

Dan D'Agostino Master Audio Systems Tour

Review by David Das

I had the pleasure of participating in the Dan D'Agostino Master Audio Systems Tour on October 17, 2024. It was a magical evening of audio demos, a walk through the production lines and the story behind the making of the Relentless Epic 1600 Mono Amplifier narrated by the legend himself.

Dan greeted us at the front door and had trays of treats and drinks to get us comfortable. The tour began with Bill McKeigan, President of Dan D'Agostino Master Audio Systems, ushering us into the demo room.

The Demo



The speakers used were a pair of [Wilson Audio Alexx V](#)

These speakers garnered raving reviews from [Stereophile Magazine](#) and [The Absolute Sound](#).



Priced at \$135,000 a pair, the Alexx V model is one step below the [Wilson Audio Chronosonic XVX](#).

Each Alexx V speaker was powered by a Dan D'Agostino [Momentum M400 MxV](#) (second generation) monoblock Power Amplifier.



These stunningly gorgeous works of art received outstanding reviews from [Stereophile Magazine](#) and [The Absolute Sound](#).

Priced at \$79,500 a pair, these power amps deliver 400 Watts into 8 ohms with a low distortion of 0.1% at full power.

A [Momentum C2 Preamplifier](#) fitted with the Digital Streaming Module was used as the front end. This retails for \$60,000.



A [Transparent Powerisolator Reference](#) Power Conditioner (\$7,600) along with Transparent Cables was used in this system.



How does this \$282K system sound?

Bill had 5 demo tracks lined up to showcase the level of performance this setup is capable of. It was jaw dropping.

Demo #1

Ein Straussfest II – Cincinnati Pops Orchestra

Track 6: Magic Bullets Fast Polka, Op. 326



Ein Straussfest II
Erich Kunzel - Composer : Various Composers

Released by **Telarc** on February 28, 1993
Classical • 15 Tracks • 01h 07m 34s


Available in
16-Bit CD Quality
44.1 kHz - Stereo

The sheer crack of the bullets startled me. The impact was solid. This was the ideal demo track to experience the extreme dynamics and bass control one could achieve from the Momentum M400 MxV monoblock Power Amps.

Demo #2

Saxnbass – Markus Philippe

Track 3: Invitation



Saxnbass
markusphilippe

Released by **iMusician Digital** on November 24, 2012
Jazz • 13 Tracks • 56m 16s

Available in
16-Bit CD Quality
44.1 kHz - Stereo

I was fortunate to be sitting right on axis. When the breathy sax kicked in I felt I could reach out and touch the player standing in front of me. The realism, resolution and imaging were uncanny.

Demo #3

Money For Nothing – Dire Straits

Track 9: Private Investigations



Money For Nothing
Dire Straits

Released by **Rhino - Warner Records** on June 16, 2022
Rock • 12 Tracks • 01h 06m 37s

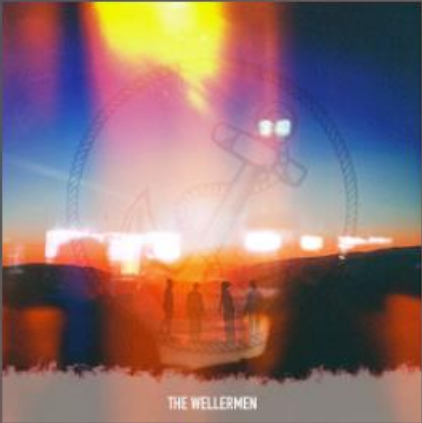
Available in
Hi-Res AUDIO 24 bits
192.0 kHz - Stereo

The smoothness of the vocals and the guitar licks impressed me.

Demo #4

The Wellermen

Track 5: Hoist the Colors



The Wellermen
The Wellermen

Released by **Tenwest** on February 9, 2023
Folk/Americana • 13 Tracks • 42m 54s

Available in
Hi-Res AUDIO 24 bits
44.1 kHz - Stereo

The Bass Vocals amazed me.

Demo #5

Inferno – Hedegaard

Track #1: Inferno



INFERNO / Ratchets
Hedegaard

Released by **OneHundred** on November 23, 2023
Dance • 2 Tracks • 05m 19s

Available in
Hi-Res AUDIO 24 bits
44.1 kHz - Stereo

This has some aggressive synth bass lines that require a system of this caliber to do it justice.

All of these 5 Dan D'Agostino Demo Tracks are available on Qobuz. I played them back on my system and could immediately tell the night and day difference the Wilson Audio/D'Agostino pairing makes.

The Momentum power amp/pre amp combo delivers astonishing dynamics, resolution, and clarity with very low distortion. You need a capable transducer like the Alexx V to exploit the full potential of these amps

The synergy between the Alexx V speakers and the Momentum amps was perfect. It was a match made in heaven.

