

HiFi VISION

1 Year
HiFi Vision!

The worldwide biggest HiFi magazin for the iPad!

Chic & Smart



- Four 55-Inch Flatscreens reviewed
- With Internet and Smart-TV **p.4**

The Blue Sprinter

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- Blu-ray-Player BP620 from LG
- The affordable home cinema for beginners
- Super quick boot in under 10 seconds

Music First

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- NAD C 356BEE Digital + C 546BEE



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Straight into the Heart

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- Active loudspeakers
- Genelec Syno 10+ tested
- Unbelievably sound performance



MUSIC FIRST

The NAD developers have always focused on the essential thing: the best sound experience possible. That's how they create HiFi products with an uncluttered design and very simple operation – just like the integrated amplifier C 356BEE Digital and the compact disc player C 546BEE, both of which we have ordered for a review in our lab.

In the past, numerous classics from NAD have proved often enough that the NAD-concept is paying off. One of the best-selling integrated amplifiers of all times was the NAD C 3020; following the company's philosophy, the mouse-grey amp was extremely easy to operate and an explicit challenge to the higher priced competition in terms of sound.

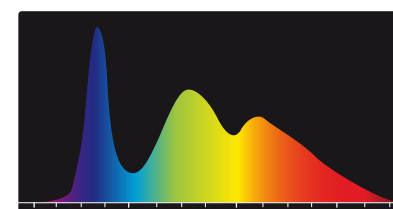
In the meantime, many things have changed at NAD, and yet the company remains faithful to its principles. The integrated amp and the compact disc player in our review are following the well-tried motto and are immediately recognizable as NAD products. NAD strike out in a new direction with their MDC technology. This „Modular Design Construction“ allows the customers to subsequently extend the range of functions of their amplifier. In our test device, the C 356BEE Digital, one module had been installed ex-factory, which raises the price by 200 Euro to 950 Euro. If you dare to install the



MDC DAC module yourself you can save 70 Euro when you buy the components individually. If you can do without a DAC in your amp but rather focus on analog music reproduction, you should buy the Phono module MDC PP375 for MM and MC pickup cartridges.

Amplifier C 356BEE Digital

Bjorn Erik Edvardsen used to give and still gives his initials to very special NAD models. Those devices with the BEE abbreviation have particularly sophisticated technical concepts and sound especially good due to the extensive fine-tuning. This is also true for the C 356BEE Digital that is recognizable as a classic integrated amplifier because of its lucid design without a display. All functions can be controlled directly at the amplifier without the aid of the remote control. There is a 3.5 mm mini jack for the connection of a portable media player and a 6.3 mm jack for HiFi-headphones on the front. The input selection switches and all other operating elements are placed on one line and their functions are clearly comprehensible thanks to the clear labeling. If you want, you can control the sound of the amplifier by means of the treble and bass compensators – sound purists on the other hand will be happy about the tone defeat switch of the NAD C 356 BEE. There are solid terminals for two pairs of loudspeaker cables on the back of the amplifier. As usual with NAD, the amp has a „soft-clipping circuit“ that limits the output and minimizes distortion at clipping. For listeners who like it loud it is recommended to use “Soft Clipping” in order to prevent any damage caused by distortion. Those who listen to music at more moderate levels will be happy without it. The powerful toroidal transformer, which can almost double the performance temporarily, provides for stable load conditions. If you need more power, you can connect another power amp for „bi-amping mode“ via the preamp output or trigger an external powered subwoofer. As already mentioned you can extend the NAD C 356BEE with an MDC-plug-in module on the back of the device. At the moment, there is space for two additional modules: the analog MDC PP375 for turntables and the MDC DAC for digital components. Unfortunately, only one module can be operated in the C 356 BEE at the same time so far.



Tech facts



Compact disc player C 546BEE

Compared to its predecessor, the NAD compact disc player has been given a jog-wheel that can control the play, pause and skip track functions and enables an intuitive and fast operation of the player. As a new feature there is also a USB port on board, so external USB devices in FAT16/32 format can be connected. 128 folders can be detected with a maximum of 511 music files in MP3 or WMA format per folder. The player, which is available in graphite or titanium look, entrusts the signal processing to the 24 bit Wolfson DAC. The sound improvement of the C 546BEE is also the result of separate power supplies for the digital and analog signal processing sections. The processed signals are transmitted to the connected amplifier via analog RCA outputs. Alternatively there are digital coaxial and optical outputs.

