MÉTRONOME

TEST & REVIEW

DSAS

Music server



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Consider vinyl playback: Pick up a record, put it on the platter, start the platter spinning, position the stylus over the lead-in groove, lower the arm, and voila, music is playing. There's a huge variety of turntables, arms, cartridges, and phono preamplifiers, but once your system is set up, the motions required for playback are largely the same across the board.

Digital playback is simpler than vinyl if your goal is to play music from a single source, like a streaming service. However, most audiophiles have local sources, too, often more than one (local files, NAS, ...) and often more than one streaming source. Managing all that is complex. There are many solutions. Some—Audirvāna, JPlay, JRiver, MConnect, Roon—require elaborate setup. Others are more plug-and-play, such as the integrated solutions from Aurender, Innuos, and Roon Nucleus, to name a few. They all do similar things but offer different features and user experiences.

Audirvāna Studio is one solution. It was created to work on computers: first Macs, then Windows machines, and finally under Linux. Some people with discerning ears say it sounds better than alternative music-player software, especially other software intended for computers. Audirvāna runs on a computer, but as long as it's running, you can tell it what to do and play from your listening seat on your smartphone or tablet via the Audirvāna Remote app, which is available for iOS and Android.

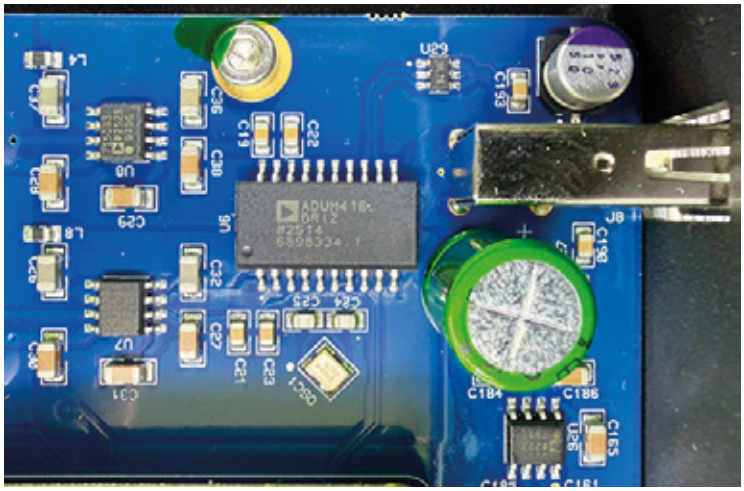
The Métronome DSAS

Why lead off with a discussion of Audirvāna—a computer application—when we're reviewing a server-streamer? Because the server-streamer in question—the Métronome DSAS—runs Audirvāna. It is the first to do so, though a half-dozen or so others are expected to follow soon, with more on the way.

The DSAS does what other server-streamers do: It manages local files and music streams and sends music data to a DAC. It is part of Métronome's "Digital Sharing" range of components: DSAS stands for Digital Sharing Audio Server. The series includes a CD transport (the DST), a Roon Ready + UPnP server-streamer (the DSS 2), and a DAC (the DSC mini). They are all in metal cases with a small, 10" x 10" footprint

The DSAS has a minimalist look, including its front face. The only front-panel control is a status light that, when you touch it, wakes the unit up or puts it to sleep. The back panel is also simple as these things go: It includes an IEC power cord input, a power switch, USB-A and USB-C ports for connecting external storage—both support USB 3.0 speeds—a 1Gbps Ethernet port, a dual-band Wi-Fi antenna, and a dedicated USB-A port for sending music data to a DAC. It's important to note that USB is the DSAS's only output.

The DSAS stands on three sturdy, prominent feet configured in a triangle—two in the front, one in the back—which provide a strong mechanical coupling to any surface it is sitting on. In this respect at least, it doesn't rock.



