

Melco S100 Audiophile Data Switch Review



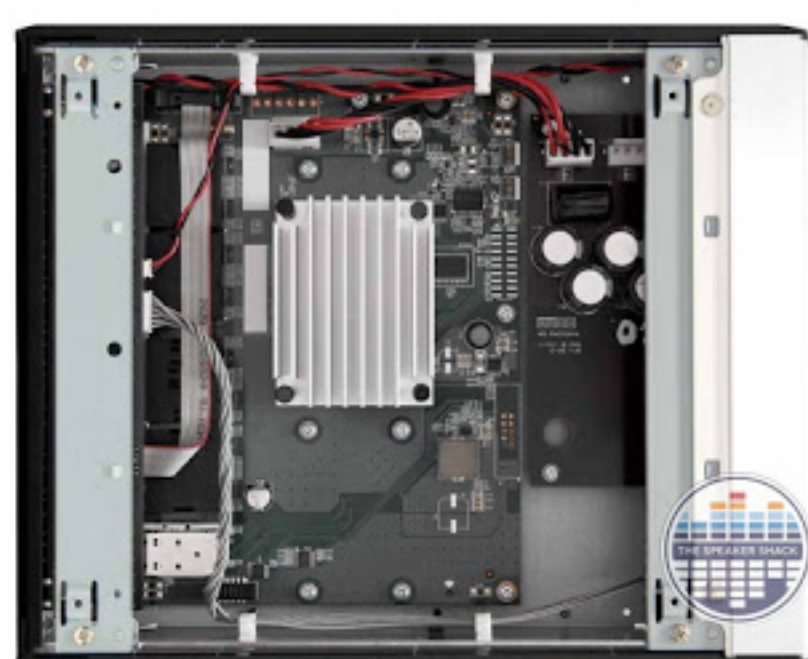
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I have been using network switches for quite some time and especially in my [audio systems](#) when streaming and listening to high resolution audio files. Having a dedicated switch for my audio never even crossed my mind until recently when I started seeing companies introduce them but Melco Audio have such good history in the computer industry being part of the Buffalo and networking giant. Noise is the biggest problem for audio systems and isolating the components that cause or create noise in your network is key and Melco Audio have crafted this beautiful S100 into the perfect [addition](#) to its line of digital library streamers and in fact any [audio device](#) that requires a network connection.

Like the N100 that I just reviewed the S100 is the same width and depth but this unit finished in brushed silver, it looks and feels so well built with added vibration dampening and shielding, it came with Melco Audio's own network cable which has gold plated connectors. The front of the unit just has a single [blue led](#) light for power and the Melco logo but all the [action](#) is at the back of the unit, with 4 x gigabit Ethernet [connections](#) for high speed use and 4 x 10/100 for your [audio devices](#) the higher speeds are for PC's or something like the Roon nucleus server where it has multiple streams which need higher speed transfers. The N100 only needs to use the slower ports as that is all that is needed to transfer your digital music on. You can connect more than one device and obviously I have other devices connected to it as my BlueSound Node 2i is also using one of the S100 ports.



It has 2 dedicated SFP ports which are meant for optical connections which some streamers or devices can use. So all type of speeds and connections are covered in this unit. Inside the unit it has its own custom board with a powerful processor and large 1.5Mb packet buffer, it has a series of high grade capacitors as it is designed to be a silent unit and to maintain the integrity of the audio files it transmits via a clean and silent network. This is key to not allowing any kind of noise to get into the system and isolate it from other types of noise that can pollute the network. I connected it to my router replacing my old Netgear switch and used a high speed gigabit port and connected both the N100 and BlueSound Node 2i to the 10/100 ports. I also connect my NAS drives to the S100 which has a lot of my music stored on them.



Sound quality and performance

For listening purposes I am using my Quobuz streaming service and music from my NAS drives, all fed through my system which is very revealing, Cyrus Audio 82 DAC Integrated [amplifier](#), BlueSound Node 2i and ProAc D2R speakers wired with Chord Cables. Having recently just reviewed the brilliant Melco Audio N100 the S100 slots in perfectly and this is where the fun begins of swapping and changing between my old Netgear switch and the new Melco S100 while using different sources of the N100 and BlueSound 2i streamer. The Melco N100 has already shown how important a good quality source is when it comes to high resolution audio files and how it digs out details in music to reveal layer upon layer of wonderful music, soundstage and imaging is perfectly portrayed but silence is golden and you just don't realise how much noise is introduced into your system when components are not correctly isolated and especially in your network. The S100 shines a light on this and makes it so apparent allowing your music to flow noise free and it makes such a difference when listening to music.

Listening to the fabulous Late Night Tales album featuring Jordan Rakei from my NAS drive sounds simply beautiful with every track on the album. When I reviewed the N100 I did not have the S100 and was amazed at how much detail the digital library managed to uncover in the high res files, well with the S100 the saga continues in a way with which the enjoyment of the music grows with an added refinement to the sound, there is a richness in the tone that just was not there before and I have been listening to this album a lot, bass has more texture and it sounds like it is flowing better in a more natural sense that your hearing is picking up more on this from the music because of the lack of noise that was there before the S100 was introduced, switching back to my old Netgear switch and it loses that refinement and richness in the tone, it still sounds good just not as enjoyable.

Moving on to music streamed from Quobuz on my BlueSound Node 2i and a beautiful album from Tom Misch What Kinda Music which is a mixture of retro vibes and my kinda rapping which is old school, when you could actually understand what they were rapping about. In general the BlueSound Node has a slightly thinner less fuller sound but with the S100 in place it regains a fuller and more structured sound and again has better tonal balance across the frequencies with a richer palette and not just in the higher spectrum of sound but also in the lower registers with a lot more texture to the bass, swapping out the S100 and putting the Netgear in its place you lose that refinement that was there with the Melco and once again the BlueSound Node sounds less fuller which is not as satisfying to listen to.

Conclusions and final thoughts

What is clear to me is how much of a difference the S100 can have to a systems performance and the detrimental affect of noise in the network whether it be RFI or EMI. The Melco S100 does a damn good job of blocking and stopping this type of noise leaking into my system and having a negative affect on the overall sound quality plus the enjoyment of the music. The only problem I have is not actually being able to [afford](#) an S100 as I could really do with one sitting in my system. With a combination of the N100 and S100 it gives you a seriously high performance digital music source and network switch and if you can afford the price then it is such a worthy investment as you improve all your devices on the network by blocking any noise from entering into your network. I recommend any potential buyers to try one in their own system and hear for themselves what the S100 can do to improve their system, fantastic bit of kit.

Price at time of review approx £2,000

<https://www.melco-audio.com/>