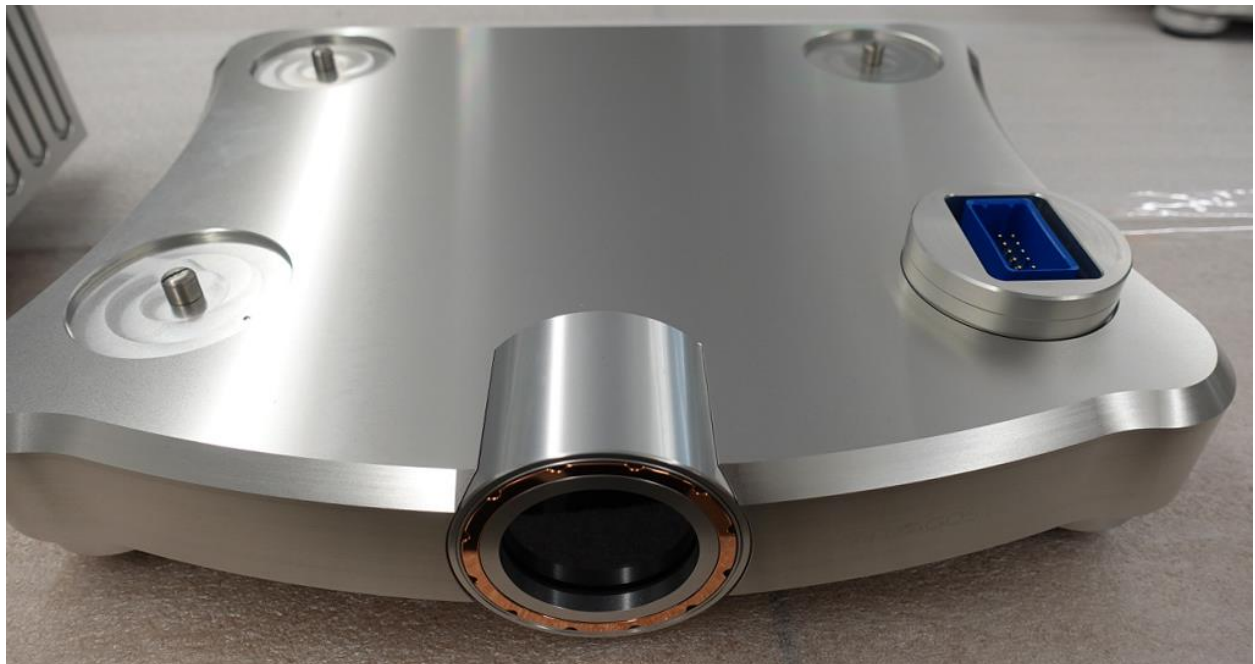
I could see why Wilson Audio features Dan D'Agostino Amps in all their marketing brochures. Dan uses Wilson Audio speakers to test his amps. He uses Wilson Audio speakers at home as well.

The Factory Tour

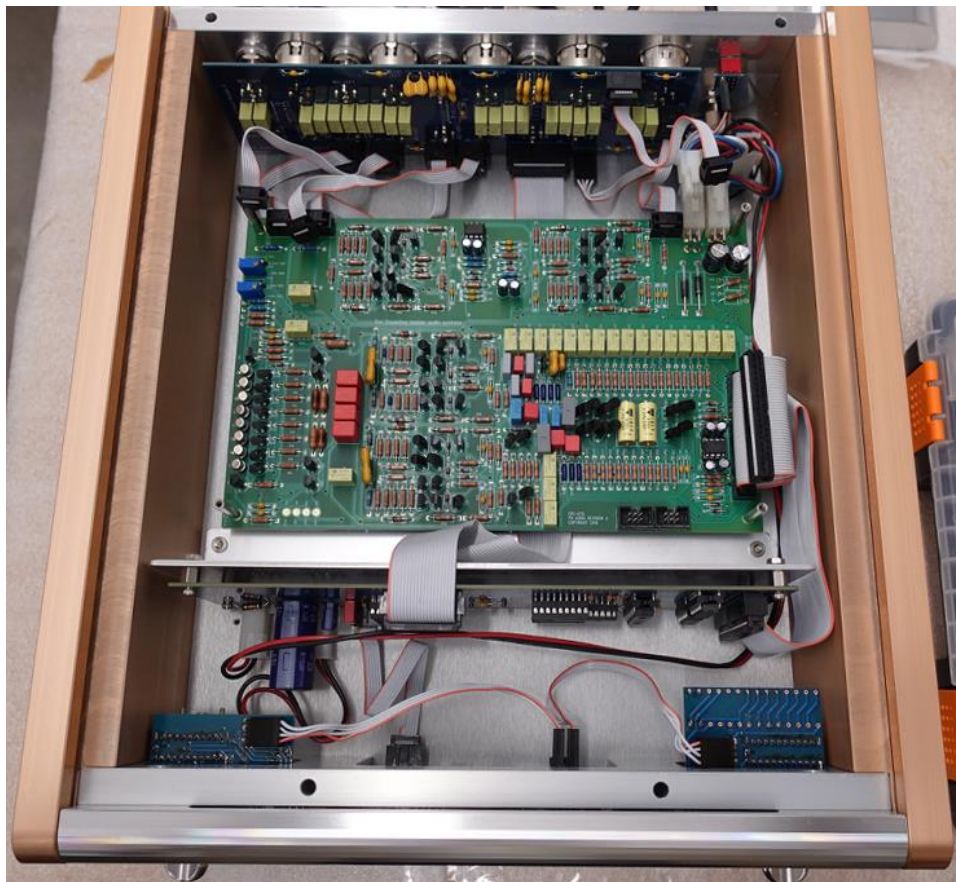
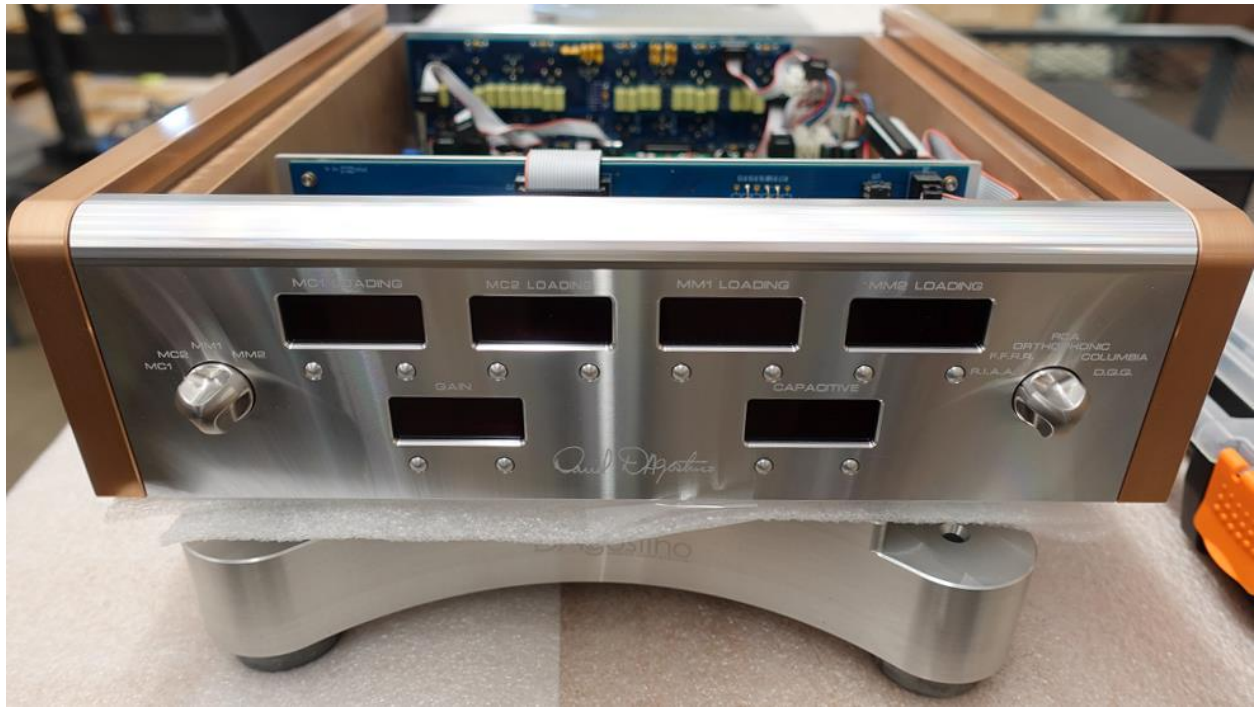
All the components are manually assembled on the production floor.

