

Comparing the Aurender N50 and Aurender N30SA

This evaluation focuses on the performance differences between the Aurender N30SA and Aurender N50 music streamers/servers. Rather than comparing either unit against competitive solutions, this evaluation is meant to guide prospective buyers to distinguish which model better suits their needs through their purchase consideration journey.



A Bit of Background

I've been an authorized Aurender dealer for over three years, but purchased an N30SA as an audio enthusiast before entering the trade. Over the past 3.5 years, I've had N30SA units serve as my reference streaming solution. Representing several high end brands and handling competitor brand trade-ins has given me perspective on Aurender's position in the market. Being completely satisfied with the N30SA, upgrading to the N50 (\$38,500) wasn't a priority, as the N30SA is certainly no weak link in my system. When I inquired about evaluation units, the team graciously provided an N50 for several weeks with the understanding that I'd put in significant hours of runtime on it for professional reviewers to facilitate subsequent reviews after I am done.



System, Setup and Break-In

Both units were evaluated in my reference system, situated in a 19'x24' room with a slanted ceiling rising from 8.5ft at the front wall to 17ft at the rear. Room treatments include solutions from Vicoustic, GIK, and Sonex, balanced between diffusion and absorption to avoid overly lively or dead acoustics. System components include Vivid Audio Giya G1 Spirit loudspeakers, a pair of Perlisten D12s subwoofers, and T+A Elektroakustik HV Series components (SDV 3100 HV DAC/preamp, A 3000 HV power amplifier, and PS 3000 HV optional power supply). Cabling comprises a complete loom of Synergistic Research SRX XL and SRX, with additional accessories from the brand including the PowerCell 14 line conditioner, Galileo Active Ground Block MK II, and several Tranquility Base Carbon electromagnetic isolation platforms. Ethernet signal purification is handled with SR's Ethernet Switch UEF Mk2 and Router UEF. Power to some of the components is supplied via a StromTank S-2500.

Kelly Scheidt, North American Director of Sales for Aurender, delivered and installed the N50. Given space constraints, the N50 and N30SA remained in stacked form. Kelly confirmed that separating the units on individual shelves would further enhance sonic performance—something I knew, but stacking proved more practical for this evaluation. During the installation process, he noted that Aurender can provide longer umbilicals for greater chassis separation. He also confirmed the N50 had zero hours, requiring the typical 200-hour break-in period I've experienced with other models. We spent two hours listening between the units at which I noticed apparent differences in presentation, but I let the system settle before forming impressions. I've since run the unit 24/7 for two weeks, enjoying the N50's exceptional performance throughout this period before listening critically.

