



Dolby and Cinemo head out on the highway with Dolby Atmos



Navigation, contact lists, Bluetooth calling, and music – these are common features of in-vehicle infotainment systems. Modern vehicles have joined the ranks of mobile devices, providing much of the functionality offered by our smartphones and often integrating with those devices. A new partnership between audio innovator Dolby and Cinemo, a leading global provider of automotive infotainment middleware, is kicking out the jams and bringing Dolby Atmos Music, a popular feature in mobiles, home entertainment, smart speakers, and PCs, to the vehicle cabin for a truly immersive experience.

This makes sense, says Andreas Ehret, Director of Automotive at Dolby Laboratories: “Video services, music services, streaming providers, podcasts – the providers are heavily investing in the space. Also, if you look at car audio, especially branded-audio car offerings, those are gaining market share. Consumers are buying more devices where audio matters, and will upgrade car audio.”

The numbers are on Ehret’s side. The global car audio market is expected to grow to \$52.4 billion by 2027. For an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) – automotive manufacturers – offering the right audio products, there’s money to be made.



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Dolby and Cinemo working in concert

Bringing high-quality audio to the automotive world isn’t like working in the consumer electronics space, though. OEMs need infotainment specialists that understand their needs. That’s why Dolby approached Cinemo, a company with a history of infotainment innovation.

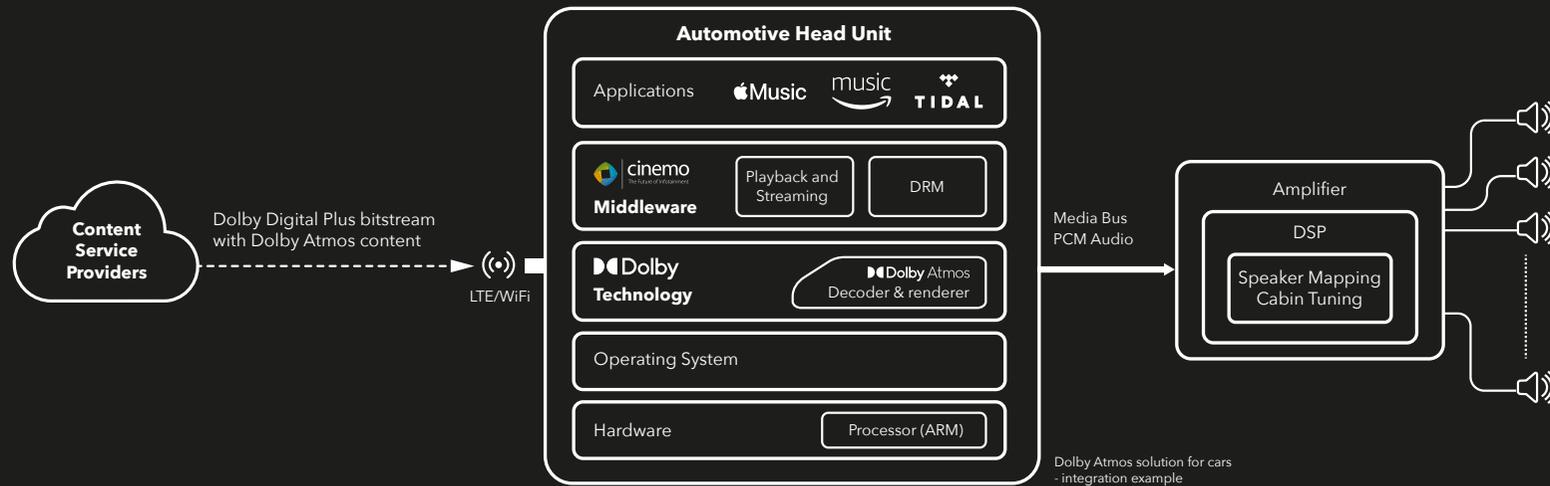
We are constantly driving innovation and work closely with many OEMs.” They need reliable partners, like Dolby, and companies that really understand the automotive space, like us. It’s different from the consumer electronics space. OEMs trust a handful of companies that understand those differences, and Cinemo is one of those companies,” says Cinemo co-founder, Ivan Dimkovic.