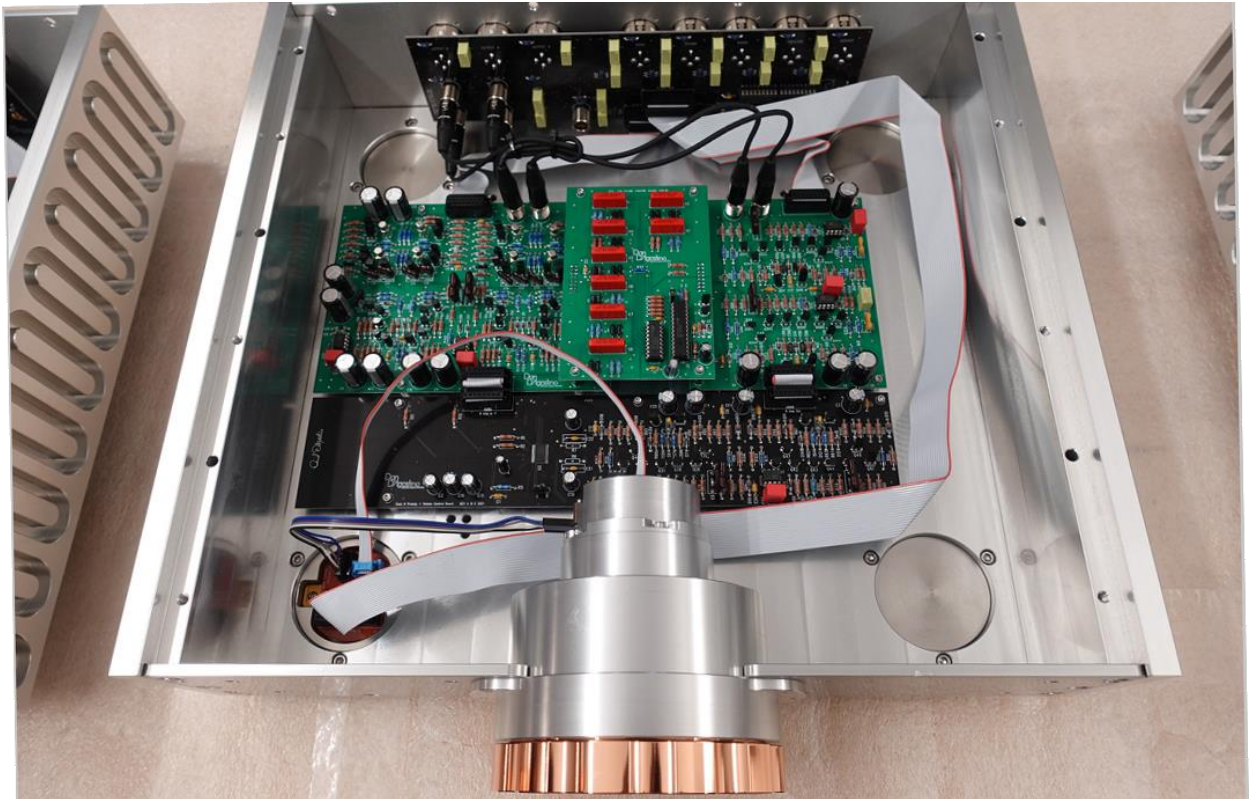


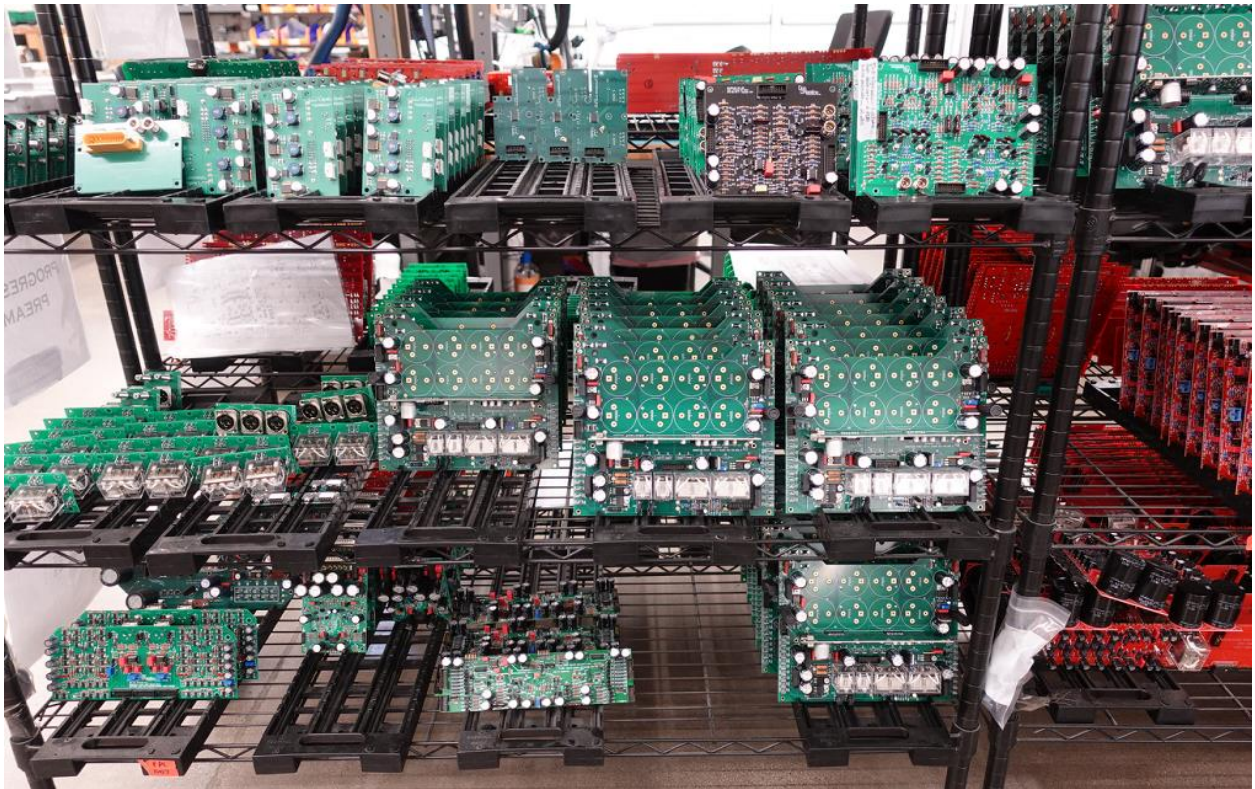
The aluminum and copper casings are milled and polished by selected third party