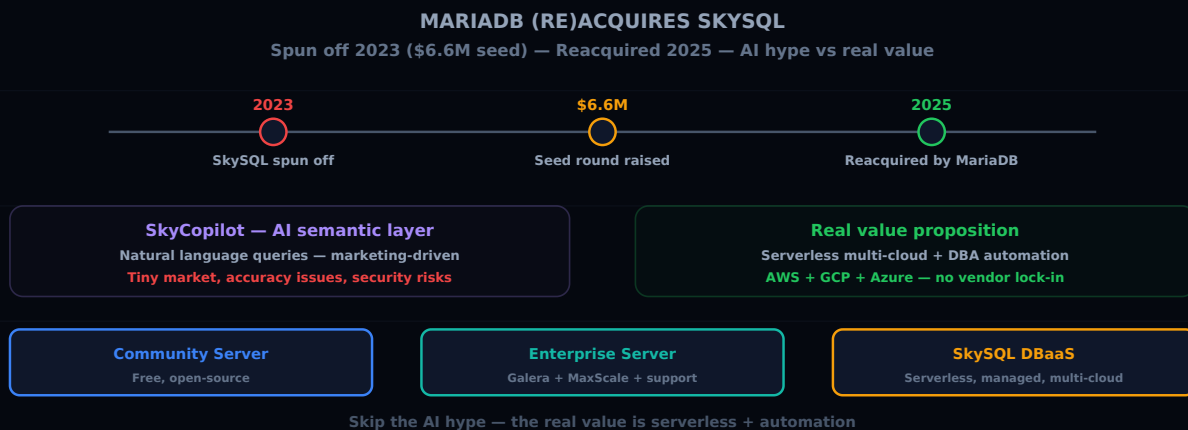


Opinion: MariaDB (re)acquires SkySQL

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MARIADB SKYSQL CLOUD OPINION



An Unexpected Return

MariaDB plc has announced the reacquisition of SkySQL. Yes, "re"acquisition. For those who have not been following the saga, let us recall the facts.

In 2023, while MariaDB plc was going through a difficult financial period, the SkySQL division was spun off as an independent entity. The idea was to allow SkySQL to raise its own funds and develop autonomously, while lightening the parent company's balance sheet. SkySQL raised a \$6.6 million seed round and positioned itself as a next-generation DBaaS (Database as a Service).

Two years later, MariaDB plc buys back what it had sold. Full circle.

The Official Narrative: AI-Powered Databases

The marketing message around the reacquisition centers on artificial intelligence. SkySQL now integrates **SkyCopilot**, an AI assistant that allows querying your database in natural language.

The idea is appealing: instead of writing SQL, you ask a question in plain English or French, and SkyCopilot generates the query, executes it, and presents the results. This is the promise of the "semantic layer" — an interface that abstracts away the technical complexity of the database.

My Skepticism About the Semantic Layer

Let us be direct: the market for natural language querying of databases is tiny. Here is why:

Technical users don't need it. A DBA or developer who knows SQL has no interest in going through an AI intermediary that might generate a suboptimal query. SQL is a powerful declarative language, and its users master it.

Non-technical users have BI tools. Business analysts use Metabase, Looker, Tableau, Power BI. These tools offer a visual interface far more intuitive than a SQL chatbot.

Accuracy is a problem. A SQL query must be exact. An "approximately right" SQL query produces wrong results. LLMs are excellent for text generation, but generating precise SQL on complex schemas remains a challenge. An error in a WHERE or a JOIN can produce radically different results without the user realizing it.

Security is a nightmare. Giving an LLM the ability to generate and execute SQL queries in production is opening Pandora's box. Even with guardrails, the risk of a destructive query or data leak is real.

The Real Value of SkySQL

While the semantic layer leaves me skeptical, the reacquisition of SkySQL has real value that is not sufficiently highlighted in the marketing discourse.

Serverless Multi-Cloud

SkySQL offers serverless MariaDB deployment on AWS, GCP, and Azure. Scaling is automatic: you only pay for consumed resources. For startups and businesses with variable workloads, this is a massive argument.

Serverless eliminates infrastructure management: no servers to provision, no patches to apply, no backups to configure. It is the "I want a database, not an infrastructure project" approach.

Operations Automation

SkySQL automates the most time-consuming DBA operations: version upgrades, replica management, failover, vertical and horizontal scaling. For a small business without a dedicated DBA, this is the difference between a well-managed database and a ticking time bomb.

Integration with the MariaDB Ecosystem

By reintegrating SkySQL into MariaDB plc, the company can offer total consistency between the on-premise edition (MariaDB Enterprise Server) and the cloud edition (SkySQL). Same engine, same compatibility, transparent migration.

What This Means for MariaDB's Strategy

The SkySQL reacquisition is part of a broader strategy. MariaDB plc is positioning itself as a complete data platform provider:

- **Community Server:** free, open-source, for evaluation and small projects
- **Enterprise Server:** commercial license, with Galera, MaxScale and support
- **SkySQL:** managed DBaaS, serverless, multi-cloud

This is the classic triptych of the database market: open-source, on-premise commercial, managed cloud. Oracle does it with MySQL HeatWave. Amazon does it with Aurora. MariaDB is following the same playbook.

My Verdict

The reacquisition of SkySQL is a good strategic decision for MariaDB plc. Managed cloud is the fastest-growing market segment in databases. Not being present would be suicidal.

However, the marketing around SkyCopilot and AI seems like noise to me. The real value proposition of SkySQL is:

1. **Serverless MariaDB** without infrastructure management
2. **Multi-cloud** without vendor lock-in
3. **DBA operations automation**

It is less sexy than "talk to your database in natural language," but it is infinitely more useful.

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