

Audio Ramblings and the Ansuz PowerSwitch A2, Digitalz A2 Ethernet Cable, and the Mainz X2 AC Cord

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By Dave Clark

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There are things one can do to their system that result in changes that are either subtle or dramatic. Little things like feet, tweaks, etc., might provide a nice subtle difference for the better (or worse) while cables and the like might result in greater improvements, while something like a component is rather dramatic. Though again, differences are differences —better, worse, or just different.

And there are times we pop something in the system that is, well, for some controversial and for others not so much. Case in point the A2 Switch from Ansuz or as they refer to it... the PowerSwitch A2.



Another network switch and one that will cost you \$4000. This is not their top, and as such, clearly not their most expensive. For that you go to the D2 at \$6200 and then after that to the D-TC Supreme at \$16,000. Ansuz's mission is to reduce, if not to eliminate, noise in the signal whether it is traveling in a cable or ending up in a component—think of their approach as a means to sending it away. Literally and figuratively. In this case to the ground. Noise cancelled. Poof! Now you hear it, now you don't. Potentially in the system as a whole due to the noise within the network. And they mean, the WHOLE network.

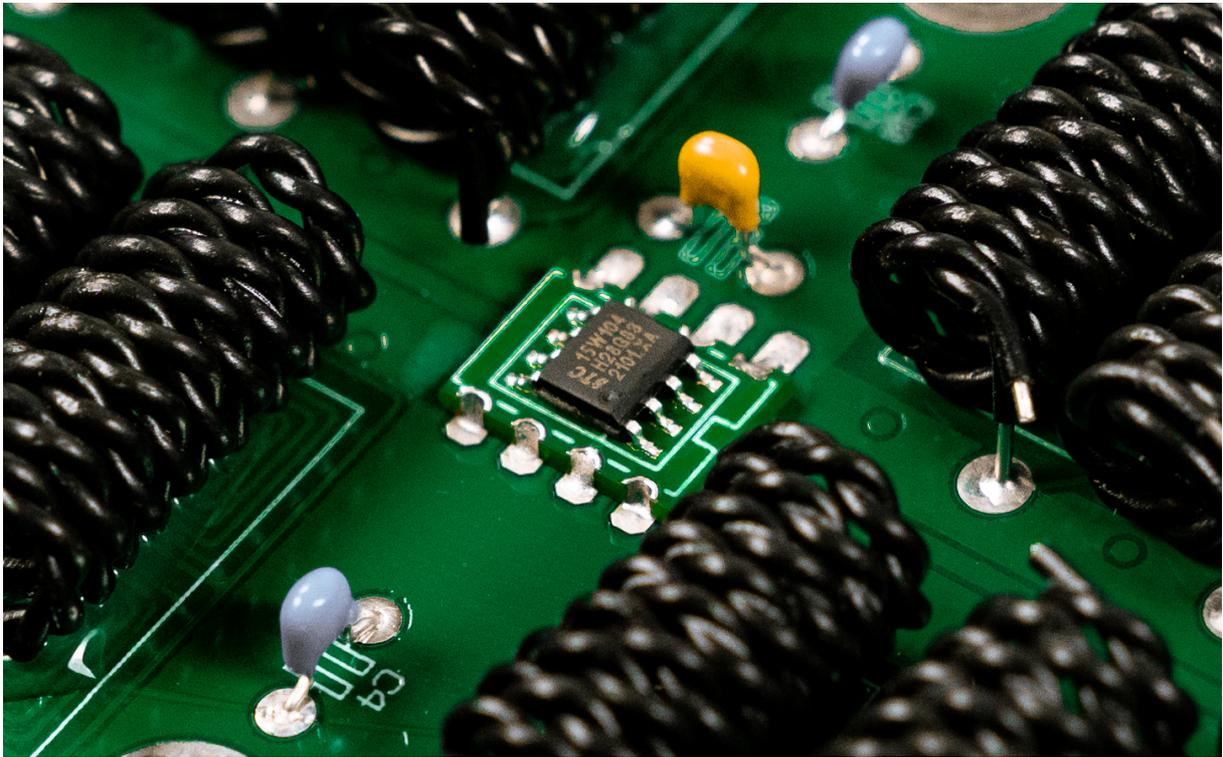
And yes, we all know that they can't change the digital stream or packets of information traveling from A to B. No one has ever said that, not even in the reviews I have read. It is just that by using their "whatever" the music you *hear* will be better. Less noise is what I take away from the audiophile switches and Ethernet cables. Less crap. More music.