vendors. Here are some photos of several products in various stages of assembly.



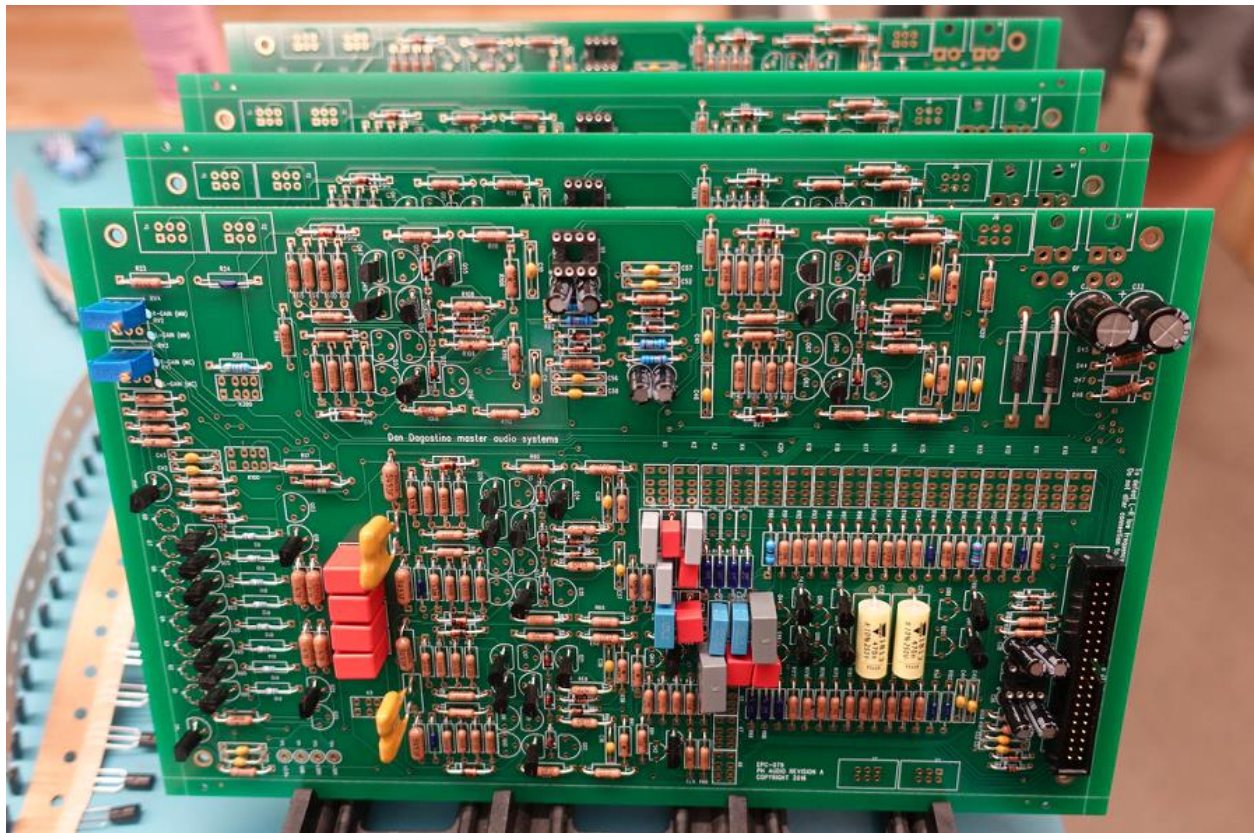
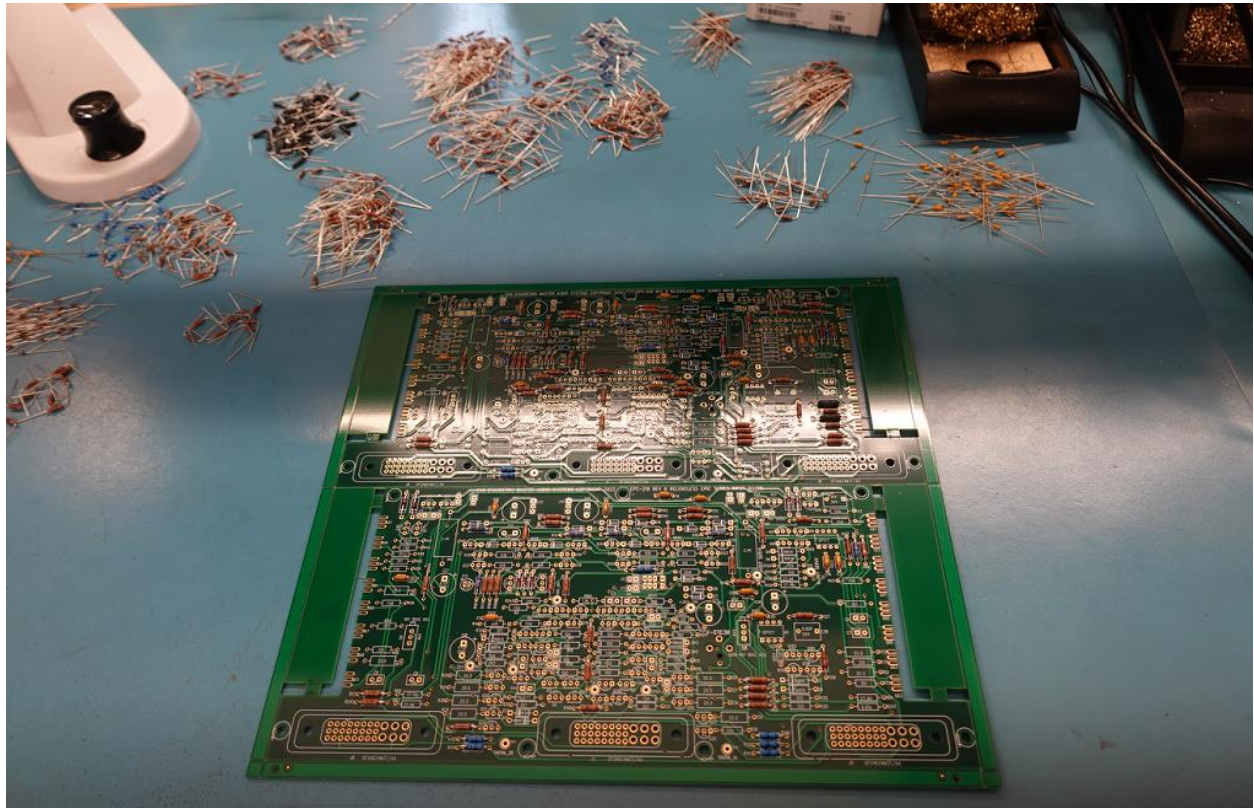






