

# Do NON UTP Switchers Get a New Lease on Life?

By Dan Tye, Technical Sales and Support Manager, Atlona



This question is one that Atlona has been asking for the last two years. As the world of residential and commercial installation has migrated towards native UTP HDMI switchers, it seemed as though the “local HDMI” switcher was on its way out. Surely, with the ranges required to reach destination displays in most environments today, these switches would be relegated to the Smithsonian with 8 track tapes and 8mm cameras. They have to be, right?

These questions weighed heavily on Atlona’s mind as they contemplated whether or not to replace their previous

generation HDMI switchers, the AT-HD-V44 and AT-HD-V88. Based on the amount of UTP matrix switchers flooding the market, and the future of HDMI output only matrix switchers seemed to be in serious doubt. While these native HDMI switchers were at a lower price point than their UTP counterparts; their limited range, as far as an HDMI cable, made them less desirable for larger residential or commercial integration.

What Atlona found when sourcing feedback from their dealers and distributors is that integrators had started using them

with HDMI extenders to offer similar functionality as a UTP switch. As late as last year, this proved extremely problematic. We all know the inherent, well, fickleness of HDMI. Many installers consider HDMI to be a four letter word, even with the analog sunset looming. Some of the installers found out the hard way that these early HDMI switchers didn’t include any EDID management. This proved to be a critical issue in the field, as the different EDID files from multiple displays used in these residential installs would often conflict when switched through the matrix. This would lead to having the

desired range with no picture and incorrect sound formats being passed. The secondary issue was the difference in robustness of the HDMI vs. UTP matrix switchers. There seemed to be, in the spirit of reducing cost, a significant difference between the details and features between these two types of switchers. Power issues coupled with EDID problems caused more than one installer to lose all the revenue built in a job due to time spent troubleshooting. This frustration led to many installers to dismiss the use of HDMI switchers and just “bite the bullet” and try to upsell their clients on full UTP solutions. This led to an uncomfortable situation for a lot of installers. They now had to sell a solution well in excess of what their customers needed and increased the overall system cost they felt comfortable supporting.

**S**o what is an installer to do? Until recently, installers were forced to sell so called “binary” systems. These matrix switchers looked for some time to be the best solution for the installer’s woes. Featuring both HDMI & UTP outputs, with EDID support they appeared to be poised to save the day. After all, they’re less expensive than comparable full UTP solutions and deal with that pesky EDID issue. The flaw in this type of product is that you’re still paying more than for a native HDMI



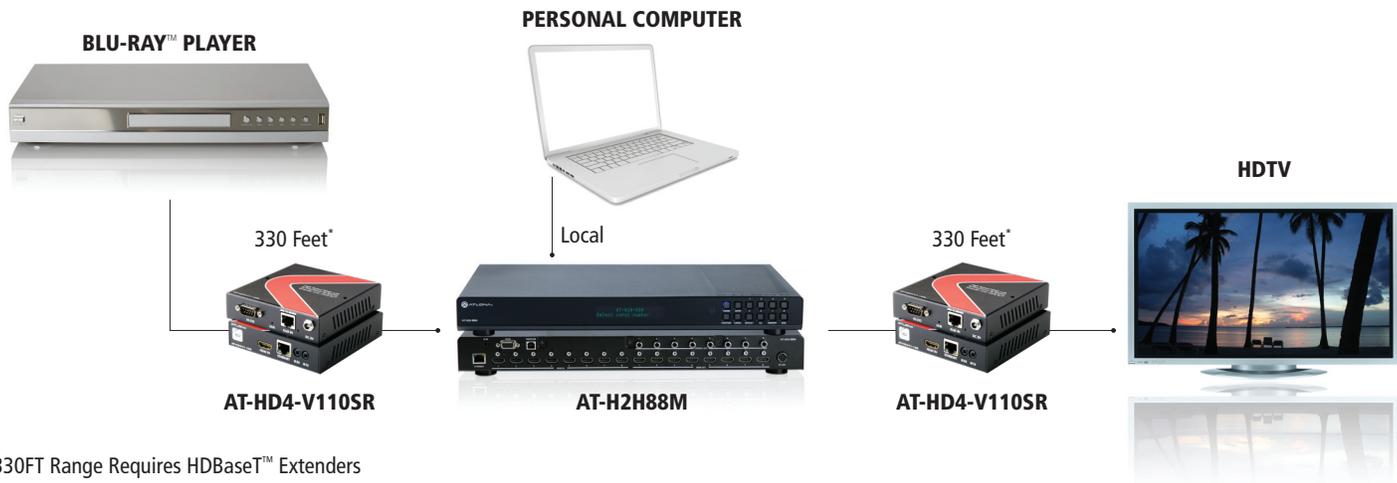
switcher, with sender and receiver baluns included. These products also include additional capacity that you don’t need because of these “binary” ports. The good news is, there is a solution!

Recently Atlona has released two new native HDMI switchers. The AT-H2H-44M and AT-H2H-88M are one of the first full featured family of HDMI switchers released on the market. What do I mean by full featured you might ask? I am referring to true EDID management! That’s right. One of the most critical issues in matrix HDMI installs has been addressed in this product family. In fact, Atlona included the same EDID management system that is featured on their HDBaseT AT-PRO2HD88M matrix switcher. Additionally, these units have had power issues addressed by moving to a

24V power system with earth grounds. This is extremely important as several of Atlona’s competitors use 12V power with floating grounds. This can lead to unreliable power situations, which if you’re called to troubleshoot, can quickly eat away at your built-in labor dollars.

**Y**ou might be saying, “That’s great, but I’m still limited to HDMI cables out of the switch for consistent reliability.”

Not so in the case of these Atlona units. Knowing that installers sometimes need additional range and flexibility within their switching environment, Atlona has extensively tested these new switchers with their full family of extender products. This testing has revealed compatibility with previous generation chipsets as well as HDBaseT and HDBaseT Lite technology. In testing,



\*330FT Range Requires HDBaseT™ Extenders

Atlona not only tested the output of local sources through the extenders, they tested extending sources that were themselves routed to the matrix through extenders. What this means is that you can have a Blu-Ray player 330ft away from the Matrix switch, which then sends its signal another 330ft to the local display, for a total of 660ft. With this new level of flexibility, installers have even more tools in their arsenal to adapt to innumerable installation environments.

With the ability to only supply extender pairs on the ports that have to have

them, installers are now able to offer a reliable solution to their customers that will be as attractive financially, as they are easy to install.

As an example, the Atlona AT-H2H-88M at its MSRP price of \$2,999.99 + 8 extender sets totals at \$4,839.91. This is \$1,159 less than the next closest binary competitor which doesn't include receivers! These competitors might think it's a **SNAP** to sell their solutions however Atlona knows that installers will see the extreme value associated with this new family of Matrix Switches. Don't let an

HDMI matrix switch be a **KEY** failure in your system design or installation. Atlona will keep you out of the **STORM** and give you the tools you need to get the job done right the first time.

Coupled with Atlona's 3 year warranty and Atlona Advantage program, this is a great way for installers to offer their customers a full featured solution without having to break the bank. When you need solutions that work, trust Atlona, your complete integration partner.

## Testing Equipment Used

AT-H2H-88M  
 AT-HD4-SI40SR extender  
 AT-HD4-V40SRS extender

AT-HD4-V110SR extender  
 Sony Blu-Ray  
 Apple TV (2nd Gen)

Windows 7 PC (HDMI out)  
 AT-DIS7-PROHD  
 Sony Bravia 46" LEDTV