

Streaming
Go deeper into
digital music

①

The New Classics
Redefining the Naim
power amplifier

②

The Beatles
Rediscovered
in mono

③

Naim Label
ESKA

④

Bentley Bentayga
The sound of the SUV

⑤

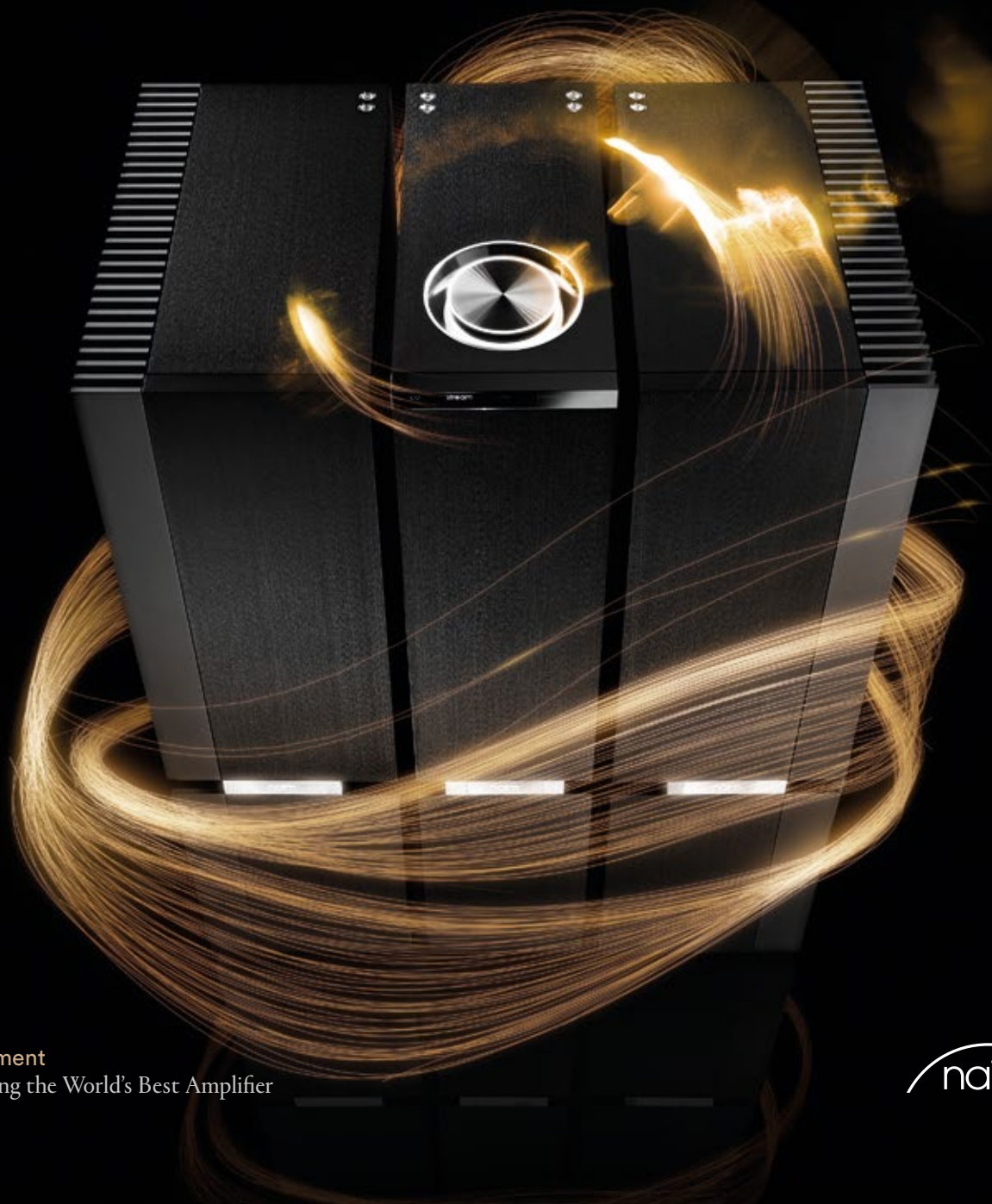
The Naim Magazine

For those who know a good thing when they hear it

Issue

Winter 2015-16

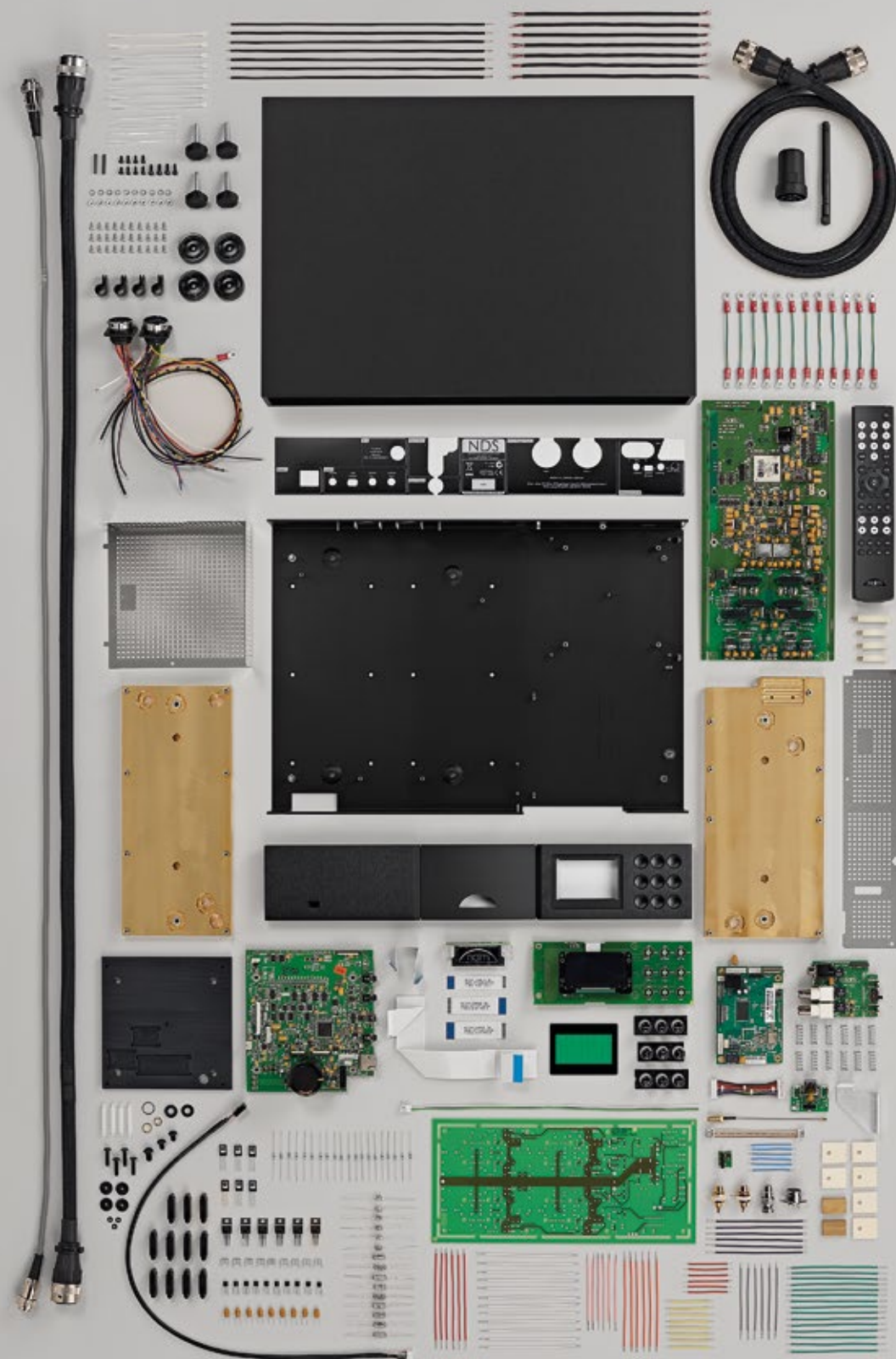
Connection



Statement

Creating the World's Best Amplifier





Deconstructed: NDS Network Player

The parts above are carefully designed, selected and tested before a Naim technician transforms them into our flagship network player. The precise

position of each component is defined through listening tests – right down to the last cable tie. In total, the NDS features 620 individual parts.

