



just pipping it here, it at least sounded natural and well controlled.

Dido's 'Hunter' again showed what a superb job the NAD makes with vocals. Once more, rock solid positioning was very much the order of the day. There was richness to the upper bass/ lower midrange that meant that the track didn't have quite the alacrity of some. Yet this didn't seem to affect the timing unduly. Again, I felt as though NAD had got a good balance, with the music being easy and enjoyable to follow, but also smooth and refined for good long term listening. If anything, though, the treble was a tad too polished for its own good, and missed out on some finer details. With most 'speakers I shouldn't think that this will be a problem, but it would be something to consider if you're going to match warmer/ duller sounding ancillaries.

Moving to Roysopp's 'So Easy and Epile' ambient tracks, and the C352 produced the most sumptuous sound stage. What really impressed was the depth of sound, which, together with the generous width, provided an impressively bold platform. There was a decent level of insight into the music, with the layering of instrumental effects reproduced to great effect. Bass proved strong yet unstrained; obviously the PowerDrive was doing its thing here. Compared with, say, a Naim Nait 5i, it wasn't the tightest, most focused of bass responses but, given its price, bass control was fine. Again, I would say it favoured warmth over agility, but not too the detriment of involvement. Even though every last detail wasn't stripped away from the mix, it still offered a captivating listen.

There was something almost valve-like with the reproduction of John Rutter's 'Candlelight'. No doubt the Class-A pre-amp and driver stage were playing a role here, with the flute in particular sounding most beguiling. String tone was equally sweet although, again, it wasn't the most analytical. To give an example of what I mean, although the flautist could be heard taking breaths, one couldn't really feel the breaths. Some of the intensity of a live performance was lost.

I felt that 'Candlelight' hadn't really pushed the NAD with the Classical genre, so it was time for a more challenging and complex piece. There's a part of Chabrier's 'Espana' that never fails to make the listener, if not exactly jump, then at least flinch. It's an intensely dynamic piece and a good test of any amps' dynamic resolve. The NAD passed the flinch test admirably with the Marantz PM7200 being the only competitor I've heard able to match its dynamic authority. Again, some of the subtle details were lost, but the general integrity of the music was well portrayed. Brass, for example, sounded suitably vibrant, and the C352 coped well in separating the various instrumental sections during the more complex passages.

CONCLUSION

It's hard not to warm to the C352. It's a thoroughly engaging

THE POWER GAME

Trace back the origins of the C352, and you'll find that, over the years, power output has quadrupled. The C352's direct ancestor, the C350 offered 60 watts, but the model that it in turn replaced, the C340, offered only 50. Mind you, the C340's predecessor, the 314, mustered just 35w RMS. Those with longer memories may well recall the NAD 304. It preceded the 314, matching its 35 watts output. At the time it rescued NAD from a depressingly average run of amps', led by the 3020's replacement, the charmless 302. Although the C352 isn't actually a direct descendent of the 3020, it has some connections with its bigger brothers, the 3225PE and, before that, the 3130. Power output from these, incidentally, was just 25 and 20 watts per channel. Figures, it seems, count for more than ever before!

design, which draws you into the music like few others at the price. Let's be clear, however; it is not a giant killer. It's no Naim Nait 5i beater, and a doubling of budget will show demonstrable improvements in sound. Ultimately the C352's weakness comes from being unable to reveal the last layer of music, the complexity of a breath, or the full force of a struck drum skin. Yet, it is unfair to expect this of the NAD, especially at the price, and anyway, this is far from being a serious criticism. As a study of balance and consistency, NAD should be awarded full marks. The comprehensive feature count adds further credence to this being one of the most complete amps' about.

Taken as a whole, the C352 has to be one of the very best amplifiers under £400 and, as such, comes highly recommended.

VERDICT

No giant killer, but one of the very best and consistent sounding integrated amplifiers at its price.

NAD C352 £350

NAD

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FOR

- Consistent, musical, sound
- Drives difficult loads
- Connectivity

AGAINST

- Tough competition
- No phono stage
- Plasticity finish

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The NAD packs a fair old punch, delivering 120W per channel into 8ohms, although with some small shortfall into 4ohms where I expected around 160W or more but measured just 132W due to supply line droop. There's still plenty enough here for high volume levels though. Distortion measurement showed that at high volumes the C352 stays remarkably clean, producing just 0.005% distortion near full volume at 1kHz and a creditable 0.007% under the same conditions at 10kHz. NAD amplifiers are consistent in achieving this level of performance and it does ensure a smooth sound.

Input sensitivity was usefully high at 370mV for full output, noise low and D.C. offset minimal. Frequency response was wide and well suited to DVD-A, with an upper limit of 106kHz.

The C352 measured well, although it isn't as tightly regulated as some. Expect a clean smooth sound all the same. NK

Power	120watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	4Hz-106kHz
Separation	82dB
Noise	-112dB
Distortion	0.004%
Sensitivity	370mV
dc offset	0.3/3mV

