

Multichannel Music and DVD Audio

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1. Multichannel Music and DVD Audio

In the early years, fantastic sound meant fantastic music. With the advent of "surround sound", the emphasis shifted a bit, in the direction of film sound. Also, my present speakers (Bose Acoustimass 7) did not really make music sound "musically". Surround sound in the sense of matrix encoded "Dolby surround" also does not "promote" audiophile music. Already Dolby Digital 5.1 and DTS offer more for multichannel music (five discrete full-range channels, although with some compression). [DVD Audio](#), together with [Super Audio CD \(SACD\)](#), presently offers the ultimate in modern audiophile audio reproduction. DVD Audio offers a sampling depth up to 24 bits, sampling frequency up to 192 kHz, and up to 6 channels. Instead of [lossy compression](#), the music data may be compressed losslessly using [Meridian Lossless Packing](#). DVD-Audio can also contain multimedia content like pictures, lyrics, etc. It can also be combined with video content, although audio of highest quality/bandwidth and video cannot coexist (for bandwidth reasons). DVD Audio comes with digital copy protection that is part of the specification, and not based on deliberately specification-violations and production of deliberately defect discs (like "copy protected" CD's). SACD has similar properties, however, it cannot be combined with multimedia content. It is said, e.g. by [Wikipedia](#), that there is a format war between SACD and DVD Audio. It appears to me that format wars in the 2000's run differently than the format war between VHS, Betamax and Video 2000; also compare the "format war" DVD-R vs. DVD+R.

Unfortunately, DVD-Audio (as well as SACD) has not spread very much. Hardware vendors are not advertising the format. The music industry seems more interested in inventing defective "copy protected" "CD's" than to provide the customers with the best possible quality. How many titles on the present "Top-10" are available as SACD or DVD-Audio?

The selection of DVD-Audio discs is not overwhelming. Several albums were obviously made during the quadraphony years, possibly never as such released, and just recently released in multichannel. Two examples are Chicago II and Deep Purple's Machine Head, both sound absolutely amazing (not only considering their age): mixed for 4 or 5 channels, instead of up-mixes.

Some of my favorite multichannel DVD-Audios (see [My DVD collection](#)) :

- Deep Purple: Machine Head
- Pat Metheny Group: Imaginary Day
- Off Space
- The Crystal Method: Legion of Boom
- Blue Man Group: Audio
- Yes: Magnification