The unit includes internal storage; a 2TB SSD is standard. Meddy Dufrennes, Métronome's product manager for the DSAS project, told me that the included 2TB NVMe SSD holds the Audirvāna database and user preferences, so it should not be replaced. A second slot has been tested with a 2TB NVMe SSD and will probably work with even bigger NVMe SSD cards.

Setting up the DSAS was simple: I connected an Ethernet cable from my router to the DSAS, powered it up, and located the DSAS on the Audirvāna Remote app. If your network is well and simply configured, the app will locate the device promptly, and you're off to the races. A purely wireless setup is also possible, though Stereophile recommends a wired connection (and a simple, well-configured local network) for lossless and hi-rez music streaming.

Moving files to the DSAS's internal storage was also simple: I accessed the internal drive on a computer on the network and dragged and dropped music into the folder labeled "Music" in the DSAS network share (footnote 1). For transferring music, a wired network connection is preferred because it is faster.

Next up: streaming services. Tidal, Qobuz, HIGHRESAUDIO (HRA), and Presto Music are supported. Connecting them is as simple as logging into the services through the Audirvāna Remote app. Internet radio and podcasts are also supported.

Once this is done, all you need to do to start playing music is connect your DAC to the DSAS via the dedicated USB connection and select an album or track to play.

The hardware

The Métronome DSAS has been designed and built from the ground up to optimally run Audirvāna—nothing else. The fact that there's an AUDIRVANA_ON status LED on the motherboard is the clearest indication this is a machine built for a single purpose.

Power is handled by two linear supplies: One feeds the USB-Audio port and the system processor; the other powers the storage components including the USB IN ports and the NVMe SSD slots. Computing tasks are handled by a Raspberry Pi Compute Module 4. I told Meddy that I was concerned that the Raspberry Pi might not provide sufficient computing power. He responded that the processing power is ample for the Audirvāna feature set, including upsampling and the newly added DSP (footnote 2). Over the course of the review, I found this to be true. The operating system resides on a 32GB microSD card mounted directly on the main circuit board (footnote 3). The aforementioned 2TB NVMe SSD is the default bin for

local music storage. The DSAS is fanless—silent—which is important if you're going to place it in your audio rack, which, in contrast to a laptop, is how it is intended to be used.

That USB Audio DAC connection port is galvanically isolated and reclocked (footnote 4) to deliver the purest, lowest-noise data transfer possible. Galvanic isolation minimizes the electrical noise passed on to the DAC. A high-quality clock is important because timing errors are equivalent to noise when it comes to causing jitter that can degrade digital conversion.

You've surely used USB with a computer, for example, to connect to external storage. If you have, your experience has almost certainly been error free. It is natural to assume that the same holds true for USB Audio. However, in contrast to the USB protocols used for storage, the USB Audio protocol is not error-correcting. The protocol can detect and mute packets with errors, but there is no mechanism to request retransmission. What the protocol does include is flow control: two-way communication between the "host" (the DSAS) and the "device" (the DAC) to negotiate the transmission speed so that the buffer on the DAC side never empties or overflows. The net result of this and other factors, as many have found out through trial and error, is that high-quality USB cables really do make a difference in the sound such devices produce. This is true for any device that connects to a DAC using USB

The software

I started to dabble in serious computer-based music playback in 2011. Back then, that meant ripping CDs to my Mac and playing them into my headphone setup. I heard about Audirvāna and learned it was intended to improve the quality of playback on the Mac. I bought a license for Audirvāna Plus in November of that year. At the time, it was a simple app that would play a list of tracks, achieving better sound by connecting directly to the DAC. It worked well and sounded much better than iTunes. I have been an Audirvāna user ever since.

I connected with Damien Plisson, creator of Audirvāna and now the firm's CEO and CTO. Damien explained the origin of the platform. "I am an engineer and developer at heart. I started this as a personal side project because I wanted to rip my classical collection of CDs and got curious about optimizing playback on a computer. I shared a prototype online in 2010 that was a simple playlist player, taking control of the audio output only. It was very welcomed by the community, especially in Japan. I decided to improve it and commercialize it. It became an add-on to iTunes in 2012. Since 2015, I have dedicated myself full-time to building the software it is now."

