

NAP300 Revisited

MARTIN COLLOMS DISCOVERS THAT SPENDING AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME LISTENING TO A NAIM NAP300 CAN BE VERY REWARDING



For some reason, Naim Audio's *NAP300*, which was launched 2003, has remained somewhat below my radar. It's a derivative of the flagship *NAP500*, which first appeared in 1999, is built with a balanced output stage, and has long been resident in our Editor's system. I did try an example some six years ago, but primarily as the motive force in reviewing the passive crossover version of Naim's *SL-2* loudspeaker (*HIFICRITIC Vol1 No4*). At the time the *SL-2* was the primary subject, and was also used in active form powered by pair of *NAP250s*, and although the *NAP300* was certainly considered impressive, I now believe that I didn't fully grasp its full potential at that time.

When recently reviewing the Focal *Scala V2* for *Vol7 No2*, I had the opportunity to try a well used *NAP300* on short term loan, primarily to see how it would fare with the big Focal speakers (very well in fact), but also to try it in my own system. A new set of Naim *NACA5* speaker cables was also provided – far from my favourite choice on past experience – but all was correctly and conveniently terminated, and it was simply the pertinent cable to use at the time. (During the *Scala* directed sessions I also made comparisons with other stock cables,

including classic Van Den Hul examples.)

Despite some initial difficulties (see later), something unmistakably interesting about the resulting sounds prompted me to persevere with the Naim combination, and this has led me to reappraise both the *NAP300* amplifier and its long established, matching (and sometimes controversial) speaker cable. It's somewhat ironic that a key feature of this cable is a complete absence of the usual hype. It looks just like a heavy duty twin flex lamp cord (albeit not so flexible in this case), and is priced at a decidedly sub-audiophile £12/metre. (With large Naim purchases this cable is often thrown in with the deal, terminated to the required lengths.)

Once things had settled down, and once the initial sensations of roughness, glare, hardness and two-dimensionality had begun to dissipate over weeks, the sounds made by this combination of amp and speaker cable were sufficiently intriguing to demand my concentrated attention. In particular it began to refresh my appreciation of rhythm and timing and its importance in creating an involving listening experience.

The £6,900 *NAP300* is a two-box stereo amplifier with the power supply in one box, and the amplifiers