MÉTRONOME

TEST & REVIEW

DSAS

Music server



The Computer Audiophile

Audiophile Style

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Metronome DSAS - A Turnkey Audirvana Server

I first saw the Metronome DSAS (Digital Sharing Audio Server) at the Munich High End show in 2025, when Audirvana's Antoine Douaillat gave a presentation about the server and the tight integration between Metronome hardware and Audirvana software. This is a 100% French collaboration after all. I was intrigued right away, for a couple reasons. First, I'm a fan of Audirvana and know many Audiophile Style community members are as well. Second, this is a very unique product, offering a turnkey audiophile solution for those who've become very tired of general purpose computers and the constant issues brought on by "upgrades" pushed out by the big tech companies. For those who want a server that works like a light switch and delivers excellent sound quality, the Metronome DSAS may be just the ticket.

What is DSAS?

Prior to the DSAS, Audirvana was enjoyed by those of us installing it on macOS, Windows, and more recently Linux. But, this was always a DIY style adventure. Some audiophiles prefer using a traditional computer for music library management and playback. I certainly won't judge one's preferences, but now that we have DSAS, another option is available.

The Metronome DSAS (Digital Sharing Audio Server) stems from a collaboration between Metronome and Audirvana. Metronome designed and manufacturers the hardware, while Audirvana developed and supports the music software. To the listener, DSAS works like an audio component rather than a computer, even though, like all music servers, it's a computer. DSAS is a finely tuned "hardware foundation (real-time Linux kernel, isolated USB audio, clean power supplies), while Audirvāna handles the audio processing layer. This division ensures both system-level and software-level excellence." Turn it on and Audirvana starts, without any user intervention possible or any keyboard, mouse, or monitor. Again, it's like a Metronome / Audirvana audio component.

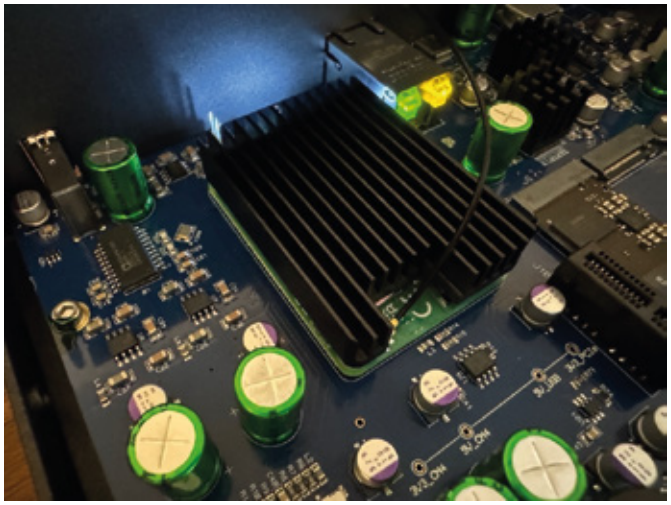
Given that this is a collaboration between two companies, listeners may wonder what happens when there are questions or potential issues. This is written very clearly in the nice DSAS Technical Guide. According to the guide, "Métronome handles DSAS hardware, system configuration, and storage management. For questions regarding music organization, playback features, or app functionality, Audirvāna's dedicated support team provides expert assistance."

The more I use music servers, the more I love turnkey solutions. I use my MacBook Pro every day for my immersive 12 Chanel system because I have to, not because I want to. There just isn't a better solution. For two channel, it's a different story. I use macOS, Windows, and Linux more because I want to understand them and be familiar with every platform. However, I get tired of the iCloud accounts, Microsoft accounts, operating system updates waiting for me to reboot before listening to music, AI, Copilot, Gemini, Windows Recall, updates that break network connectivity, the new "features" pushed upon us that nobody actually

requested, and the one that really gets me, massive data collection and tracking of how I use the computers.

I use many music servers from the well known high end manufacturers by choice. They work excellent. Now, my choice when using Audirvana is absolutely the Metronome DSAS. This server just runs, without issues requiring my input and patience. Let's look at what makes DSAS tick.

Hardware

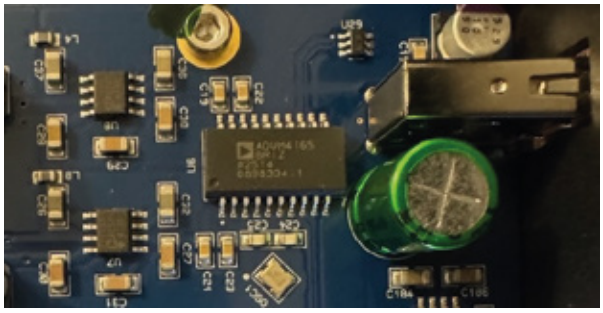


The Metronome DSAS pleasantly surprised me in many ways. When I pulled it out of the box, it was much heavier than I expected. The build quality is very nice, not overly done. It's just right.