Damien went on to describe his design priorities and details: "The focus has always been to apply the principles of 'silent component' and 'shortest path' to the computer hardware platform. I always seek ways to avoid any unnecessary processor activity during playback and get the most direct access to the audio output. When Apple introduced the M-series processors, it opened for me new options to further optimize the audio playback path. On Windows, I worked using the Kernel streaming mode that gives the highest potential for optimization.

"In 2014, the app was enriched with a library management solution—separate from iTunes—with its own interface. In 2015, Qobuz streaming was integrated, soon followed by Tidal and HRA"—that's HIGHRESAUDIO—"in 2016 and Presto Music in 2025. Version 3"—Damien was referring to Audirvāna 3, not the current Audirvāna Studio 3—"was released in 2017, adding MQA support, new oversampling algorithms, and UPnP/DLNA capability. Audirvāna introduced an iOS remote app in 2015, followed in 2017 by the introduction of a Windows version of the player as well as the Android version of the Remote app. The Linux version was developed in 2024, allowing integration of Audirvāna on NAS devices and Linux-based audio servers." This last move was, Damien said, "motivated by the observation that many music lovers simply don't want to use their computer as a source."

Voila, the DSAS.

"You can think of the Linux version on the DSAS—and other servers—as an optimal Audirvāna implementation on a computer entirely dedicated to audio, with audiophile-grade hardware components with less insulation compromise and a quiet power supply. Each operating system manages the audio output in different ways, and I had to work and optimize the playback for each one. On Linux, we take exclusive, direct access of the ALSA output (footnote 5).

"The current platform, Audirvāna Studio and Origin (footnote 6), was released in 2021 and updated in 2022 with [internet] radio and podcasts, Chromecast audio, Audio Scan, and the tablet-mode Remote app."

The latest major update of Audirvāna Studio—version 3—was released this March. Audirvāna Studio v3.0.2 was used during this review. It includes a redesigned interface that Audirvāna calls Allegro, which streamlines the user experience. It adds substantial new Digital Signal Processing (DSP) functionality: 10-band Parametric Equalization; Convolution Engine for room correction; Crossfeed for headphone listening; and Balance, which is, as you might guess, a Left-Right channel-level adjustment. These new DSP features are, Damien remarked, "really something I am proud of. I wanted to introduce this in Audirvāna for some years now, but I had to start from scratch because I was leaving it until then to external plug-ins. I developed the EQ myself, which I wanted to stay easy to use, but I think is really professional grade in terms of audio quality. As for the Convolution and Crossfeed, I worked with a signal-processing expert who is really into audio, so we have been able to meet our specs and really optimize the code."



The Audirvāna team continues to improve the platform. Just since the launch of Studio v3, updates have improved the Remote app, and DSP supports both SoX and r8brain upsampling

algorithms to higher-rate PCM and to DSD. The latest Audirvāna also supports plug-ins, but the Audirvāna in the DSAS can't use them because the relevant plug-ins cannot be used "headless"—that is, without a display.

What other Audirvāna features are unsupported on the DSAS? Just one: metadata editing, which is currently supported on desktop platforms only, not on the Remote app. Damien told me, however, that app-based metadata editing will be added with an update later this year.

Footnote 1
The manual indicates that the fastest way to do this is to connect a USB drive to either USB IN port and follow the same procedure from your computer between the two network drives. I tried this, but it was slower than the network process I just detailed. For fastest performance, use a wired connection to transfer the files. Métronome is considering changing the manual to reflect this.

Footnote 2
I have engaged all DSP functions as well as DSD128 upsampling—the most computationally heavy of the upsampling algorithms—without issues.

Footnote 3
A microSD-to-USB-A adapter is provided in case it becomes necessary to reflash the microSD system card in the rare circumstance that the card becomes corrupted.

