

ReadyNAS RN102 Review

There is a old chinese saying: “May you live in interesting times.” It is an interesting time if you look at current and emerging technologies in home networking and entertainment right now. Most homes now have computers, laptops, tablets, smart phones and personal video recorders gaming consoles, set-top boxes, smart TV’s and a broadband internet connection. All these devices can be used to edit and store documents, listen to music and watch video. Before you know it, you’re storing and backing up terabytes of data that everybody wants to access to, sometimes all at the same time.

What to do? As most homes now have a broadband modem that also doubles as router, we’ve already got a local network at home, but where’s the server? This is how I came across the idea of the home NAS (Network Attached Storage) device.

Enter the Netgear ReadyNAS RN102. Designed to be the heart of a networked home, the ReadyNAS is a excellent solution at a very reasonable price.

The is unit encased in a compact, well-designed metal chassis that would make a welcome addition to any decor-conscious home. The processor is a Marvell Armada 370 1.2GHz ARM chip with 512Mb or RAM and two hot-swappable SATA hard drive bays will handle up to 8Tb of storage. You'll need to buy at least one SATA or USB hard drive and install it before getting started. For connectivity, it has one Gigabit LAN Port and two USB 2.0 ports at the back and one USB 3.0 port at the front. I had a 2Tb USB drive connected to one of the rear ports and was was able to stream movies to my smart TV and my Telstra T-Box via ethernet flawlessly.

The RN102 supports all the important networking protocols, including CIFS/SMB, AFP, NFS, HTTP/HTTPS, FTP, WebDAV and more. An excellent web-based GUI (Graphical User Interface) with intuitive tab-based navigation is provided, which works well all the major web browsers. If you need access to your files on the RN102 via the web, there is good support of Dropbox via the Backup tab in the GUI.

Streaming movies and music to your network is just a matter of copying some files onto a USB drive or an internal drive, setting up DLNA/UPnP in the GUI with a few clicks of the mouse, selecting “My Media” or similar in your networked smart TV, T-Box, Fetch TV, gaming console or PVR, navigating the file system, and you’re watching your favourite movie or

listening to music on whatever device you have that supports DLNA or Universal Plug & Play.

As I have an MacBook and iPhones at home, I was keen to find out how well the RN102 would work with these devices. The ReadyNAS comes with built in support for Apple Time Machine which was easy to set up and worked seamlessly over Wi-Fi. There is also support for Apple iTunes for those interested in hosting their media collection on a NAS.

For streaming movies from the ReadyNAS to Apple and Android devices the I found the best apps were Netgear's ReadyDLNA and VLC. I found the former the most reliable, but due to the varying quality of downloaded files you will always get a few that will not play. At one stage I had two iPhones and my TV streaming movies from the RN102 at the same time and it handled it all just fine.

All in all, I was very happy with the Netgear ReadyNAS RN102. It was easy to use and did everything it was supposed to do well. I would recommend it anybody with basic IT skills looking to set up a budget-conscious home entertainment network. Once you have a ReadyNAS, it won't be long before it becomes as important to your home entertainment system as your TV and your Hi-Fi is.