Eager to learn more about the DSAS, I opened the chassis, unscrewing four small screws and lifting upward. Looking inside I discovered the unit is built very well. Nothing outrageous or over the top, but very solid design, focused on delivering great audio.

The brains of the DSAS are a Raspberry Pi Compute Module 4, with a Broadcom BCM2711 quad-core Cortex-A72 (ARM v8) 64-bit SoC @ 1.5GHz CPU. In the image below, you can see the large heatsink on top of the CM4, near the top left, between the external WiFi antenna and the USB cable.

The Compute Module 4 connects to a custom Metronome carrier board that contains all the input and output ports and storage slots. Compute Modules are designed to connect to a carrier board and it's nice to see Metronome took the design of this one very seriously, unlike the others I've seen online. This isn't just a Raspberry Pi, this is a custom design using a Pi for computing power.



Left of the Compute Module 4 in the image, one can see a vertical USB port and an ADuM4165 digital isolator, providing galvanic isolation and clock regeneration to, "eliminate ground loops, reduce jitter, and ensure pristine signal integrity to any connected DAC." Metronome nicely lists this chip in the DSAS Technical Guide, that I should've read before searching the internet for chip part numbers and features. This isolated US interface supports audio up through DSD512 and PCM 384 kHz.

Metronome opted to forgo all other digital audio interfaces, instead focusing on optimizing the USB output with isolation, reclocking, and Linux ALSA driver optimizations. The company suggests using a USB to S/PDIF convert for those who need support for such interfaces.

In the Technical Guide, Metronome lists some interesting points under the heading Digital Audio Quality - Technical Reality. I can figuratively see many members of the Audiophile Style community nodding their heads in agreement when reading this.

Digital Audio Quality - Technical Reality

Digital audio transfer and playback quality is measurably affected by implementation. The oversimplified "bits are bits" argument overlooks critical factors.

Real-world variables:

- ✓ Error correction limitations (unrecoverable read errors = interpolation artifacts)
- ✓ Jitter and timing accuracy (affects D/A conversion precision)
- ✓ Power supply noise (USB drives, network switches, routers)
- ✓ Electromagnetic interference (cable quality, grounding, isolation)

DSAS architecture addresses these factors:

- ✓ Linear power supplies (clean 5V/12V rails)
- ✓ Isolated network interfaces (reduced EMI)
- ✓ Optimized Linux kernel (real-time audio priority)
- ✓ Quality storage controllers (NVMe SSDs)
- ✓ Audirvāna Studio integration (bit-perfect playback, advanced audio engine)

Conclusion:
Audiophile-grade network components, quality cables, and proper file transfer methodology demonstrably impact sonic performance. DSAS is engineered to minimize these variables at the system level, while Audirvāna's software ensures optimal audio rendering from storage to DAC.

The DSAS features two NVMe drive slots for Audirvana files and music storage, while also supporting external USB drives in read-only mode. NVMe slot 1 ships with a 2TB drive that shouldn't be removed or replaced. Slot 2 has been tested to support NVMe drive up through 2TB, but may support larger drives according to Metronome. When two drives are used, both are viewed as separate storage locations. In other words, there are no RAID0 or RAID1 options.



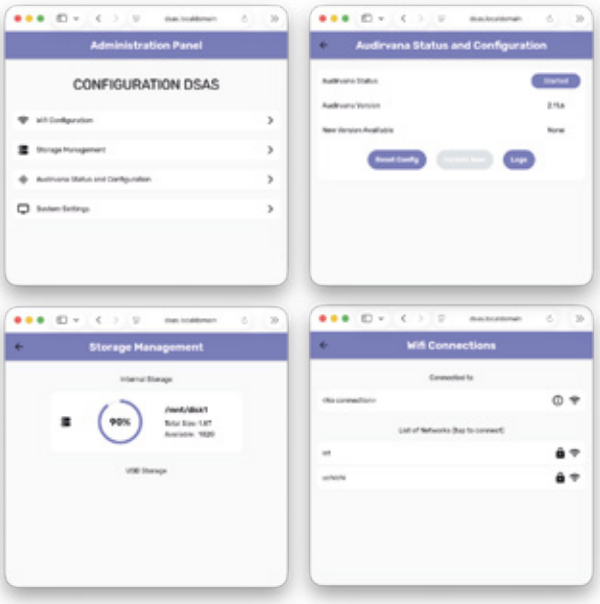


Given that the Compute Module 4 only exposes a single PCIe Gen 2 lane, the DSAS includes an internal ASMedia ASM11843 PCIe switch. These are somewhat similar to Ethernet switches in that they enable more devices to connect to a single port, sharing the bandwidth. The important point in this is that there's no sense in purchasing the latest, and most expensive, PCIe 5 Samsung 9100 NVMe drives for the DSAS. A single PCIe Gen 2 lane won't take advantage of the speed of these new drives.