“That blending of expertise is why OEMs can be confident they’re getting the best solution” says Thomas Ziegler, Director of Automotive Architecture at Dolby. Ziegler is in charge of the architecture of the Dolby Atmos solution for

cars and works closely with counterparts at Cinemo to facilitate the process of OEMs integrating Dolby Atmos into their vehicles.

“Any time you do something new, it is a challenge. And we love to take on challenges for our customers. And working with Cinemo, we are providing a single component that can be easily integrated into the OEM’s existing subsystem, just like an existing codec. We also need to take care that we don’t use all the processing power of the head unit for Dolby Atmos, but we’ve got a good balance - that is not a problem. Cinemo is already deeply engaged into the automotive business. They know what they’re doing, they’re very flexible, and they can tailor it to any OEM’s particular needs,” he says.

But even the best audio technology is useless if you don’t have anything to listen to.



Content will drive demand

For more than 50 years, Dolby audio innovations have changed the conversations around music, cinema, and recording. The Dolby Atmos solution for cars is the first of its kind to faithfully deliver the music as the artist intended - without the need to boost or upmix tracks.

Dolby Laboratories' Ehret has met with artists, content creators, and record labels to discuss recording and distributing content in Dolby Atmos. The response from creators, excited about the new artistic possibilities, has been enthusiastic. Even the corporate folks at the labels - which include Universal and Warner, two of the largest, as well as many smaller companies - are committed to making music using Dolby Atmos. Key streaming services already offer music recorded in Dolby Atmos - Apple Music, Amazon Music and TIDAL - and others are taking an active interest.

Making sure this content can get into the car is Ehret's counterpart at Cinemo, Director of Partnerships, Charly Lippoth. He works with content providers to integrate their apps and services into OEM infotainment systems. "We are able to provide access to multiple service providers. We ease the complexity for the OEM of integrating those services into the car," he says. "The OEM is going to benefit from much faster time to market by having Cinemo take care of the technical heavy lifting to make these services available in the car."

Making the numbers work

In addition to innovative technology, business needs must also be considered. An option that is difficult for an OEM to integrate into the product line, unreliable, or too expensive, can prove to be more trouble than it's worth. That's why it's important to ensure Dolby Atmos in vehicles makes financial sense. There are several business benefits to the system:

“When two companies with a culture of innovation align and can put the puzzle pieces together to bring this technology to market, it makes it so much easier for the OEMs, and gives them every reason to offer this great technology to their customers.”

Charly Lippoth, Director of Partnerships at Cinemo

- No extra computational hardware is needed: Existing CPUs – and there are often several – are more than capable of processing music encoded using Dolby Atmos as easily as other audio formats and codecs.
- No extra playback hardware is needed: Tier 1 manufacturers of audio equipment already offer Dolby Atmos compatibility in their hardware, or plan to do so. Additional speakers for height channels are not necessary to experience Dolby Atmos audio (though they could be offered as a premium upgrade to the audio package).
- Dolby Atmos units integrate seamlessly into the supply chain: Because the work of integrating Dolby Atmos with the in-vehicle infotainment system has been done by Dolby and Cinemo, the resulting system fits right into the supply chain, the assembly line, and the vehicle. And it works, first time, every time.

- A premium experience can be sold for a premium price: Customers value their time, and a premium, immersive audio experience makes them feel time behind the wheel is time well-spent. They will pay for a better experience and have a better perception of the brand.

Dolby and Cinemo know that OEMs have enough on their plates. That’s why their joint offering makes sense, says Cinemo’s Lippoth: “Removing the friction, that’s the key. Our partnership is a testament to this. When two companies with a culture of innovation align and can put the puzzle pieces together to bring this technology to market, it makes it so much easier for the OEMs, and gives them every reason to offer this great technology to their customers.”