Footnote 4
According to Meddy, the USB output "uses an [Analog Devices] ADuM4165 isolator/reclocker, providing full galvanic isolation and clock regeneration."

Footnote 5
The Advanced Linux Sound Architecture (ALSA) is the standard Linux kernel framework providing device drivers for sound cards, MIDI, and audio interfaces. ALSA manages hardware devices directly, providing low-latency and high-quality audio.

Footnote 6
Audirvāna Origin only supports local playback; it is a single-payment option, no subscription required.

The experience

he DSAS is an audio streaming appliance that's easy to configure and brings the full power of Audirvāna to your audio system. It works as advertised.

As mentioned previously, of all the computer-based streamer-server software out there, Audirvāna is widely thought to have the best sound quality. That is Audirvāna's pitch, and it's the reason Métronome decided to embrace it. Much like several brand-specific systems, it is architected to do all the digital-end things that are thought to improve sonic quality. In particular, Audirvāna operates connected DACs in exclusive mode, buffers music data in memory

to reduce any read/write electrical noise, and operates at the lowest computational levels (another effort to reduce computational noise). Many think upsampling improves sonics, and with Audirvāna you have a choice of upsampling multiples and algorithms. For music recorded and stored at rates too high for your DAC to handle, the same algorithms are used to downsample that data before it is sent to the DAC.

Version 3 of Audirvāna Studio is a mature platform, though it isn't perfect. Allegro is easy to use and powerful, and it looks great. Like most other systems, it has some idiosyncrasies and can occasionally feel unfinished.

Longtime users of Audirvāna know that the display on the Remote is a bit different from the display on the computer. The Remote app is the same and looks the same whether you are running Audirvāna on the DSAS or a PC—save for unavailable features like VST or Audio Units plug-ins. The Home screen shows all your sources as small buttons along the top: local files, your streaming services one by one, internet radio, podcasts. In landscape view on a tablet, there's a panel on the left that also lists sources, plus search; the left-column list can be reordered, but that's the only part of the layout that can.

Immediately below the buttons is a track-by-track playback history, with album-cover images, ordered left to right. Below that is a list of local files, below that your streaming services: Qobuz first, then Tidal, and so on. Below that are a series of "Tailored for you" rows derived from the streaming services. Their precise function varies with the streaming service: "Tailored for you—Qobuz" displays recently released albums on Qobuz; "Tailored for you—Presto Music" leads with Presto Music playlists. Below "Tailored" comes internet radio (labeled, simply, "Radios"), then Podcasts.

Click on Radios and you see the beginning of a long list of station icons with headers above to help filter and sort: Local, High Quality, Genre, Location, Language. Find a radio station you like and click on the heart to favorite it; it will show up on your Favorites page, with a link to the page in the left column. Podcasts works the same way, but when you click on the three dots below a podcast or radio station, it prompts you to "Play All," "Play Album Next," or "Add Album to Play Queue." A radio station, of course, is not an album. This is one of those things that seems unfinished; it's a small annoyance that should be easy to fix, and it should be fixed promptly.

Underneath the Podcasts header are images of six continents—there's no Antarctica—with their names underneath; click on a continent to bring up a list of countries; click on a country to bring up either podcasts or a list of states, then, possibly, cities. More usefully, once you're on the Podcasts page, there's also a tab to filter "By Language."

The search function is almost comprehensive. A search is clearly intended to show results from all sources on one screen, but currently it only incorporates one streaming service; if you subscribe to two, only one will be searched (footnote 7). Tapping the search box also shows previous searches, which is handy.

In the standard display mode, the playing track shows as a small icon on the bottom left, but



tapping on it brings it to full screen—which displays the first special feature of Audirvāna: Audio Scan. This feature analyzes the entire audio track, displaying the frequency spectrum, bandwidth, bit depth, and other parameters (footnote 8). It works with both local and streamed files, as long as they are PCM. It does not work with DSD files, and for MQA files, it can only analyze the PCM output after the first unfold. Rendering is DAC dependent.