Software

The Metronome DSAS runs Linux (6.12.25+rpt-rpi-v8 aarch64 ARM64), which is setup to work like a light switch. It's either on or off, and the listener needs to know nothing more than that.

The heart of the DSAS is Audirvana Studio. Currently the DSAS is on version 2.11.6, after receiving one update during this review period. Metronome includes a three year subscription to Audirvana Studio with each DSAS purchase, or a perpetual Audirvana Origin license for those with offline libraries only.



Testing and researching the DSAS I was continually impressed at the transparency and information provided by Metronome and Audirvana with respect to functionality and support. One notable and important point listed on both sites is that DSAS doesn't support, "for the moment, ... editing audio file metadata and integrating signal processing for equalization or acoustic treatment." It's very nice to know this before jumping in head first, and I appreciate the possibility of future support for these items. I'm a big fan of convolution and VST3 plugins and would really use such features on the DSAS.

All library management and playback control is done via the Audirvana Remote app for mobile devices and tablets. Those with Apple Silicon Macs can install the iPad version of Audirvana Remote as well. Again, the DSAS has no local display, keyboard, or mouse with which to interact, and it's a blessing.

One difference between running Audirvana on a standard computer and the DSAS is that

DSAS provides a limited web interface for WiFi Configuration, Storage information, System Information and Debug Logs, and Audirvana application information and logs. The screens can be seen in the images below.

Using and Listening Through DSAS

Using the Metronome DSAS was really enjoyable and made the music listening experience beyond simple. One thought came to mind when using this server, as simple as possible and no simpler. Listeners familiar with the Audirvana interface will step into a DSAS based system and hit the ground running. The only thing missing is the hassle of a traditional computer.

I copied roughly 1.75 TB of music from my Mac to the DSAS, over my network. I know the Technical Guide says to do this in chunks of roughly 200GB, but I went for 400GB at a time. I had zero issues copying the data.

Once the music was on the internal NVMe drive, I had Audirvana scan the drive for music and I was ready to start listening.



I queued up Bill Evans The Paris Concert, Edition One, not even thinking about the French connection between this concert and the DSAS / Audirvana. This is just an album I discovered recently and absolutely love.

Listening through the DSAS > dCS Rossini APEX > Vinnie Rossi Brama preamp and mono amps > Wilson Audio Alexia V loudspeakers, with Shunyata power and Transparent signal cable, This album sounded magical. One the opening track, I Do It For Your Love, Evans shows both a soft and slow side and a harder more forceful side, where he works the keys over at a rapid pace. The sound of his piano on this track is really wonderful, with an abundance of clarity between the notes and a very expressive top end. The DSAS delivers clean, bit perfect music with which my audio system ran, and reproduced with a relaxing, yet thrilling, presence.

The final track on this album, Beautiful Love, is my favorite and what I consider the most expressive on the album. Evans works his magic on the keys, while Marc Johnson lays a solid foundation on the double bass, and Joe LaBarbera really shows off his drumming in the second half of this 9.5 minute track.

Listening through the DSAS I could hear each musician individually as they played as a trio, not like a conglomerate of sound. Rather, a group of talented musicians playing off each other, showing personality, and my audio system delivering the goods.

Both LaBarbera and Johnson solo on this track and I felt like I was in L'Espace Cardin back

in November of 1979. As I do once in a while, I give the volume a bump for the drum solo because I like to really feel the kick drum. Doing so on this track, roughly five minutes into it, sounded fantastic. I could almost picture Joe LaBarbera sweating and smiling as he let it rip, working over his kit like a real magician. I could place the individual kick and snare drums on the soundstage, just right of center, one on top of the other, and hear the drum heads, with air around the snare, as if I was at the show. In fact, perhaps being at the show wouldn't have revealed this much detail and such a solid sonic image.

After the track ends, the audience claps, and I felt like even I needed a break, in the best way possible. It was so energetic sounding and engaging. What a treat for the senses.



