1. A microprocessor based system for providing a media player with access to remotely-stored digital media content and its associated metadata (collectively, the "content") wherein (a) the system is capable of accessing the content; (b) the media player is provided, by the system, with a suitable interface, accessible by that media player, for interacting with the content, and wherein the content is made available via a digital media content subscription service and the system is capable of registering or logging into that service if required, and in which the system performs protocol mediation such that media content may be downloaded or streamed to the system from a remote server but presented to the media player as if it were a locally stored file.

2. The system of claim 1 in which the media player is connected to a network, the media player is not connected to a network or the media player is intermittently connected to a network.

3. The system of any preceding claim in which the suitable interface presented to the media player consists of one or more of the following, or some combination thereof: a USB connection, and related technologies, such as mini-USB and micro-USB connections of whatever version, whether or not presented as a Mass Storage Interface to the media player; a Wireless USB connection; a Secure Digital card connection or similar technology, such as an SDHC card, a MicroSD card, a MiniSD card, a Memory Stick or an SDIO (Secure Digital Input/Output) card; a wireless connection to the media player, utilising WiFi, BlueTooth, a Wireless LAN or other wireless connections; an Ethernet cable; an eSATA connection; a mobile media player connection such as an iPod™ or iPhone™ hub or any other appropriate connection; a DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance) capable interface; a DVI (Digital Video Interface) connection; a HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) connection; an infra-red or other non-visible light based interface; an IEEE 1394 ("FireWire™", "i.Link™", "Lynx™) interface; a smart card connection, such as an RFID interface or related wired or wireless technologies; any NFC (Near Field Communication) technologies, such as an RFID interface or related wireless technologies; any other mechanism which may be used to provide a communications facility between the system and the media player.

4. The system of any preceding claim in which the suitable interface presented to the media player includes a coaxial aerial connector or an audio input terminal or any other suitable connection, whether analogue or digital.

5. The system of any preceding claim in which the selection as to which interface(s) to present to the media player is made manually.

6. The system of any preceding claim in which the selection as to which interface(s) to present to the media player is made automatically based on the capabilities of the media player - whether those capabilities are detected by the system or retrieved via a lookup of the media player's capabilities based on identifying information about the media player, however obtained or retrieved – or by any other suitable criteria.

7. The system of any preceding claim in which the system accesses the content via one or more of: a direct connection, a wireless connection, such as wifi; a wireless network; a mobile network; an internet connection; 2G, 2.5G, 3G, 4G, EDGE, Wifi, wireless LAN access, Bluetooth, 802.11a/b/g, LTE (3GPP Long Term Evolution), LTE Advanced or any mechanism which provides communications via any other wired or wireless communications protocol or method.

8. The system of any preceding claim in which the selection as to which method of connectivity to use by the system to access the content is determined manually.

9. The system of any preceding claim in which the selection as to which method of connectivity to use by the system to access the content is determined automatically based on connection strength, tariff costs, location, connection speed or by any other suitable criteria.

10. The system of any preceding claim in which the system houses or otherwise utilises one or more active SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards to permit the system to authenticate to a mobile network and so make use of the MNO's (Mobile Network Operator) data connectivity.

11. The system of any preceding claim in which the system houses or utilises multiple SIM cards and switches between different mobile network operators, whether that switching is performed manually, at user instigation or automatically, based on location, tariffs or any other considerations.

12. The system of any preceding claim in which interacting with the content (which term includes any associated metadata) includes one or more of: searching the content; browsing the content; retrieving the content; playing the content using the media player; making the content available for playback by any other capable media player; or any other suitable manner of interacting with the content.

13. The system of any preceding claim in which the system accesses and/or maintains subscription information and/or digital media content entitlements for the user or users of the system with regard to the service or services with which the system is registered and/or connected to.

14. The system of claim 12 and any preceding claim dependent on claim 12, in which the associated metadata includes one or more of: the title(s), artist(s), composer(s), genre(s), style(s) of items of digital media content; any files, keys or information required to access items of digital media content, whether protected by DRM technology or not, as required; playlists or any other groupings of digital media content; any other metadata related to items of digital media content or groupings thereof.

15. The system of claim 12 and any preceding claim dependent on claim 12, in which the associated metadata includes in addition of one or more of the following: user profiles, messages, recommendations, social network-related data or functionality, album listings, movie details, television schedules, theatrical listings, news, the making and obtaining of recommendations and/or playlists and any other data made available due to the system's connectivity and/or accessible to the system via a service.

16. The system of any preceding claim in which the system allow synchronisation, whether manual or automatic, between the user's preferences and/or any other associated metadata on the system and in the digital media catalogue.

17. The system of any preceding claim in which the online connectivity provided by the system is made available to the media player and/or to the system for other purposes, such as social networking functions and web browsing, whether generally or only to specifically authorised applications.

18. The system of any preceding claim in which the system contains a protected and/or encrypted store, used to hold one or more of: DRM licences and keys, system configuration settings, system registration details, system bindings, digital media

catalogue licensing or subscription files and any other files which are deemed either to be sensitive as to their content or non-useful to be visible to the end user or which are stored in that protected store for any other reason.

