

# Ansuz Mainz8 D3 power distributor

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**T**he notion that something doesn't have to look fancy to be good is a very Scandi design ethos. It's a long-term approach that means products become more attractive over time and is in direct contrast to the make it flashy and of the moment for up front appeal that means such products look out of date a few years down the line. Ansuz is totally down with this approach. There are eight versions of the Mainz8 power distributor and all but the most expensive look almost identical. In fact, they look remarkably plain and understated.

The Mainz8 D3 sits just over halfway up the range. That is an awful lot of power distributors for one brand, but with a price range that goes from £1,200 to £60,000 there is one for almost every budget. Ansuz are keen to point out that these are not power conditioners, rather they are noise reduction devices which are designed to deliver the cleanest AC power to the components in a system. The 3 in D3 indicates that this is the third generation of Mainz8

distributors and the part that has evolved to this status is the so-called analogue dither technology that Ansuz use to keep noise at bay.

Analogue dither is not something you will find mentioned in any other manufacturer's information. It is apparently based on radar tech where a pulsing signal of a specific frequency is used in antiphase in order to cut through the noise and focus on the relevant frequency, which in the case of European mains is 50Hz. The D3 has eight of these dither circuits.

## Zirconium power

Another technique used by Ansuz to reduce noise are Tesla coils, which are essentially a coil within a coil running in opposite directions. This is a form of balanced circuit that's said to cancel spikes in the incoming power. For the third generation Mainz8 units a zirconium bar is used as a resonance control for the Tesla coils. Ansuz are very interested in the properties of different metals and make a range of isolation feet made of all sort of metals with





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» unusual coatings, zirconium is one of their favourites, thanks to time spent with the research team at Aarhus University.

The cabinet used to contain all this radical tech is made of a 'natural-based composite,' which is presumably some variation on MDF as the fit and finish are exemplary with only top and bottom plates offering a flat surface that might be prone to resonance. Of the eight sockets one has a white ring and this indicates that it is best suited to the preamplifier in a system as this is where best grounding is required. All the outlets are connected to a star ground with a very low impedance that is designed to stop noise getting from one outlet to another.

### Balls

The Mainz8 D3 follows Ansuz protocol by standing on metal feet with a circular ring machined into the underside, this is designed to accept three titanium balls perched atop one of the company's Darkz feet. As with the distributors and power cables there are numerous versions of Darkz available in a range of metals and finishes with prices that seem on the ambitious side, at least they do until you put them under a product like this within a revealing system.

At present, Mainz8 distributors are only available with European Schuko and flat pin US sockets. We may have the best mains plugs in the UK, but it's a small market in international terms. This means that you are obliged to use cables with Schuko plugs such as the wide range that Ansuz offers. As prices for these start at £720 this is a consideration if you need several. The cable that goes from the wall socket to the Mainz8 is a regular 13A to IEC cable and so could be from any brand but Ansuz would of course prefer if it was one of theirs. I used A2 power cables for the most part, being slightly lower up another eight strong range these are not at the same level in range terms as the D3 but they do the trick. They are particularly stiff cables

however which is worth bearing in mind when ordering for a particular system, I would say that they need to be at least 50cm longer than a more flexible power cable.

### Change up

The Mainz8 D3 and its associated half dozen Mainz cables are not a quick install by power distributor standards, the cables have to be coerced into position and it would take an hour to take the entire system from one distributor and cables to another. With this in mind I went through the system piecemeal, contrasting the Ansuz combination with an admittedly vintage Russ Andrews pairing of Powermax cables and a distribution block that is probably a forerunner of the X6 Block but not necessarily as fancy. Essentially a much less expensive option but a decent mains distribution system nonetheless.

I started out with the System on the Russ Andrews block and cables and switched a Merason DAC1 MkII converter over to the Mainz8 whilst playing the Locrian Ensemble's Mendelssohn Octets. The result was a significant increase in image depth alongside an obvious relaxation of the presentation. The sound was no longer up front and urgent but open with better dynamics and timing. Doing the same thing with the Melco N10 server, which is effectively the source in this streaming set up brought out space, separation and naturalness of tone with another track. This was a bigger change that made the overall sound sweeter as a result of quieter backgrounds which revealed low level detail that produced a more complete musical picture. It was as if someone had taken the lid off the sound so that it could open up into the room.

Switching my Lumin U2 mini streamer with Network Acoustics mods and an LDA power supply to the Mainz8 D3 made the leading edges cleaner and brought out the kick of the drum, it was a better defined and more







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» precisely paced rendition that likewise enhanced the sense of space in the sound. The drums on Patricia Barber's 'Company' really motored now with a taut snappy drive that made the track that much more compelling.

### Adapting

In order to contrast the effects with a Townshend Allegri Reference preamplifier I had to use a UK to EU adaptor of the basic travel variety, not ideal but it made the connection with that unit's wall-wart supply do-able. Even with this compromised connection there was a clear uplift in space, dynamics and ease that was frankly surprising. This preamp is fundamentally passive, the power only being necessary to allow remote control of relays, yet it sounded as if the speakers had disappeared so much better was the imaging. I later realised that I could connect an Isotek distribution block with an IEC cable to achieve the same end with less compromise.

The final step was to add the power amp to the Mainz8 D3, this was initially connected directly to the wall with a chunky Living Voice power cable which may be why the change was so great, here the sound became cleaner and separation between instruments and voices much clearer, the reduction in low level noise opening up the space in the mix. It revealed the grunge in the '70s funk recording but took away the background noise that was polluting the signal.

### By contrast

As I was on a roll I decided to see what the Ansuz power delivery components could do for the analogue source so connected the Tom Evans Groove SRX phono stage and Rega Planar 10 turntable. The results were very similar to those encountered with the digital source; more relaxation, space and better depth of image being the primary benefits alongside more precise placement of instruments in the soundstage. The Mainz8 D3 and A2 cables reinforced the ease of vinyl without undermining the fabulous timing of the format. Dynamic contrasts were if anything increased thanks to the quieter background broadening perceived dynamic range. One interesting contrast was with a Naim Powerline mains cable which usually sounds great on the phono stage, this comparison revealed that it brings an energetic drive to the sound but this sounded less natural in the context of a system fed by the Ansuz components.

I got a great result with the more affordable Mainz8 A3 earlier in the year and used it with the same A2 cables



for long enough to make it clear that the D3 delivers a cleaner, more open and revealing result albeit doing much the same thing but to a greater extent. The Mainz8 D3 is remarkably good at keeping noise out of the system and every component I tried it with opened up and revealed more musical detail as a result. It's proof that clean power delivered without compromising current delivery is the lifeblood of a high resolution sound system, give it a try, you won't want to go back. +

### Technical specifications

Type AC mains power distributor  
Outlets Eight outlet EU or US  
Input IEC C14 230/110V  
Dimensions (HxWxD) 91 x 500 x 263mm  
Weight 5.4kg  
Price £8,500, \$8,500  
A2 Mainz cable 1m £1,800, \$1,800

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