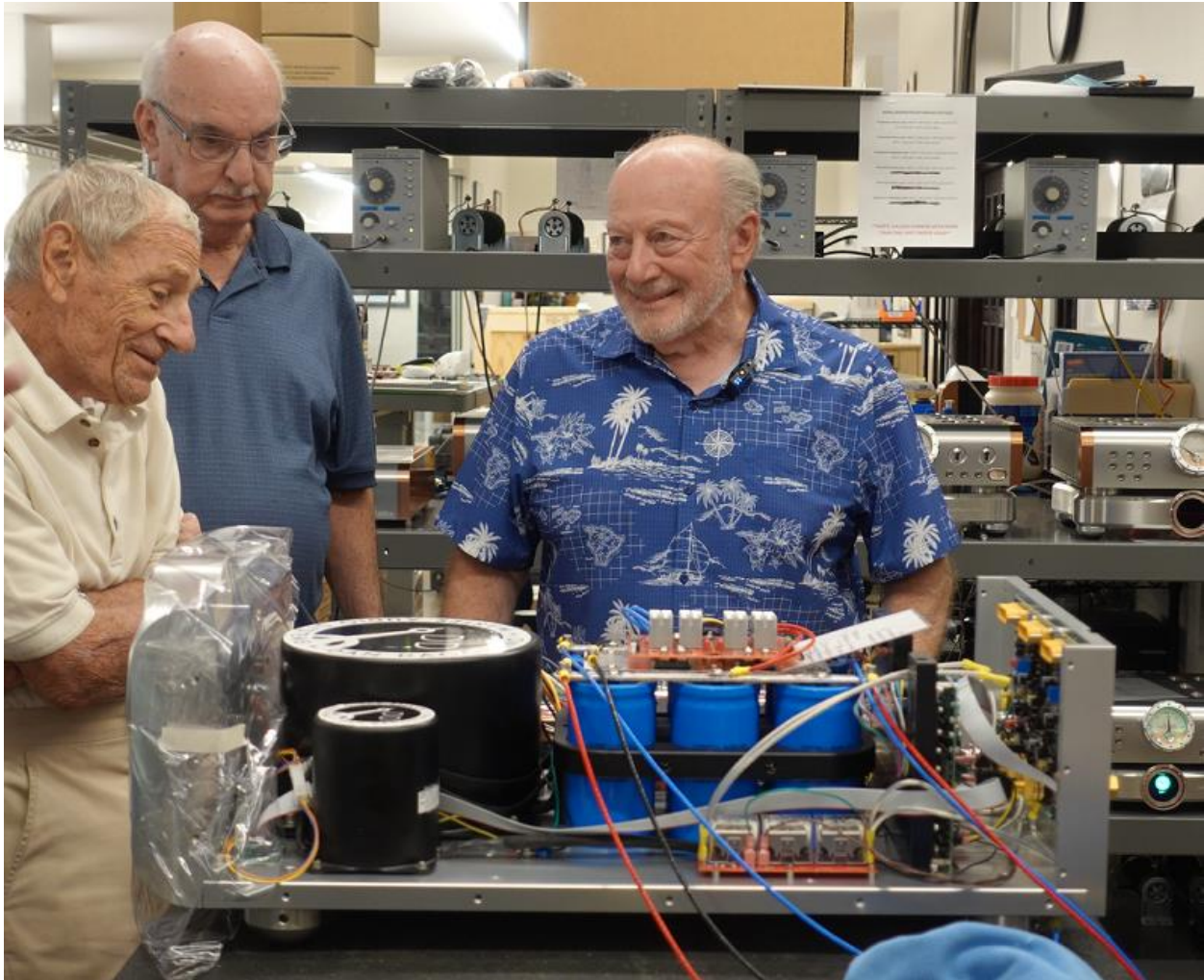


Each resistor, capacitor, inductor and transistor is soldered by hand one at a time.



The making of the Epic 1600 Relentless Mono Amplifier

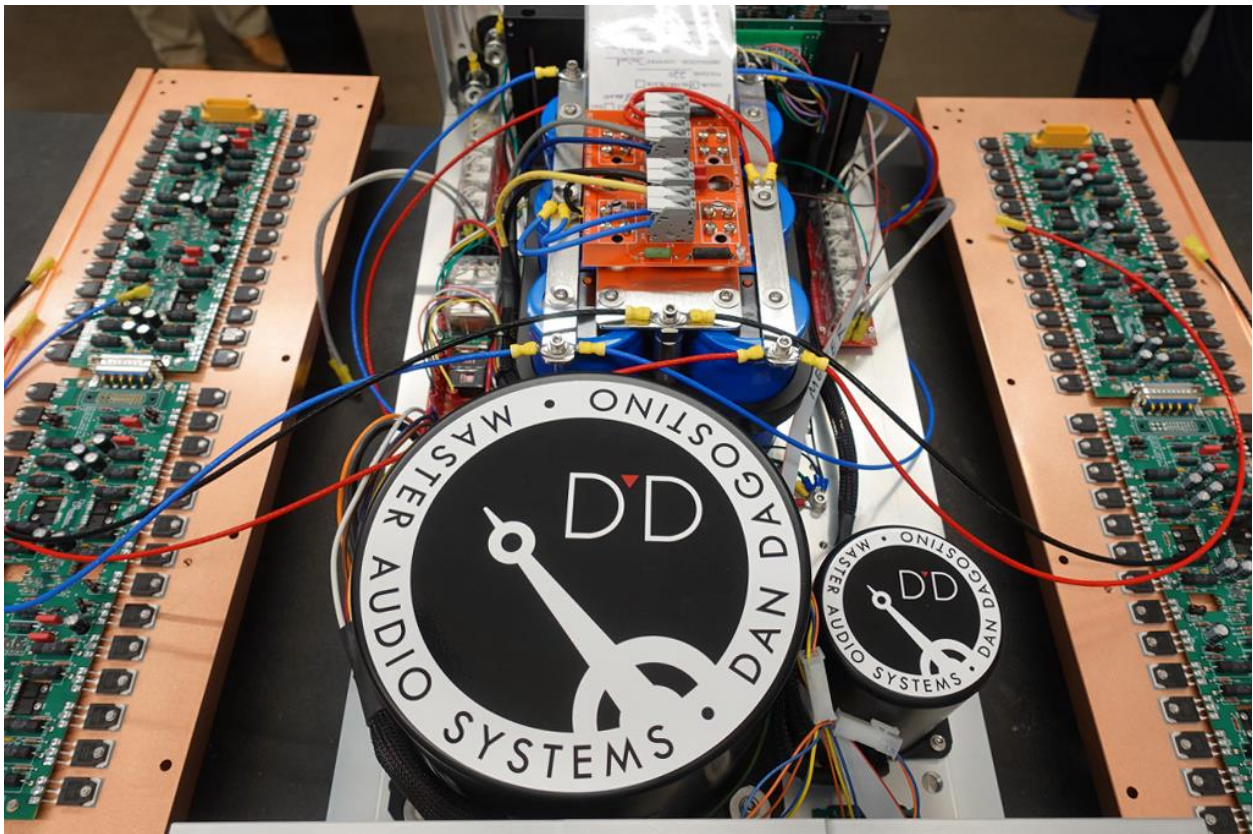
