

CD PLAYER
NADC515BEE
★★★★★
£ 165

↑ FOR

Fanatically detailed and widescreen sound; build

↓ AGAINST

Not as agile or dynamic as some rivals

→ VERDICT

The C515BEE joins a very short shortlist of sub-£200 winners: truly excellent

High-end sound under £200

THE SUB-£200 CD player arena has been mighty quiet of late – in fact, only Cambridge Audio has hit that particular five-star bull's-eye in the last 12 months. Until now, that is. The C515BEE's strong showing is all the more welcome in light of the comprehensive

“It can wring the last drops of emotion from a Nina Simone vocal”

air-kick that is the CD525BEE, its £200 bigger brother (which was awarded three stars last July).

It's no radical departure, but the look of the BEE subtly updates NAD's traditional battleship aesthetic to good effect.

The dimmable display is clear, the remote control is tactile and thorough, and there are digital optical and coaxial outputs alongside the stereo RCAs. Build quality is good, too – so far, the NAD appears to be everything an entry-level CD player should be.

Well-focused soundstage

Load a copy of The Cure's *A Forest* into the smooth-sliding disc tray, and the BEE impresses from the off. It creates a wide, well-focused soundstage and generates an extremely vivid and all-encompassing stereo image.

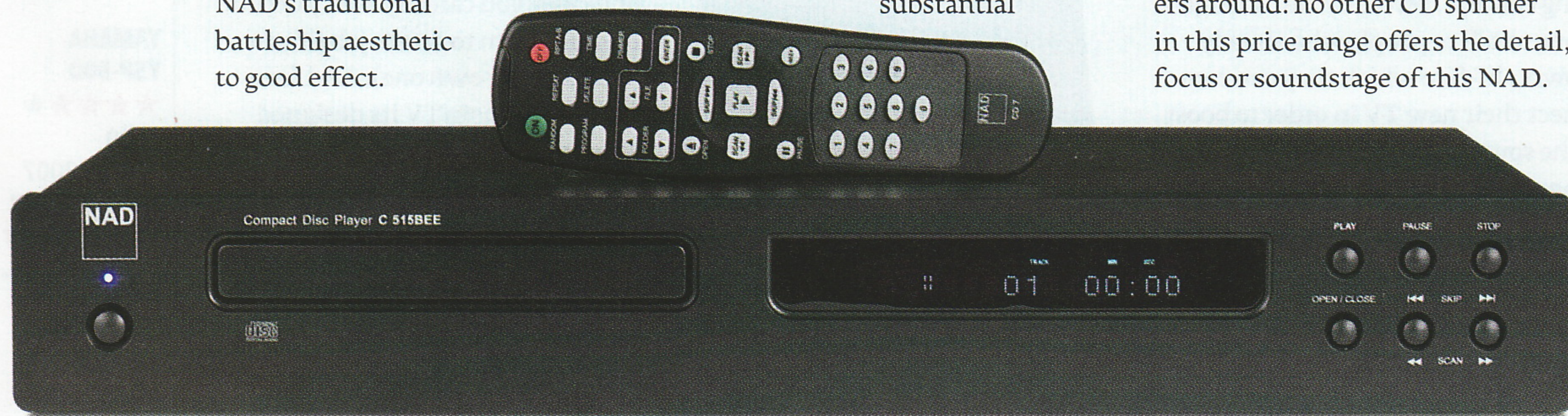
There's a veritable torrent of detail available, a solid and substantial

low-end presence and a fine level of integration throughout the frequency range. Where emotional communication is concerned, this is the only sub-£200 player we've seen that's capable of wringing the very last drops of expression from a moving Nina Simone vocal.

It's not perfect, mind you. We think rhythms and tempos could be handled with a little more confidence, and the NAD could certainly benefit from more dynamic potency when push really comes to shove.

The best you'll find for the price

Minor gripes aside, the C515BEE is one of the very best budget players around: no other CD spinner in this price range offers the detail, focus or soundstage of this NAD.



ALSO CONSIDER



CAMBRIDGE
AUDIO AZUR
340C

★★★★★

£150

Awards 2007

Lacking the insight of the NAD but proving more fun on the dancefloor, the Cambridge is an action-packed player

MARANTZ
CD5001

★★★★★

£170

December 2006

The Marantz is an easy-going player across all genres of music, and is a pleasure to use and listen to