The display of album liner notes is supported, when liner notes are available: An icon at the top right of the album display shows when a PDF file is present in the directory. Tapping it shows the contents of this file.

Earlier I mentioned DSP. Some of the DSP features work in real time, allowing you to hear the effects as you change the settings. If you want your DSP settings to apply to DSD files, there's a way to do that: Just tell Audirvāna that your DAC doesn't do DSD. Audirvāna will then transcode to PCM and apply DSP.

I already mentioned that you can't (yet) edit metadata on the DSAS—but Audirvāna can retrieve missing metadata from MusicBrainz and save it into the files themselves if you so desire.

Comparing Audirvāna to Roon is interesting. Roon was released in mid-2015, so it makes sense that it provides the most complete and polished user experience I have had. It offers some features essential to managing my music library.

One such feature is album groupings: I keep several local versions of favorite albums, and Roon can differentiate them and group them together into a set and assign a "primary version," which plays by default when the album is selected. Audirvāna often merges albums with the same name into a single album with duplicate tracks. Currently the only way to prevent this is to give the different album versions different names, which, in fairness, is a reasonable way to track their differences.

Roon also handles classical music well. In particular, it can group together movements of larger works, acknowledging them as part of a larger composition. Audirvāna has some facility to do this, but the metadata required is not exposed, and it wasn't obvious how to make it work consistently (footnote 9).

Sound quality

The DSAS is an audio streaming appliance that's easy to configure and brings the full power

of Audirvāna to your audio system. It works as advertised.

As already mentioned, Audirvāna was designed from the start with sound quality at its core, using bit-perfect playback, a connection to the DAC that's as direct as possible, smart upsampling, and an approach intended to keep computational noise as low as possible.

And it works. Since I first used it, Audirvāna has delivered the best sound I've heard on my Mac computers. However, stepping into the realm of dedicated music servers subjects it to stiffer competition. It now needs to measure up to dedicated offerings from Aurender, Innuos, and other high-end streamer-server manufacturers.

If I had to describe the sound of the DSAS in a few words, the words would be "free," "relaxed," and "dimensional." Tsuyoshi Yamamoto Trio's "Midnight Sugar," from their album of the same name (DSD rip from SACD, First Impression Music; also available on CD from Three Blind Mice) sounded clear and present, with beautiful piano tone. Astor Piazzolla's "Libertango," from the album Misa Tango (16/44.1 FLAC, Deutsche Grammophon/Qobuz), goes from nuanced piano to orchestral crescendo with a pleasing combination of ease and power.

Compared to Audirvāna on a Mac mini, the sound over the DSAS is more dimensional—it extends in all directions—and relaxed. The Mac mini sounds more closed-in and less tonally rich. One track that made this clear was Azymuth's "Bateria do Mamão" from their album Demos (1973-75) Volumes 1&2 (16/44.1 FLAC, Far Out Recordings/Qobuz). This drum track has deep layering of each component of the drum set; the cymbals float above while the bass drum is recessed in the center. The DSAS portrayed this layering effortlessly and expansively. The Mac mini sounded more constrained.

This and much else will likely depend on which DAC is used. Some DACs are wired for optimal sound from USB; others prefer other inputs. My dCS Rossini APEX uses a standard XMOS receiver chip in its USB implementation, while other DACs implement galvanic isolation. This is likely to affect the sound extracted from the DSAS, so, if you do similar comparisons, your mileage may vary.

Comparing Roon playback directly to the dCS Rossini over RAAT (footnote 10) versus the same files from the DSAS over USB, I heard a slight muddiness in the Roon version compared to the DSAS.

Next I compared the DSAS with the Aurender N50 ($38,500) that I reviewed in the May 2026 issue of Stereophile; note the price differential of nearly a factor of four. The N50 can serve as a Roon endpoint; it can also play music via the Aurender Conductor app. I will focus on the latter, since Conductor and Audirvāna are much more similar experiences, and to me Conductor sounds the best of all sources on the N50.