Welcome

Welcome to *Connection*. This is our first issue since I became Managing Director, taking the reins from Paul Stephenson who, after over 34 years at Naim and 15 at the helm, moves into a new role as Chairman. His passion for music and great sound has led us to where we are today.

I'm an engineer by profession and a music lover at heart. So, in a fast-moving world I'll keep Naim at the forefront of technological change without ever compromising on our core reason for being: to bring you closer to the music.

The theme of this year's magazine is exploration. We go beneath the surface to investigate the potential of our range of streaming products (p.06) and see what it takes to create the world's finest amplifier (p.10).

We profile Naim Label's ESKA (p.18), trace the history of our power amps (p.12) and see a classic Naim product restored to full health (p.28). We treasure this heritage – it's what fuels our progress.

Enjoy this issue and make sure you join our online community to get even more from Naim.

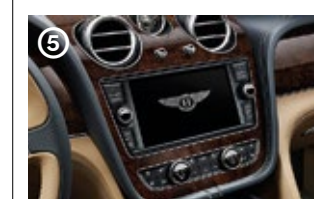
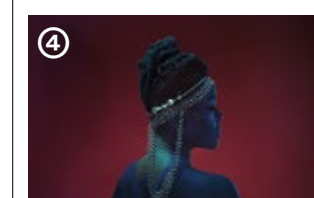
Trevor

Dr Trevor Wilson
Naim Managing Director



Winter 2015–16

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Design & Art Direction: Hingston Studio
Editor: Justin Quirk



News

The latest updates for the Uniti range and network players

We're delighted to announce that TIDAL – the Jay-Z led, high-fidelity, subscription-based streaming service is now supported on all Naim streaming products. The update is available for all Naim Uniti all-in-one players, network players and streaming preamplifiers with the 24/192kHz capable hardware as well as the Mu-so® wireless music system. It means that Mu-so will also gain the ability to act as the Master in a multi-room system, streaming music to other players in up to four additional rooms. For a more in-depth guide to Naim and streaming, have a look at the full feature, which you'll find on p.06.

In addition to our latest new releases and innovations, Naim's team of engineers has also been hard at work striving to improve our existing products. The Uniti range – our original, revolutionary all-in-one players – now features Bluetooth (aptX) and Spotify Connect, giving you even more ways to enjoy your music whatever format you are using.

Meanwhile, the Naim SuperUniti all-in-one player was further expanded earlier this year to gain DSD64 compatibility, alongside our highest specification DSP network players: the ND5 XS, NDX and NDS and the new-for-2015 NAC-N 272 streaming preamplifier.



Full information at naimaudio.com/streaming-and-multiroom

Naim Label: New Releases

Sons of Kemet
Lest We Forget...



We welcome back Sons of Kemet with the follow-up to 2013's MOBO winner *Burn*. Touching on jazz and sci-fi this is 'a meditation on the Caribbean diaspora'.



Get The Blessing
Astronautilus



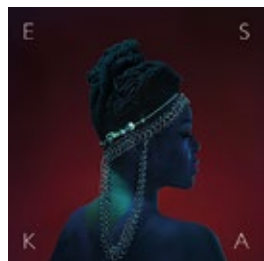
The quartet built around Portishead's rhythm section returns with a boundary-pushing jazz interpretation. The incredible live show visits UK/Germany this autumn.



