There is the option to install from usb disk. See here:
https://help.ubuntu.com/community/Installation/FromUSBStick
I had problems with booting to the CD with a certain motherboard (Sapphire with ATI chipset), and
the problem was fixed by tweaking the bios USB settings.

I would imagine that this upgrade would be much more difficult due to the new sound system
(Pulse Audio) and security system (Policy Kit). I haven't had good experiences with the upgrade
procedure, probably due to the amount of customization I end up doing. Fresh installs usually run
much smoother for me.