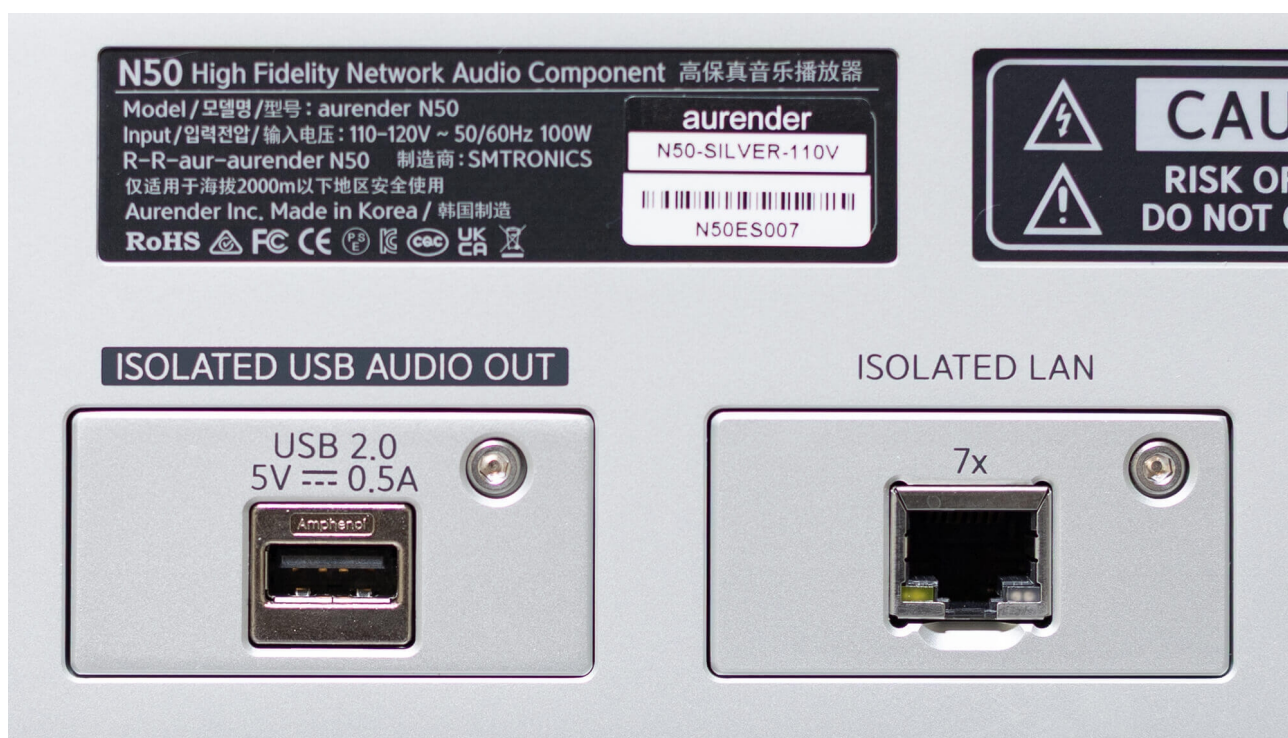


Comparisons were made by simply switching Ethernet and SPDIF/coax cables between units, clearing internal cache, and playing identical tracks back-to-back. Both units remained powered on, plugged into the same PowerCell 14 receptacle using identical Synergistic Research SRX XL power cables. Both sat stacked on Synergistic Research MiG SX isolation footers atop Tranquility Base Carbon platforms.

Technical Observations

It's important to examine how the N50 builds upon Aurender's previous flagship, the N30SA, with fundamental engineering advances that address the core challenges of digital audio reproduction: noise and jitter. The following technical comparisons aim to do just that.

Where the N30SA pioneered dual-chassis isolation by separating audio outputs from noise-generating components, the N50 takes this further with a triple-chassis design. The server, power supply, and digital audio sections now operate in complete physical isolation, virtually eliminating internal interference pathways to allow for blacker backgrounds from which musical details emerge. The N50 features a more robust power architecture, with dual laboratory-selected toroidal transformers, each vacuum-encapsulated in polished stainless-steel enclosures. Combined with multi-layer AC and DC filtering, this redundant approach ensures exceptionally clean power reaches sensitive audio circuits, supporting the unit's dynamic capabilities and low-noise operation. This power supply optimization appears critical for delivering the natural presentation and improved dynamics described later.



Network isolation advances from the N30SA's double-isolated connections to the N50's 7x isolation, combating network-borne contamination to preserve signal integrity throughout the digital chain.



In addition to the typical digital outputs, the N50 offers dual AES outputs, as well as a modular i2s output to be able to handle native DSD. This output can be changed out with other modules, including MSB's ProISL interface to ensure maximum compatibility with other digital components in the market.

Finally, both models employ OCXO oscillators with external clock support, but the N50 utilizes an improved sync algorithm, enhancing the performance out of the same OCXO clock to deliver improved timing accuracy, fundamental to natural musical reproduction and directly affecting rhythmic coherence and spatial presentation.

Finally... Tuning In

Aurender maintains its characteristically neutral presentation—neither conservative nor overly smooth compared to competitors like Innuos or Auralic. However, listening to the N30SA after the N50 revealed the former's slight restraint across many parameters compared to its successor. The opening of Fink's "Sort of Revolution (Sidestep Dub)" on Sort of Revolution (Single, 2009) immediately reveals subtle improvements in percussion presence and dynamics, from the speed and punch of the bass drum to the speed, sustain, decay and air of the cymbals and toms. Enhanced separation is also noticeable when the bass guitar enters. The bass guitar is produced wonderfully on this track, likely applying some sort of compression effects to attain the incredible growl from playing simple notes. Through the N50, this growl becomes fully realized—not only audible but viscerally felt, with the instrument's textural liveliness filling the room. The N30SA delivers this information but more tentatively. While both machines excel at noise floor and staging at their price points, the N50 distinguishes itself not by creating a larger stage, but by improving airflow within it.



There's simply less congestion in the performance as bass, percussion, and electronic embellishments intersect without obfuscation.

The same is true when playing Jeff Beck's breathtaking live performance of "Brush with the Blues", from Live and Exclusive from the Grammy Museum (2010). This is one of the most transparent live recordings I've ever heard, and Beck's breathtaking live performance through the N30SA delivers impactful placement of performers with excellent individual contributions and depth. When switching to the N50, the increase in presence slightly enlarges the performers' individual images. While this initially drove me to believe of a more forward presentation, careful analysis revealed that depth is actually improved. Overall, the track's presentation was more visceral, more alive, and the forwardness of the emotional response allows for the song to "reach" and "touch" its listeners while Beck's incisive guitar still originates well beyond the speaker plane, farther than it did with the N30SA.



