

Naim NDX 2

ANDREW EVERARD THINKS THAT THIS SECOND-GENERATION OF NAIM'S NDX NETWORK AUDIO PLAYER HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR GREATNESS



The new generation of Naim's *ND*-range of network players now comprises some three brand new models. While the £4,999 *NDX 2* is a direct update for the discontinued *NDX*, and the entry-level £1,999 *ND 5 XS 2* is somewhat different from its predecessor, the £12,999 *ND 555* is pitched even higher than the *NDS* it replaces.

At first glance, it would seem that the new models are just the inevitable result of combining the old with the hardware/software package on which is based the revised *Uniti* range (launched a little over two years ago). At the time of that launch, the obvious question was whether this 'new platform for the future' (as Naim called it), would find its way up from *Uniti* to *ND* models.

Spool forward to 2018, and it's not quite that simple: the new Naim platform at the heart of 'new *Uniti*' was always developed with new *ND*-models in mind. Their arrival meant that the full potential of the platform, designed to futureproof the range against developments in file formats and streaming services, is finally being realised. The new models now play DSD files up to 128/5.6MHz, PCM to 32-bit/384kHz, will also handle anything supported by Google Chromecast, are Roon-ready, and will support Bluetooth and Apple AirPlay 2.

Both the *NDX 2* and *ND 555* gain the full-colour 5in TFT screens first seen in the new *Uniti* models. The entry-level *ND 5 XS 2* has no display, the idea being to optimise sound quality. And in practice all three models will usually be driven by the ever-evolving Naim App.

Like the *NDX* it replaces, the new *NDX 2* can either be self-powered or use an external *XPS* or *555PS* power supply. That pitches this midrange model at just under £5000 in self powered form,

while the *ND 555* requires a £6600 *555 PS DR* power supply to operate.

The *ND555* does very nicely indeed with just one power supply, which should come as a relief to those thinking of upgrading from, say, an *NDS/555 PS DR* package, as the demonstrations I've heard to date have suggested the new model is better than the old, but that the previous flagship still has 'something' about it some may find hard to surrender. Time, and more listening, will tell.

When used 'under its own steam' the *NDX 2* has a small switch-mode power supply to keep it ticking over on standby, which is entirely disconnected when the main toroidal kicks in for listening – a neat solution.

Under the lid, the *NDX 2* uses Naim's own streaming board and DSP, now with enhanced efficiency, a third generation master clock and Low Voltage Differential Signalling, to keep down the unwanted radiation from the digital transmission, which could otherwise affect the analogue sections of the unit. Discrete filter circuits are used in place of the *NDX*'s op-amps, and the upgraded *PCM192A* DAC combines with a discrete I-to-V converter. Some circuit boards are mechanically decoupled in order to combat acoustic feedback effects, and there's a choice of S/PDIF input on BNC and RCA electrical sockets, and an optical input.

As is usual with Naim players, there's the choice of RCA or DIN outputs, and a remote output to allow the *NDX 2* – and thus the Naim App – to control a suitable Naim amplifier or pre-amp, and a remote control is provided (in this case the radio-frequency Zigbee device introduced with the latest *Uniti* models).

I have to say that the new look of the *NDX 2*, with its large display fitted into classic Naim 'classic