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It's Time To Switch Things Up

If You Have The Peripherals, We Have The KVMs

Raritan SwitchMan SW4-USB

After seeing the Iogear, the SW4-USB is a very persuasive 1-to-4 alternative with its four USB peripheral ports, audio, all four cable sets, and many hotkey options for switching functions individually or en masse. Manual port switching was a bit different. By default, KVM/audio and USB are independent foci, and there are two buttons, one for KVM/audio and one for the USB hub. This is clever because if you don't need to share the same peripherals across all PCs, not moving the USB focus can save time and annoyance with PnP operations. Hotkeys let you bond all three foci together or separate KVM from audio so that pressing the PC button (or advancing to the next or previous port with double-Scroll Lock commands) only moves the KVM function.

Stereo output was very good, but mic recordings picked up some buzz and slight distortion, but not enough to hinder regular use. The switch seems unnecessarily large after handling the Aten. A stand for vertical mounting is included, but Raritan's all-in-one cables were so stiff they kept pulling the switch off-balance. You can press Scroll Lock-Scroll Lock-Up/Down to advance to the next or prior port, but you can't press, say, 3 to jump from port 1 to port 3. Hotkey operations, including auto-scanning (in various increments), automatically skip unused ports, but manual button pressing won't skip these. My Logitech mouse's extra function buttons worked, but the wireless keyboard's didn't. Also, the package only

SW4-USB

\$219

Raritan
Raritan.com



includes two sets of cables.

None of these are deal-breakers, though, and my overall experience was generally positive. The SW4-USB is firmware upgradeable; buzzer alerts are easy to toggle; the many configuration options are mastered with some practice; switching response is fast; and peripheral ports are USB 2.0. This is probably the best deal I saw in a 4-port unit for single-monitor setups. ▲

by William Van Winkle



Raritan
400 Cottontail Lane
Somerset, NJ 08873
(800) 724 8090