Listening test

In our listening room we put the integrated amplifier C 356BEE to the test first. It showed immediately that the fine-tuning of the sound has paid off: The NAD amp controls even big floor-standing loudspeakers and exudes a lot of enthusiasm. If necessary, it plays with a powerful and mighty drive, while it is also able to single out fine detail of complex musical pieces without any sign of stress or exertion. We have treated ourselves to connect a Playstation 3 and a Squeezebox to the DAC module. The DAC does its work very well, too, letting the music flow from the speakers in a relaxed and lively manner.

The CD player is a congenial partner for the C 356BEE Digital: it is neutral, precise, and analytical – however, its sonic presentation is also extremely smooth, round and playful. The NAD's components harmonize very well with each other and in addition to their enormous power delivery they show a lot of feeling for the many subtleties of the music.

Lab

Both NAD components shine with excellent figures in the measurement lab. Close to 200 watts at 4 ohms and 113 watts into 8 ohms are delivered into our load resistors by the NAD C



356 BEE Digital – mind you, for each stereo channel! Channel separation is very good; the distortion and noise behavior is excellent. In standby mode the energy consumption is less than 1 watt for each device. If the amp is turned off completely it doesn't use any energy at all anymore. The measurement figures of the NAD C 546BEE are similarly convincing.

Conclusion

NAD succeeds in connecting the classic with the new with flying colors. Thanks to the modular plug-ins the amplifier C 356BEE is ready for future upgrades. However, together with the compact disc player C 546BEE the NAD combination is a lot of fun when listening to music already now.



Verdict

Price

Internet

about 560 Euro

www.nadelectronics.com

In brief:

+ extendable with modules

+ high power output

+ excellent sound

Sound quality

Lab

Practice

70 %

30 %

30 %

★★★★☆

★★★★☆

★★★★☆

CD Player

33/2012

HiFi Vision

Best Sound

HiFi Vision

33/2012:

NAD C 546BEE

Silver Class

Value for Money

Grade

hervorragend

★★★★★

Verdict

Price

Internet

about 960 Euro

www.nadelectronics.com

In brief:

+ outstanding sound

+ USB-interface

+ simple operation

Sound quality

Lab

Practice

70 %

30 %

30 %

★★★★☆

★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Amplifier

33/2012

HiFi Vision

Highlight

HiFi Vision

33/2012:

NAD C 356BEE Digital

Silver Class

Value for Money

Grade

hervorragend

★★★★★

Product link

WWW

Test results

TEST

Product link

WWW

Test results

TEST

Jochen Schmitt ■

OUR RATING SYSTEM



Because of the international readership we have changed the rating system and developed a new star rating.

Star Rating ★★★★★

A product can achieve a maximum of 5 stars.

The final rating results in the sum of the partial rating. You can only compare the results in the same classes.

At HiFi Vision, we are working with standardized test procedures to evaluate the products. Therefore we are using special measurement equipment. Furthermore, a team of editors, audio engineers, technicians and musicologists are doing listening- and visual benchmarking tests.

Product Class

Basically all products will be grouped in one of three product classes: bronze, silver and gold.

The decisive factor is the audio and video quality as well as the hard and software features. For example, a low-resolution TV (480i) can only achieve bronze-class because it is not HDTV compatible.



Bronze Class: Product with very good price-performance ratio



Silver Class: High-Quality product with excellent video and audio quality



Gold Class: Uncompromising High-End product with outstanding audio and video quality

Test Equipment

- ▶ CD-SACD- / DVD- / Multiplayer
 - Burmester 052
 - Denon DVD 3910
 - Panasonic DMP-BD10 (Blu Ray)
- ▶ Amplifier / Pre-Power Amplifier
 - Audionet Pre I G2 with EPS
 - Rotel RA-04
- ▶ AV-Amplifier / AV-Receiver
 - BrysSound SP1.7/9BST
 - Denon AVC-A11XV
 - Rotel RSP-1098, RM-1075
- ▶ Speakers
 - KEF Reference 205/2
 - Dynaudio Audience 52 SE
 - Sonus Faber Cremona Auditor
 - Teufel Theater 10
- ▶ Beamer
 - Marantz VP-11S1
 - Samsung SP-H700AE
- ▶ TV
 - Pioneer PDP-LX6090
 - Sharp LC-32X20E
- ▶ Cable and power supply
 - Kimber Hero
 - Oehlbach NF 14 Master Set
 - Sun Audio Reference XLR
 - AIV Black Moon
 - Black & White 1202
 - Kimber 4PR, Kimber 8VS
 - HMS Gran Finale SL

TV testing room

We compare TVs and Blu-Ray-Player in our specially prepared TV testing environment with special test images and high quality movie sequences.



Testing Lab

All electronic devices will be evaluated in our own electronical testing lab. In a special procedure, over 30 measuring data (frequency response, power, SNR-ratio, distortion, crosstalk, damping factor) will be determined.



HiFi Vision

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