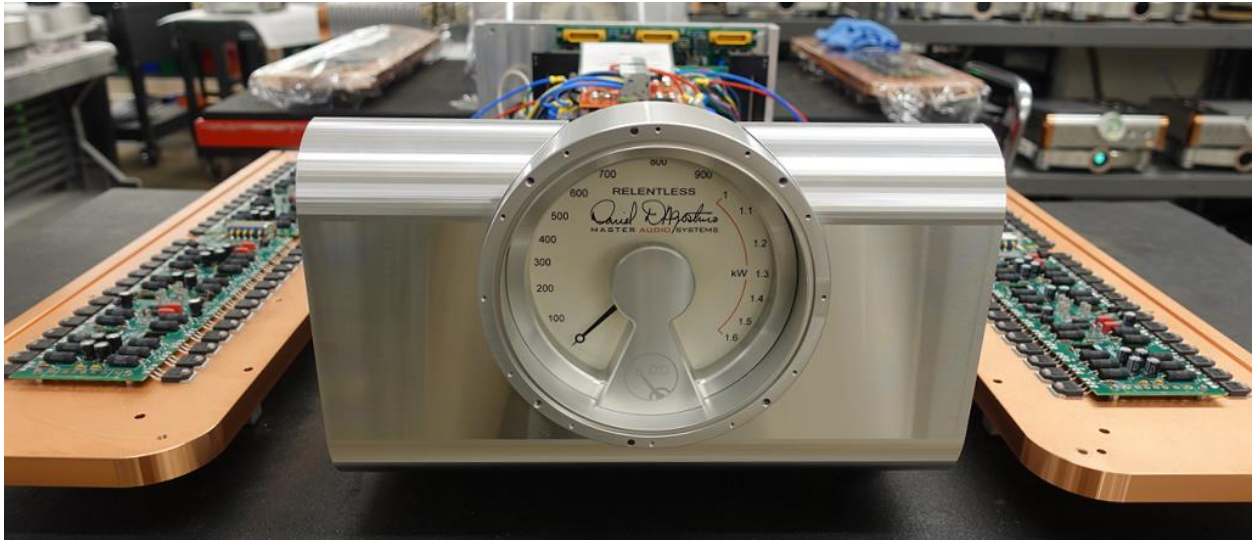
The [Epic 1600 Relentless Mono Amplifier](#) is the pinnacle of Dan's achievement in amplifier design. Dan gave us the back story behind this statement product from concept to creation.