How do they do this? Well, interestingly enough, all the Ansuz switches come in the same box. One that is made not from any metal, but in their words, "an innovative natural-based composite material, which reduces the mechanical influence, particularly the hysteresis." The idea being to reduce, if not eliminate any mechanical resonances. This "box" is oddly shaped, though I clearly see a "form follows function" thing happening here. Rounded corners/edges while being deeper than wider and more oval than rectangular.

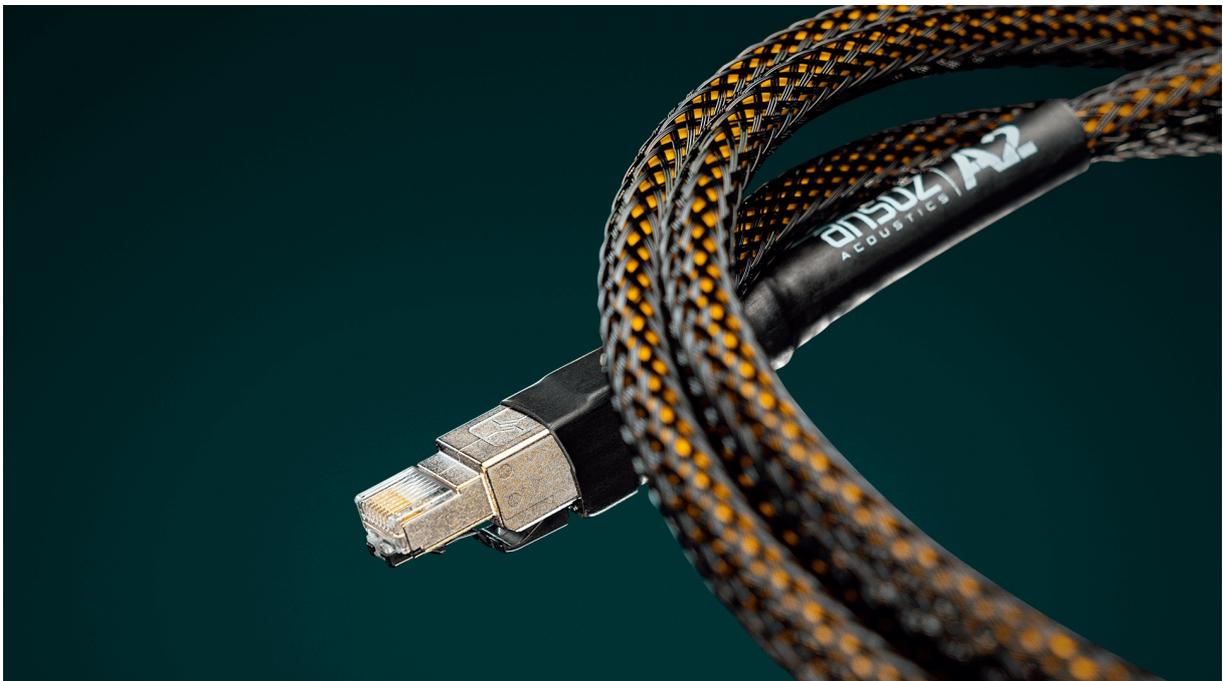


Inside they all appear to use similar boards, but differences are in the number and types of Tesla Coils being applied—active, active square, active cable, active dither, and anti-aerial resonance. All of this is explained on their site with a table explaining how many of each is used in each switch—the more used results in the cost of the unit. Meaning, more means more. The A2 uses two active cable coils, 90 active square coils, and 2 analog dither circuits.

It should be noted that the Ansuz uses an internal switching power supply that I would assume (going out on a limb here) has been selected for being the right option for the switch as well as being treated with Tesla coils.



