Synology DS110+

A single-bay version of our favourite wired storage box makes Graham Morrison a happy man.

In brief...

- Share files, stream music and videos and monitor webcams. Synology’s closest competitor is Qnap, but you could also build your own.

We’ve looked at Synology’s network attached storage boxes before (see LXF111 and LXF123), but we’ve never looked at a single-drive model. Synology has finally released a native assistant application, meaning that we no longer have to resort to either Wine or guesswork when getting the boxes working on a Linux network. This is important, because that’s always been our sole caveat in recommending these boxes to Linux users.

The DS110+ is half the width of the DS209+II because it has only a single drive bay. Like all other Synology devices, you need to source and install this drive yourself. This shouldn’t be an issue, but if you’re planning to use a newer 2TB drive, it’s wise to check with a compatibility list online before spending your money. The internal design has also changed slightly, and you no longer need power and SATA connectors to attach the drive to the raw pins on the motherboard. Instead, you only need to carefully slide the drive into the bay and on to a plastic bridge to make the connection, before securing it with a few of the supplied screws.

Once you’ve bolted up the case, attached the power and network cables and turned the drive on, you’re ready to use the new Linux Assistant. This is installed by executing a shell script as root and specifying a destination location. You then need to run a link to the application from `/usr/local/bin`. This ran without any problems from our system, and within a few moments, the main window had discovered the box on the network and listed it in the main view. You need to grab the latest version of the operating system and let the manager install this on your drive, requiring only a single further click. Another nice feature is that, after the installation is complete, you can use a Resource Monitor mode to watch CPU, memory, network and storage usage through a series of widgets.

Revamped interface

After installation and formatting, you can access the drive’s web interface using the IP address listed in the Assistant. The latest version is 2.3, and this features some significant upgrades over the versions we’ve looked at previously. You can now listen to your music collection, upload photos and watch the output from a connected USB webcam using custom iPhone apps, for instance.

The web applications for managing files, music, surveillance and photos have all been bumped up a version, and they’re still the best we’ve seen. You can even connect a pair of USB speakers and play music directly from the box. The web UI is smooth and is now easier to use, thanks to the addition of a customisable ‘most used’ page. Unlike its competitors, Synology also makes it straightforward to access the embedded version of Linux by enabling the SSH service. You can then install your own packages, grab community-supported versions and hack the configuration without any difficulty.

We got reasonable performance out of the box, thanks to its speedy CPU and decent memory size. Copying a 700MB ISO file over Samba averaged around 7MBps, both uploading and downloading, and took about 10% of the CPU. There’s a point-and-click web server installation, including PHP and MySQL, and we see no reason why you couldn’t run a decent WordPress site or similar from it, as long as demand wasn’t too high. All this means that, in essence, the DS110+ is a decent drop-in replacement for a Linux box. Except it’s cheaper, quieter, more efficient and better looking.

Features at a glance

- Linux Assistant
  - At last, a native Linux application for installation and monitoring.
- New UI
  - Version 2.3 of the web interface makes all the features accessible.

Verdict

Synology DS110+

Developer: Synology Inc.
Web: www.synology.com
Price: £250

Features: 10/10
Performance: 8/10
Ease of use: 9/10
Value for money: 10/10

Filled to the brim with features and functionality, and it’s great to finally have a native Linux application.

Rating 9/10

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