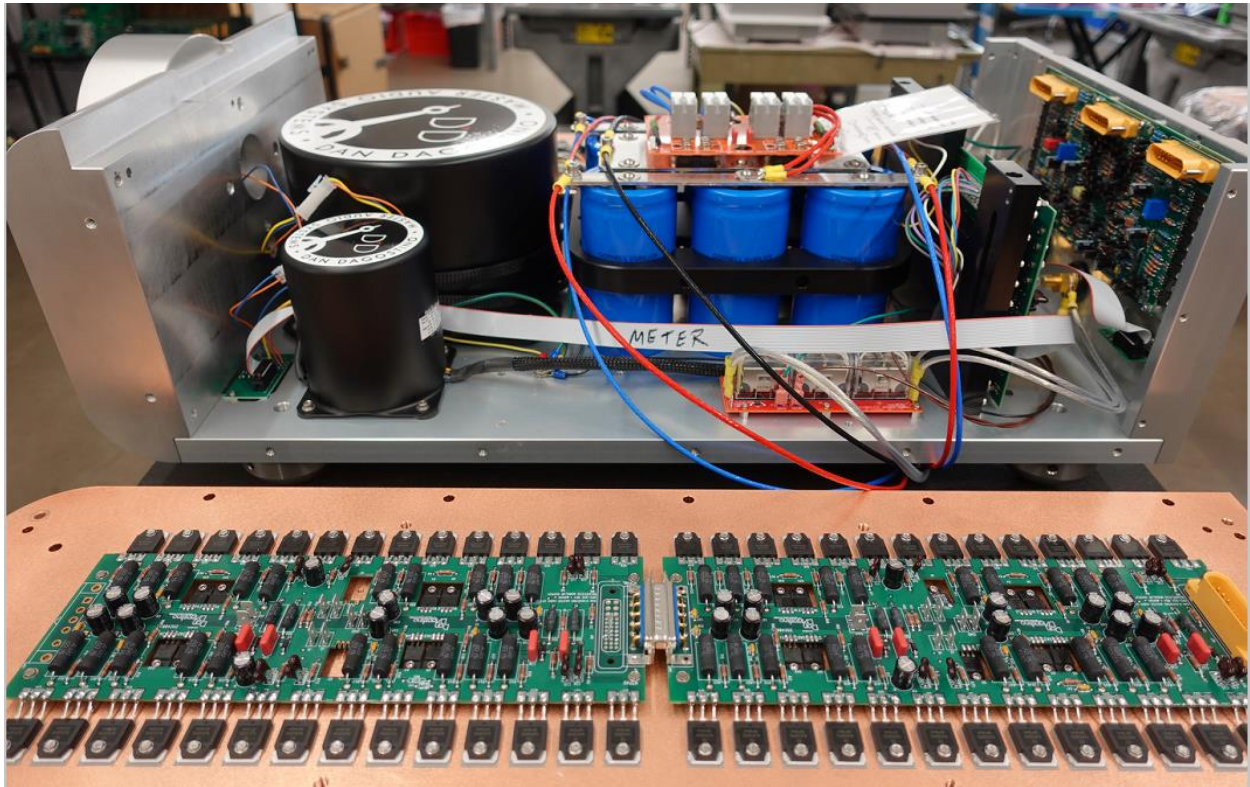


How was Dan able to achieve this incredibly low distortion of 0.007% while driving the amp at full power delivering 1,500 watts at 8 ohms?