19. The system of any preceding claim in which the system uses its network connectivity to download, progressively download and/or stream the content.

20. The system of any preceding claim in which the system acts as a proxy or a protocol mediation proxy between one or more online digital media collections and the media player to which the system is connected.

21. The system of any preceding claim in which content - including digital media content, any associated metadata, social networking data or any other retrieved data, as required – is cached for future use, whether cached directly on the system or on some suitable alternative, such as Network Attached Storage or the media player.

22. The system of any preceding claim in which cached data is used to provide the system with access to content and/or associated metadata when "offline" (when online connectivity is unavailable), such as when travelling on some planes and underground railways or when connectivity is disabled, whether manually or automatically.

23. The system of any preceding claim in which the system intelligently reclaims storage space by identifying that content which was least-recently accessed/played and/or which the user (or his/her associated community, whether via social network rating or otherwise) has rated as being least popular and then deleting, archiving (moving to a separate storage system) or overwriting such media in order to utilise its storage space for more recently requested metadata or files.

24. The system of any preceding claim in which the media player communicates with the system via an Application Programming Interface (API) provided by the system to the media player for that purpose.

25. The system of any preceding claim in which the API provided by the system to the media player allows the media player to interact with a remote digital media content catalogue and/or a service via the system.

26. The system of any preceding claim in which the API provided by the system to the player mimics file system operations undertaken by the media player, including but not limited to a search by the media player of what appears to the media player to be a

local file system being managed by the system as a remote search of a digital media catalogue, with the search results presented by the system to the media player in a form consonant with the media player's capabilities, such as by providing the media player with a virtual file system containing the search results or placeholders thereof or by any other appropriate means.

~~27. The system of any preceding claim in which the system performs protocol mediation such that media content may be downloaded or streamed to the system from a remote server but presented to the media player as if it were a locally stored file.~~

27. ~~28.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system permits content to be broadcast to one or more suitable media players, whether connected directly or wirelessly, including but not limited to broadcasting to one or more DLNA-capable media players.

28. ~~29.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system is capable of communicating, directly or wirelessly or by any other appropriate means, with other systems and/or media players to permit sharing of content, including associated metadata; shared caching of content; or for any other suitable purpose.

29. ~~30.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system scans and/or identifies any digital media content stored on the media player and/or the system and uploads that content or descriptors thereof to one or more remote servers from which that content may be made available to the user's other registered systems and/or media players.

30. ~~31.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system incorporates location tracking technology, such as GPS (Global Positioning System), to assist in providing one or more of the following functions: determining which locale-specific digital media catalogue is to be accessed; obtaining access to that catalogue if desired; to automatically, or on request, purchase or otherwise obtain access rights to that catalogue; perform social networking functions; or for any other suitable purpose.

31. ~~32.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system functions as a removable or Network Attached storage system and/or interfaces with other such storage systems.

32. ~~33.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the architecture of the system and/or its controlling software is modular in nature AND may be updated and/or

expanded or contracted based on manual or automatic directives, whether initiated manually, automatically by the system or remotely by any suitably authorised service.

33. ~~34.~~ The system of any preceding claim adapted to interface with the media player, in which the media player is one or more of the following, or any combination thereof: a computing system; a digital media player; an analogue media player or any system capable of browsing, storing or playing digital and/or analogue media content.

34. ~~35.~~ The system of any preceding claim adapted to interface with the media player, in which the media player is a desktop system, such as a computing system, a hi-fi system, a turntable, a television, a games console or any other non-portable system.

35. ~~36.~~ The system of any preceding claim adapted to interface with the media player, in which the media player is a portable system, such as an mp3 player, an in-vehicular entertainment system or a handset or any other portable or mobile system.

36. ~~37.~~ The system of any preceding claim adapted to interface with the media player, in which the media player is wholly or partially integrated into the system and provides zero, one or more of: connection socket(s) for headphones; a battery; a battery charging mechanism; a screen to display information to the end-user and/or to display images, text and/or video or any combination thereof; operating controls for an on-system media player; remote controls for an on-system media player; facilities for searching, browsing and/or otherwise interacting with a remote digital media content catalogue and/or service; any other suitable provisions.

37. ~~38.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system is a portable, personal device.

38. ~~39.~~ The system of any preceding claim in which the system microprocessor is not dedicated to the system but used by other processes or modules that are unrelated to the system.

39. ~~40.~~ The system of any preceding claim 1 – 37 ~~38~~ which is self-contained in so far as it has own dedicated microprocessor and operating system.

40. ~~41.~~ The system of any preceding claim which is adapted to operate with the media player, in which the media player has no intrinsic ability to access remotely stored content.

41. ~~42.~~ The system of any preceding claim which is adapted to operate with the media player, in which the media player has no intrinsic ability to access remotely stored content and is a legacy third party media player.

42. ~~43.~~ The system of any preceding claim in combination with the media player defined in any preceding claim.

43. ~~44.~~ The system of any preceding claim which is packaged as a USB memory stick.