



NAD T163/T973

For the price of a high-end receiver or amplifier, this new combination offers both exceptional performance and striking flexibility, not to mention very serious clout from its big power amp

Why does everyone buy AV receivers? You'd be amazed how many systems

have at their heart a single big, expensive box cramming in surround processing, a preamp, a radio tuner and anything up to seven channels of power amplification. And every time I see such a set-up I can't help but think that I'm looking at a compromise. After all, it's asking a lot of a single box to do all that without corners being cut somewhere, not to mention the idea flying in the face of any kind of purist audio/video thinking.

For at least the past decade I've been a firm believer in the benefits of preamp/power amp combinations over integrated amplifiers or receivers. Not only do you have the flexibility to configure the system the way you want it, by mixing and matching control and power amplification components, but you can

also keep delicate low-level signals well away from the power section. It avoids potential interference, and means that each section can have its own power supply, dedicated to its task, which pays off in terms of quality.

Mind you, all that's likely to be very secondary in some minds when eyes are first clapped on NAD's new T163 tuner/preamp/processor and T973 seven-channel power amp. The first thought, given price tags of £900 and £1200 respectively, is just how much you seem to get for your money. The T163 is the size of a conventional AV receiver, and the interior doesn't exactly seem underpopulated, while the power amp is a 31kg chunk of kit so hefty that it comes wrapped in a couple of strong webbing straps to help you drag it from its box.

Beside the likes of the Sony and Yamaha home cinema amps (*Home Cinema*, May 2004), the NAD looks decidedly affordable,

The NAD T163 processor/tuner is the size of a conventional receiver, which means the 31kg T973 power amp is a really hulking piece of kit

and is likely to have two-fold appeal: those who want to have just the processor in view and hide away the power amp will be happy, while those who want to have the big powerhouse on display will find it looks macho in a suitably understated fashion.

There are three large fans on the underside, which look like they ought to be powering a hovercraft, not just cooling an amp. Inside the box are seven separate power amplifier sections – effectively seven monoblocs, with only the power supply shared – each capable of delivering 140w. NAD says it's "taking a stand" on the often inflated power output figures common, unfortunately, in home cinema: it quotes the power of this amplifier in terms it describes as 'Full Disclosure'.

That means the 140w figure is available across full range – 20Hz-20kHz – with all channels driven simultaneously into 8 ohms