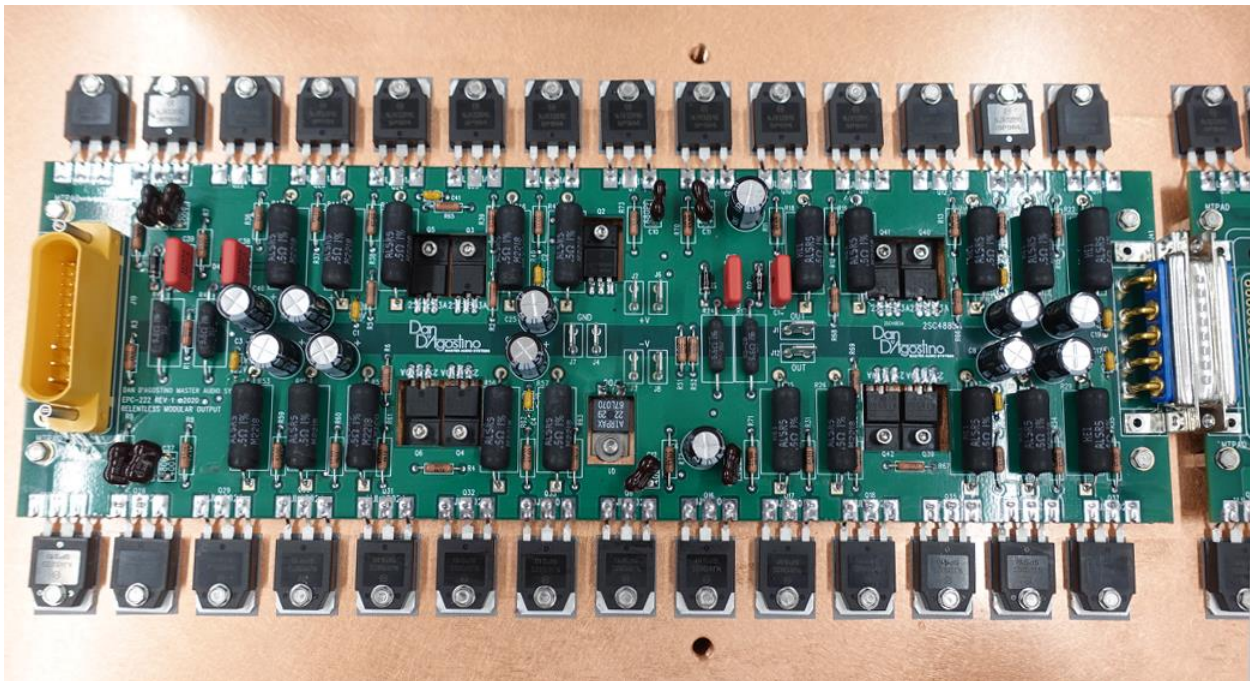
The secret lies in having a purely balanced design with identical positive and negative halves which when combined cancels out the distortions completely.

The Signal-to-Noise Ratio exceeds 113dB. It has an extremely quiet power supply. There are 100 Output Devices. The voltage on the output stage remains constant whether you run the amp at full power at 8 ohms or 2 ohms.





You will find the Dan D'Agostino signature everywhere.



This amp delivers 1,600 watts into 8 ohms and hence the name. This output power scales linearly to 3,200 watts at 4 ohms and 6,400 watts at 2 ohms.

At idle the amp outputs 100 watts of pure Class A power. This means if you have an efficient speaker, the amp will predominantly operate in Class A mode.

Copper has the highest thermal conductivity of any metal. The thick copper side plates serve a dual purpose. They absorb the heat generated from the Output Devices on the inside while dissipating the heat to the surrounding atmosphere on the outside.

This makes it possible to maintain a steady temperature even if the amp is powered on for two weeks.

Of course, the thick aluminum base & top plates and the copper side panels contribute to the enormous 570 lb weight of these beasts.

To make it easy for the customer, these amps are placed on a platform with wheels. They can be rolled out from the shipping cartons.

The heavy copper side plates can be detached by removing a few screws. Dan told us how a customer in Italy asked for help in moving these Relentless Amps down a narrow staircase leading to his basement.

Bill flew to Italy and to his customer's astonishment showed him how simple it was to disassemble the amp by removing the side panels making it much easier to move.

Bill McKeigan has worked with Dan for 30 years since 1994. Bill is the President of the company. He has seen every product improvement and iteration that Dan has rolled out. He is always cheerful and friendly and ready to answer any user questions.

I asked Bill if he ever fears of damaging the expensive Alexx V speakers by playing these demanding demo tracks so loud. Bill explained that speakers get damaged when paired with underpowered amps. When such amps are asked to deliver more power, they clip sending a DC current that typically ruins the tweeter.

On the other hand, D'Agostino amps like the Momentum M400 MxV are designed to output 400 watts into 8 ohms and double their output to 800 watts into 4 ohms and double yet again to 1,600 watts at 2 ohms. With so much reserve power, it is highly unlikely a connected speaker will ever receive a clipped signal.

I asked Dan if he could have used internal fans to help with the cooling thereby making it possible to have thinner copper plates bringing down the weight.

Dan explained that he was not willing to accept fan noise on such a state of the art product. He mentioned how quickly it ruined one of his test amps when he tried using a ¼" thick copper panel instead of a ½" copper panel.

I asked Bill about the significance of Damping Factor. Companies like Parasound and Yamaha make a big deal about this.

Bill explained the industry is awash into fooling customers with dubious specifications like High Damping Factor, High Current, Total Harmonic Distortion, etc. which have no standards of measurement. Any Damping Factor above 50 is all you need to see. Damping Factor can be a consideration for Tube Amps. This is not an issue with Solid State Amps. They all measure above 50. What is really important is for the amp to be able to double the power output linearly from 8 ohms to 4 ohms to 2 ohms, all while maintaining a low distortion level at full power.

Dan was asked on his thoughts on Class D power amps. Dan said all his amps are Class AB designs. This is a mature technology with over 50 years of history behind it. Class D is relatively new. Class D amps while being lighter and consuming less power do not have the same level of refinement as Class AB amps. Perhaps in another decade things may change.

Dan D'Agostino Master Audio Systems is a small company with less than 20 dedicated employees. It is privately owned. This allows Dan the freedom to follow his relentless passion in the pursuit of perfection. A single Epic 1600 Relentless amp takes 3 weeks to hand build. Dan would never compromise on anything. All his creations are a statement of power, finesse and beauty.

Bill's daughter Reagan McKeigan was the hostess for the evening. Reagan documented the entire event using an iPhone mounted on a handheld [Hohem Gymbal Stabilizer](#) and [a RODE Wireless GO II wireless microphone](#) system. She plans to upload the entire video recording for those who could not make it.

Reagan is the Marketing Executive of the company.

We feel privileged to have Dan and his dedicated team in Arizona. This was a rare occasion to meet with a living legend and understand the philosophy, craftsmanship and attention to detail that goes behind every hand-made product at this Cave Creek factory.

Best regards,

David Das