Moving to a newer recording, without the audible artifacts of the aforementioned Bill Evans Paris Concert, I put on Nenad Vasilic's album Solo Live. Vasilic's double bass playing on this album is both musical and authoritative. I lean heavily toward this combination, over the HiFi demonstration style of music. This album has serious bottom end, but I didn't play it to work out my woofers.

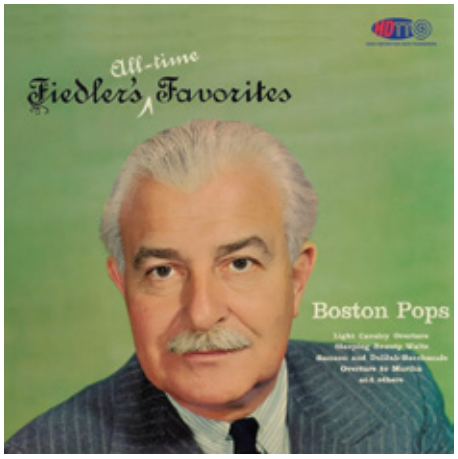
The DSAS, feeding my dCS Rossini via USB, proved to be a stellar source for this recording. All the intricacies of Vasilic's playing, finger plucks, breaths, instrument positional sounds, and the concert venue, were all audible and only added to the main course, the music. Real life is full of flaws, but the beauty is in the imperfections.

Listening to track two, Kalas Bre Andjo, Vasilic's beautiful playing is bolstered by an audience member's cough, but this ads to the soundstage and give his bass more authority as it isn't just bass in a vacuum, it's like placing a ruler next to something in an image to show scale.

Through the DSAS, Vasilic's bass is large while also delivering a compact and focussed sound. Put another way, large sound with tight musicianship. I could hear the venue and place myself in the audience without even thinking about it. The sound and soundstage were effortlessly reproduced, putting me at ease while listening. As the concert went on, I started thinking more about the venue and the picture I had in my head of Vasilic on stage, with medium size space behind him and even the textures of the walls. I want to look up the space, but in a way I also don't want to know because it'll never match the vivid image in my head. Theater of the mind is much more powerful than anything real life can offer.

Note: While browsing Vasilic's catalog on Qobuz I discovered the DSAS didn't have all my Qobuz favorite albums listed. This is because there is currently no manual way to synchronize streaming services with Audirvana. Thus, the only way to sync Qobuz and Tidal with the DSAS is the power cycle the unit. Audirvana is aware of this issue.

In the mood for some Boston Pops and Arthur Fiedler, I put on the Fiedler's All-Time Favorites album from High Definition Tape Transfers, in 24/352.8 DXD. I really don't know if this is



the most definitive version of any of these recordings, but I also don't really care sometimes. I love the music and I'd listen to it on an AM radio if that's all I had.

Track one, Light Cavalry Overture, starts with wonderful sounding horns. Played through the Metronome DSAS, I can almost picture the horn section standing straight up and proudly delivering the opening notes.

When the rest of the orchestra joins the horns, the wall of sound, bolstered by percussion and elevated by the strings, is powerful enough to snap any listener out of whatever funk they day may have brought. The energy, mixed with incredible finesse and impeccable timing, of this recording are truly something to behold. With my iPad in hand, the Audirvana Remote app open, I watched the track's waveform at the bottom of the screen, eagerly awaiting the next crescendo.

This emotional rollercoaster ride is worth the price of admission, and it makes this entire hobby such a joy. Using incredible HiFi components such as the Metronome DSAS to reproduce recordings from nearly any decade, and feeling elation, sadness, wonder, and being able to turn it off and on with the tap of a finger, is truly amazing and possibly the most underrated and overlooked part of our wonderful hobby.

Conclusion

Last week I was on vacation, with only my iPhone and iFi DAC with headphones. As strange as it sounds, I thought about the Metronome DSAS quite a bit. I was excited to get back home and spend time with it in my listening room. The DSAS is understated yet has serious "gravitational" pull because of how it works and what it does.

DSAS is a turnkey solution for lovers of Audirvana, great sound quality, and anyone tired of traditional computer audio. This server works like a light switch, it's either on or off. There's nothing to learn or maintain. When one sits down to listen, it plays, without any operating system complaints.

I like to tinker as much as anyone in this hobby, but I also appreciate products that just work and I understand that many audiophiles have no interest in learning anything related to macOS or Windows as a music server. To some extent I wish I could forget some of what I've learned about those operating system over the years.

The Metronome DSAS sounds excellent, works flawlessly, and makes listener's lives easier. What more could anyone want? Plus, who doesn't need an easy button these days, especially when there are no downsides? I highly recommend the Metronome DSAS as the premier way to listen through and use Audirvana.