The Ethernet and power cables I was provided with are the Digitalz A2 \$1500/2M (\$1200/1M) and the Mainz X2 AC Cord \$1200/2M (\$960/1M). Ansuz insisted I try the switch as a system with their cables so I could experience the total effect of their products... as a *system*. Thinking... synergy.



The Digitalz A2 consists of eight wires (four twisted pairs), each made of shielded silver-plated copper and uses two passive end Tesla coils and one passive cable Tesla coil.

From the Ansuz site:

The passive end coil prevents noise in bleeding into the audio components. The Tesla coil is mounted just before the connector and when the Tesla coils encounters a voltage spike, a counter spike is activated to eliminate the noise.

The passive cable Tesla coil is wound around the outer part of the cable and protects the cable from absorbing disturbing airborne RF noise. This noise is absorbed in the Tesla coil and eliminated in the counter coil. When voltage flows through the cable's conductor, which is wound in the opposite direction, it operates as this counter coil, which eliminates the RF noise.

The cable is rather stiff, but will coil rather well. Meaning longer is better than shorter to get from one thing to another without any undue stress.



The Mainsz X2 uses two twisted pairs of silver-plated copper as well, but the ground is also two shielded twisted pairs. No Tesla coils are used with this base cable, for that you spend more. And yes, the cable is also rather stiff, but like the Digitalz A2 it also coils easily and stays in place.

We gave all the pieces a rather decent break-in—200 hours or so used as the main switch for the house. We did place the cables on the [audioDharma Cable Cooker](#) for the recommended time prior to swapping them in for my regular Ethernet cables (Cardas Clear and Wireworld Starlight 8).

With all that, what were our expectations?

Hard to say as we always enter any review with a "give it a listen and see what is what." Either it sounds different with that difference being better or we don't really go any further. Differences are nice for sure. Often times any difference—as long as it is not a worse difference—offers one a nice change or alternative to one's music. That is, how the music comes across.

Of course, we do expect to hear something—whether it be different or not. But what we did not expect to hear were differences equal to that of say, swapping an amp or preamp, or even a DAC for whatever. The A2 should be, must be considered as a component, equal in terms of what it can impart on one's music to that of any other component. So yeah, make that \$4000 component.

As noted in my previous Ramblings...

A case of anticipation/expectation bias? Maybe. Yeah, we read that X will improve something and so you put it into the system and damn... it does what they said it would do. Or it made some difference—of which could be a better or worse difference or just a difference; neither worse or better.

But then there is the other side of the coin. Your anticipation/expectation bias is that it can't or won't make a difference and lo and behold... you don't hear a difference. Or that any difference is going to be for the worse.

But then... after years and years of listening to gear, music, changes to the room, different rooms, different systems—let's just say experience— and so while no one is perfect, the idea of anticipation/expectation bias becomes less of a thing. You kind of know what is what, what is going to happen or not, what differences might happen; if they do.

For sure we both have enough experience as reviewers that we know components, cables, whatever we toss into the system or room is going to do something. Something that might be audible, and if so, it will be different, and then that this difference might be for the better or the worse. Or just different.

First up... swap in just the A2 switch for the SotM sNH-10G (with internal clock \$1500 and powered by an SBooster \$400). Same Ethernet cables as before but with a generic AC cable.

Note: Certon Integrita NAS to switch to AURALiC Aries G2.

Results? Audible and not subtle in the least. Big immediate differences.

Greater transparency. More music. Blacker blacks. Less crap getting in the way of whatever it is that is going from A to B. Simply hearing your music as never before. Literally. Like listening to a different mix of whatever we were playing. Remastered. Not just to remaster though like we see so often... not so much better, just different, but with the A2, yeah... our music sounds like a killer remaster. Fresh.

Greater separation, greater localization... instruments took on way more a dimensional presence. Crazy. Strummed guitars take on a so realistic and an "it is there thing." Now it is not going to make bad recordings better, actually perhaps the opposite. You will hear

more. Meaning more of what is wrong is now even more readily apparent. But so is the opposite is going to happen. The better the recording the better it now sounds. You will appreciate these even more than before. Better, results in WAY better.

And while we tend to listen to music as a whole and not the bits and pieces, with the A2, the pieces were like... "listen to us!" "See—or make that *hear*—what you've been missing!"