The N50's superiority becomes most evident during complex passages, particularly the 3:00-4:30 timespan when intensity peaks during Beck's virtuosic breakout with Narada Michael Walden's high-energy percussion. The N50 easily reveals greater dynamic range; every element with heft, texture, and the appropriate amount of separation and improved detail retrieval for superior musical coherence. Crucially, in comparison to the N30SA, the N50 delivered these improvements with an even more realistic tone, making the experience more emotionally engaging. In this fully analog recording, no digital artifacts emerged.



Continuing in the vein of heightened dynamic range and substance, I need to share my experience when listening to one of my favorite jazz tracks, "Moment to Moment" from Freddie Hubbard's First Light (1975). Opening as an intricate, contemplative noir ballad with flowing melody and relaxed tempo, it shifts mid-track into energetic, swinging improvisation with significantly increased tempo, creating magical dynamic contrast. Due to its exceptional staging, performer interplay, and musical appeal, this has been a demonstration reference for my clients for a few years now. It was also in heavy rotation both on digital and remastered vinyl in the Bliss Hifi room at AXPONA

2025. Having intimate familiarity with its N30SA presentation—which I considered exemplary—the N50 comparison proved revelatory.

This track exemplifies the N50's enhanced dynamic range and substance. Opening as an intricate, contemplative noir ballad with flowing melody and relaxed tempo, it shifts mid-track into energetic, swinging improvisation with significantly increased tempo, creating magical dynamic contrast. Due to its exceptional staging, performer interplay, and musical appeal, this has been my client demonstration reference for two years, featured heavily both digitally and on remastered vinyl in the Bliss Hifi room at

AXPONA 2025. Having intimate familiarity with its N30SA presentation, which I considered exemplary, the N50 comparison proved revelatory. From the opening, Ron Carter's bass through the N50 introduces itself with more muscular tone, enhanced growl and texture. The backing symphony's violins and oboes, plus Jack DeJohnette's cymbal decay, portrayed a richer, more fleshed-out presentation than through the N30SA. The tone becomes more vivid—appropriately so when Freddie Hubbard's horns soar. This made the images of each performer larger and more present, but without mutual interference. The soundstage dimensions remain similar between the two units; neither portrayed wider or deeper staging, but the N50's layering in every dimension becomes more apparent, largely due to improved coherence and separation while maintaining richer, more vivid performance.

The N50 truly excels during the 2:30 shift, particularly when the uptempo peaks just before 3:00. DeJohnette's drumming showcases equal proportions of technical mastery and creativity, while Carter demonstrates playful prowess through quick plucks and sustained notes. With the highlight of Hubbard's horn soaring above backing instrumentation, including Herbie Hancock's reverberant Rhodes piano, images could easily smear or lose tonal balance. The N50 handles this effortlessly. Where the N30SA already delivered reference-level performance, the N50 achieved this with superior transient response and improved pacing while retaining the tonal saturation described above.

Aurender MC10: The Missing Piece?

One limitation of this review is the absence of an Aurender master clock evaluation with either unit. I've previously used the Aurender MC10 on demo with my N30SA for several months. With the clock engaged, the N30SA's coherence snaps into lockstep, similar to upgrading from consumer to professional camera lenses. Image outlines become crisper yet more confident, effortless in delivery. Texture becomes more apparent, speed more immediate. Overall delivery gains breath, transforming the N30SA into a truly world-class performer. I can only imagine the N50 paired with an MC10, though perhaps I'll be fortunate enough to experience this later this year or early next.

The Right Fit

While my descriptions above may suggest significant improvements in the N50 over the N30SA, the decision ultimately depends on individual listeners, how much they value system performance gains, and their position in the audio journey. First, improved performance requires accommodating three chassis (or four if including a master clock) on equipment racks, potentially daunting for many. That said, there are a few competitors (ahem, DCS), who may have even more, and at significantly higher price points. Those preferring simplicity will likely avoid the N50 and choose the N30SA or the N20. But for those who value performance over form factor, it's important to realize that the form factor is a major contributor to getting "there". Performance-wise, differences between the N50 and N30SA become noticeable almost immediately during comparison, even casually. However, articulating what makes it better requires extended listening with both units. For someone with a quality but non-endgame solution like the N200 or N20 who desires and can budget for best-in-class performance, the N50 represents a clear choice. If budget constraints apply, the N30SA achieves most benefits at two-thirds the price. For current N30SA owners considering the N50, diminishing returns apply; whether the price difference justifies sonic improvements depends on individual priorities. For me, it surely does, and I'll be purchasing one after recouping business investments into new product lines over the summer.

By Bliss Hifi USA