

and with 0.03 per cent total harmonic distortion. That's about as straight as you get, so there's no reason to doubt the further claims that the amp will deliver up to 450w per channel into a 2 ohm-load for momentary peaks.

The T973 uses Class A FET input and driver stages for each channel, with a gain control available on each input, and high quality discrete output stages. The company's soft-clipping system protects speakers should you be of a mind to overdrive the amp as a matter of course, though such is the power on tap here I can't imagine that being the case too often. Also employed is NAD's PowerDrive circuit topology, which allows the amp to sense the impedance of the speakers with which it's being used and adjust itself to give peak performance at all times. While the package is completed with 12v trigger switching allowing it to be slaved to the T163 or most other preamp/processors.

The T163 is one of the few processors to have an internal FM RDS/AM radio tuner, but for most readers the home cinema abilities will be the main attraction: here we have processing for Dolby Digital EX and DTS-ES surround, Dolby Pro-Logic II/DTS Neo:6 and a range of proprietary modes for listening to music sourced from stereo. EARS (Enhanced Ambient Recovery Circuit) gives an 'audience' surround mix, with a solid front soundstage, while Matrix 7.1 puts you in the centre of the music. Stereo Enhanced 1 is almost a party mode, feeding the front stereo sound to the rear speakers for maximum level, while Enhanced 2 uses the rear speakers for background listening.

There's also HDCD decoding, and the T163 uses 24-bit/192kHz converters for each channel. There are 7.1-channel analogue inputs and outputs, the latter buffered for low impedance and high current, and generous input provision, both analogue and digital, plus video switching on component, S-Video and composite connections and extensive remote options, along with a Zone 2 output with its own remote control. All the inputs are assignable and can be renamed, up to five surround/bass management presets can be stored, and there's adjustable input gain on all the analogue ins. The remote is a backlit learning device.

The NADs appear to offer a lot for the money, and that's borne out in the performance. I gave it plenty of 'background' use before serious viewing and listening began. Over that time the T163/T973 pairing had begun to hint at what it could do with the intensely dynamic soundtrack to episodes of *Band*

## NEED TO KNOW...

### NAD T163

**Price** £900  
**Processing modes** Dolby Digital/Pro-Logic II, DTS-ES/Neo:6, Matrix 7.1, EARS, Enhanced Stereo, HDCD  
**Digital to analogue converters** 24-bit/192kHz  
**Analogue audio inputs** 7.1-channel plus 6 stereo  
**Analogue audio outputs** 7.2-channel plus 2 tape, Zone 2  
**Digital audio inputs** 2 optical, 4 electrical  
**Digital audio outputs** optical, electrical  
**Video inputs** 5 composite, 5 S-Video, 3 component  
**Video outputs** Monitor (component, composite, S-Video), Zone 2 (composite), 2 record-out (composite, S-Video)  
**Remote control connections** IR in + 3 IR out, 12v trigger in + 3 12v trigger out, RS232  
**Remote handsets** Main learning remote, plus miniature Zone 2 remote  
**Dimensions** (hwxwd) 15x43.5x40cm  
**Weight** 8kg

### T973

**Price** £1200  
**Inputs** 7x line, with adjustable gain  
**Outputs** 7x combination speaker terminals (banana plug/spade/bare wire)  
**Output power** 7x140w  
**Remote connections** 12 trigger  
**Dimensions** 43.5x16x45.3cm  
**Weight** 31kg

Made by NAD Electronics International

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Controls are kept simple on the T163 (left), despite the extensive input options. Backlit remote control (below left) can 'drive' a complete system



of *Brothers*, but when unleashed the package soon left no doubt that it's special. The processing is clean, fast, smooth and totally involving, with the only hitch being the lack of Pro-Logic IIx to make full use of all seven channels with stereo and older surround material. I ran the power amp at some serious levels and got the feeling I was only exploring the lower slopes of its towering ability –

**The NADs seem to offer a lot for the money and that's borne out in performance – they're pretty special**

'unburstable', that's the word I'm looking for. In fact the only drawback I found was that the trio of cooling fans produced a noticeable rushing sound when a quiet passage followed a protracted sequence of driving hard, but that's not a real problem if you keep the amp hidden away – where, of course, the cooling advantages will outweigh the slight noise.

That aside, this combination is a monster: inspired by a blast of *Don't Stop* from Fleetwood Mac's *The Dance* live DVD, complete with the University of Southern California Marching Band, I loaded up the testing final 'battle' sequence from *Drumline* and found out just how powerful, fast and precise the NAD duo could sound. This is a system with all the attack and drive you could want, and at the same time its lightness of touch ensures every detail is clearly heard.

Even in the midst of the biggest action sequence I can summon up, the NAD delivers fine ambient information, while in the best tradition of top-notch home cinema equipment it's perfectly able to take you by surprise with 'was that on the disc or is that someone at the door?' effects. But what will please many investing in a serious home cinema set-up is the simple matter of

the massive amount of clout it can deliver, always entirely under control, and the total ease with which it's all delivered.

The current fashion may be for big heavy one-box amplifiers, but the NAD approach pays off in performance. Why not have two big heavy boxes for the same money?

Andrew Everard

**NAD T163/T973**  
**£900/£1200**

#### The score

95%

#### Home Cinema verdict

This is definitely a real home cinema powerhouse, and for the money it offers unbeatable value