Even the bass became that much deeper, more dynamic with more authority and textural *there-ness*. Clarity and presence. Clean. Of course adding in another Black Box from Synergistic Research, while placing the existing one in a more effective location, was very productive in cleaning up that area of the music to a point that, crap, this is nice. But that will be in the next Ramblings.

Okay, so a dozen or so tracks in and we were swapping in the A2 Ethernet and X2 power cables. We had a solid idea of what is going on, so we decided to move to the next step. And yeah, we were both in agreement what was happening. That look we give each other while silently acknowledging the obvious. A smile... or nod that comes after 40 years of listening to music together when we both know what we know when we know it. And we both know what we are hearing.

Agree 100%! As Dave has said, sometimes it is hard to pin down exactly what is different, but this component made a difference. I felt more engaged, everything sounded better.
Carol Clark

Damn. This also took the music further into that realm of being new... being different. Different-ly better though. Like someone had gone back in the studio and cleaned up the mixes resulting in greater clarity, definition... all that audiophile stuff we clamber over.

Oddly, the Ethernet and power cables added a wonderful degree of sweetness to the music. Was not expecting that, actually was thinking, hmmm... silver-plated copper, stiff, and somewhat "glitzy" appearance... the cable will probably result in a brighter, glare-ier sound. Hard and analytical. Nope. Kind of the opposite; smooth and velvety is what we were hearing in terms of the music's presentation. Very well balanced and delineated. Sweet. I mean this was evident as soon as I hit play and sat down. Same track but different. Nice.

And not that what we had been using prior are chopped liver—which I like—the change brought a difference that was better suited to the A2 switch. Complimentary. Additive. More.

The overall impression was of the music possessing a wonderful sense of dynamics, resolution (without being analytical or sterile), openness, naturalness, etc.

Keep in mind, this is how the music coming out of the speakers sounded. You are listening to a system and not individual pieces, but how these pieces work together. How they are passing something from one to another. Noise, distortion, etc. Not saying that

any of this was changing the digital stream, nope, not at all. But it was clearly changing, for the better, the music we were hearing.

While other switches and Ethernet cables have wrought similar results, it was clearly more subtle than what we experienced with the PowerSwitch A2 and their cables. Yes, the other pieces do what they do, and do that as I and others have written, but the Ansuz products are a whole 'nother beast. Which is simply to put things in perspective. The Ansuz set up here is over \$8200 total (this does not include the third A2 Ethernet cable which will eventually go from the switch to the Netgear WiFi unit). My SOTM/SBooster with say, the Cardas cables is around \$2500. Is it worth the extra \$5700? I can't speak for you, but the differences in what we hear with our music using the Ansuz products is dramatically better than our reference. I mean a dramatically *better* difference. But then it better be for that money, though in the end only you can decide what is of value to you. To us... the price is worth the results.

And this from the more "entry" level offerings. Damn.

Weeks into this and we are still relistening to older albums or tracks that we thought we knew. So different, so "new." I dunno. Not sure if I care to go further up the Ansuz ladder. We have never been into expensive gear. Just not us. Items in the \$5000 range is pretty much where we live. Kind of our limit. Remember to consider the Power Switch A2 not as an accessory, but as a component.

Curious though... how much better can it be?

Not sure I care. This is damn good enough.

A side note... I don't tend to list the music we play when listening or reviewing simply because it becomes more of "what do you want to hear"... and it goes from there. Our tastes range from noise to alternative to post-punk to reggae to rock to industrial to ambient to shoegaze to slow core to hardcore to punk to electronic to... well, pretty much anything but classical, jazz, country, and female vocals.

A sampling of artists we tend to play would include, but not be limited to, Massive Attack, the Notwist, Mogwai, Cavern of Anti-matter, Gary Numan, the Cure, Joy Division, the Telescopes, Burial, Low, New Order, Iggy Pop, Bowie, Tortoise, Eno, Laswell, Gang of Four, Miser, Glen Branca, NiN, Talking Heads, Lambchop, Pole, Calexico, the Evens, Flanger, Unwound, Duster, Swans, Clash, PiL, UI, Japan, MBV, the Soft Moon, and so on. Some 4200 albums with 60000 tracks.