

On Sunday, January 19, 2014, the monthly meeting of the Audio-Video Club of Atlanta was held at the new Virtual Properties meeting room in Duluth. The theme of this meeting was to enable those present to hear high resolution downloads, including both DSD and PCM files, through the Benchmark DAC2 D with various USB cables. There was a standing-room only crowd of about 40 new and current members present, including at least one who joined the club after the meeting!

The meeting started at 2 pm with John Morrison up first with a few club announcements. He thanked our two presenters, Lee Scoggins and Nick Arroyo, who worked many hours at home to get the music flowing. Also thanked were Chuck Bruce, Darren Censullo, Ed Leonard, Dennis Juranek and Rick Stehno for helping Lee and Nick, and Steve Gooding and Sam Papadas for bringing the club equipment, and Bob Prager for the refreshments. Chuck Bruce also shared some news about upcoming meetings that are already set to go or are almost ready to go.

The equipment used for this meeting was a MacBook PC and the new Benchmark DAC2 D (list price \$1800) supplied by Lee, and the club's integrated tube amplifier and club-built speakers (the 2-ways and the two subwoofers). Also used was a "passive" preamp especially built for this meeting by Sam to control the volume on the integrated amp and the two subwoofer amps simultaneously, a Power Plant power center, and Black Cat Lectraline interconnect. The latest MSB Analog D/A DAC was also scheduled to be auditioned at this meeting, but due to shipping logistics immediately after CES, we were unable to obtain it. The USB cables that were auditioned included the WireWorld Platinum Starlight USB, Shunyata Venom USB, WyeWyres USB, a generic USB cable, iFi USB cable, the LH Labs Lightspeed USB cable, and Dennis Juranek's DIY USB cable. The pricing of these cables varied widely, from \$5 for the generic cable to up to around \$700 for the more expensive cables. The pricing of the cables seems to change almost daily, so one can look up the latest pricing if you wish.

Nick was first up to present the set-up he and Lee had worked very hard to play music. To set up the hardware and software to get DSD downloads to play through the DAC2 was very difficult and help from other folks including the Benchmark engineers was needed to get it to work. They had it working Saturday, but after hooking everything up Sunday, it failed to work. It seemed that the issue was the "handshake" between the DAC and the computer over the USB cable (for DSD) that did not want to work Sunday. After numerous reboots of the DAC and more experimentation, Lee got it to work. We then listened to music over DSD, but when the DSD started to fail again, we switched over to PCM (mainly 24 by 176) to compare the USB cables. Opinions varied as to which cable sounded the best; although all agreed that the specialty cables all sounded better than the generic cable.

Nick discussed how it is very difficult to find "native" DSD files because most DSD (SACD) recordings were mastered using PCM, due to the very high cost of DSD workstations for mastering engineers. The engineers would switch a DSD master to PCM, do their editing (on a much cheaper PCM workstation), then switch the result back to DSD to create the SACD. Nick believes that DSD and hi-resolution PCM sound very similar, but Lee believes that DSD sounds more like vinyl. Your opinion could vary of course (the interesting part of our audio hobby)!

The meeting concluded at 4:30 pm, but listening continued until cleanup had to begin at 5 pm.

The club again gives many thanks to Lee and Nick for all their work (at times frustrating) to set up all this equipment and software, and for a very interesting and fun-filled afternoon of listening and comparing.

Thomas Horner  
Secretary, A-V Club of Atlanta