The USB output of the N50 is a new design by Aurender, and it's an improvement over previous implementations. It is a galvanically isolated and reclocked USB Audio output. Comparing the playback to the DSAS, I found that the sound quality was very close. I'll give the nod

to the N50, but the differences are so small that I doubt they'd be noticeable without a direct A/B test. This test, though, compared both servers over USB. The N50's secret weapon is its AES3 outputs, which I found sound much better than its USB output. Aurender over AES3 also sounded much better than the DSAS over USB, but note the price difference.

The last comparison I made was with streaming versus local files. I compared files purchased and downloaded from Qobuz versus the streamed version (on Qobuz) of the same files. I found that the local files were better articulated, with more relaxed and richer tonality. Eva Cassidy's voice on the track "Autumn Leaves," from the album Live at Blues Alley (24/44.1 FLAC, Blix Street Records/Qobuz), was a prime example. Her voice had a tad more body and color when played locally.



Conclusion

The result of a successful collaboration between two French firms, Métronome Technologie and Audirvāna, the DSAS shows that there's virtue in a single-purpose machine compared to using a computer as a music source. The quality of the playback and the convenience of the setup make it a compelling solution for those seeking an appliance-like server that is easy to use and sounds great. There are some issues in the software, specifically search across multiple streaming providers, classical music grouping, and some features missing in the Remote app, including metadata editing. These issues will presumably be resolved over time, since Damien and the team are responsive and add new features constantly.

For devoted Audirvāna users who cherish the player's sound quality, this is a way to get even better sound, from a device that, in contrast to a computer, would be right at home in your audio rack. Great stuff.

Footnote 7

I had a similar experience. For me, a search returned results from internet radio, podcasts, local files, and Qobuz, but I saw no results from Presto Music, which specializes in classical.—Jim Austin

Footnote 8

It would be useful to also see the track's dynamic range, as I find this to be a good indicator of quality.

Footnote 9

I have tried some of the methods described online unsuccessfully.

Footnote 10

RAAT is Roon Advanced Audio Transport—Roon's mechanism to play from the Roon server (aka "Core") to a Roon Ready endpoint over the network. In this case the endpoint is the dCS Rossini APEX.

SPECIFICATIONS

Description:

- Streamer-server running Audirvāna Studio software (3-year software license included).
- Physical inputs: Network—Ethernet (10/100/1000Mbps) and Wi-Fi (2.4 and 5GHz bands).
- Audio outputs: USB DAC output (galvanically isolated and reclocked) supports rates up to PCM 32/384 and DSD up to DSD128 (DoP) and DSD512 (native); UPnP (network) supports rates up to PCM 32/384 and DSD up to DSD128 (DoP) and DSD512 (native); Chromecast (rates not specified).
- Internal storage: 2TB NVMe SSD included (stores Audirvāna database and user prefe rences); additional NVMe slot available—2TB NVMe SSD tested (for a total of 4TB of storage).
- External storage: USB 3.0 inputs (one USB-A, one USB-C) for USB drives and USB keys; NAS capable.
- Sources: Internal and external local files; Qobuz, Tidal, HIGHRESAUDIO, Presto Music, and internet radio streaming. Supports Last.fm music tracking and MusicBrainz metadata retrieval.
- Digital Signal Processing: Upsampling up to DSD256 (SoX/r8brain algorithms); 10-band parametric EQ; Convolution; Crossfeed; Balance; Audio Scan (sound quality metrics for all sources including streaming music).

Dimensions:

- 9.8" (250mm) W x 2.8" (70mm) H x 9.8" (250mm) D. Weight: 10.6lb (4.8kg).

Finishes:

- Silver or Black.

Serial number of unit reviewed:

- DSAS2511066. Made in France. Firmware: v21; Audirvāna Studio v3.0.2 was used in this review.

Price:

- $8900. Approximate number of US dealers: 10. Warranty: two years, parts and labor.

Manufacturer:

- Métronome Technologie, France.