ESKA
ESKA



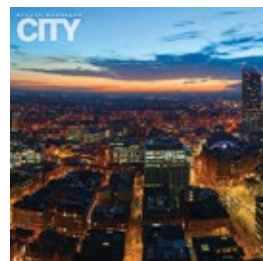
The long-awaited debut from an astonishing London voice joins the dots between folk, soul and psychedelia. (Find out more in the interview and feature on p.18)



Stuart McCallum
City

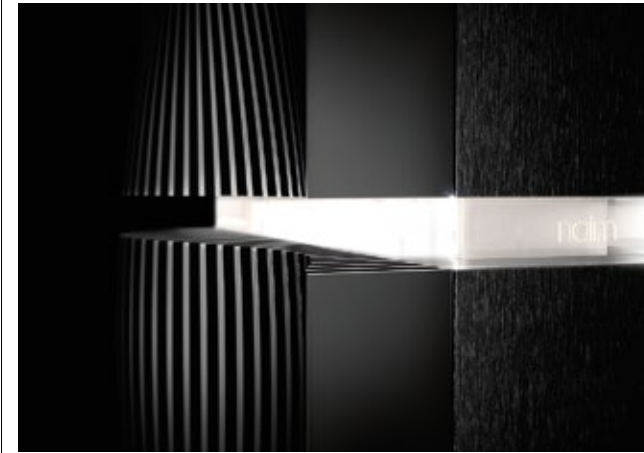


This beautiful ambient/electronica soundscape from the prodigiously talented Mancunian guitarist and composer is his second studio album for Naim.



2015 has been a hugely exciting year for Naim with new products, new features and several awards. Whether you're a new arrival to the Naim community or a long-established member, there's been plenty to celebrate.

Statement technology for your system



Further updates have been made to Naim Classic power amplifiers. These have been revitalised and reintroduced with the addition of the new technology developed through our work on the flagship Statement amplification system (read more in the feature on p.12-13). Owners of Classic and 500 Series product looking for a taste of Statement performance can also demo our new Super Lumina high-performance interconnects and speaker cable at their local Naim specialist retailer.

Critical acclaim for Mu-so



It's been an award-winning year for our Mu-so wireless music system. As well as the *What Hi-Fi?* Product of the Year award and a 9/10 ranking from *Wired*, it has also received the *Stuff* Hi-Fi Gadget of the Year, a prestigious Red Dot Award 2015 for Product Design, the T3 award for Best Sound and the sought-after EISA badge for Best Compact Hi-Fi System. And with TIDAL and Multiroom now on board, it looks like we might have to make some more room in the trophy cabinet.

Claim your free 3-month trial of TIDAL

To celebrate the arrival of TIDAL lossless streaming to Naim streaming products we're offering new and existing owners of Uniti all-in-one players and network players* a free 3-month trial of the service. Subscribing takes a matter of minutes and you can do it via the Naim app for iOS and Android.

*Product hardware must be at 24/192kHz board specification to be compatible with the new

update and to claim the free trial. For full details visit naimaudio.com/connection



Community



For all the latest updates, new music, new products and more make sure you join our thriving community of followers and fans and share your views on everything hi-fi and music with us at:

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forums.naimaudio.com

Exclusive *Connection* content

To enjoy even more exclusive *Connection* content including full-length interviews, product updates and event details, head over to naimaudio.com/connection and subscribe to our mailing list.



Go Deeper Inside the Music

Connection explores the boundless potential of Naim’s network-connected range to unleash your digital music and reveal its true depth

Naim defined the new world of digital music playback with the HDX hard disk player/server in 2008, and since then has been refining its network music technology and expanding its range of ways to bring top-quality music to your system.

The latest addition to the suite of Naim functionality is TIDAL. The lossless music-streaming service, acquired by a group of music stars led by rapper Jay-Z, is now available natively from all Naim music streamers. It joins an already formidable arsenal of connectivity features that include UPnP™ streaming at up to 24bit/192kHz resolution, Spotify Connect®, Internet Radio, Bluetooth® (aptX®) and a plethora of wired digital and analogue inputs.

This feature set is constantly being added to as the world of music delivery evolves. Through free firmware updates Naim can continually offer new and improved user features, often providing access to even more music from your system.

The Naim App for iOS and Android is the gateway to this world of music. It offers complete control of Naim streaming products with all playback and browsing covered – including creation and saving of playlists, control of local and group volume, ability to select specific rooms with the multiroom feature – and an extended metadata feature giving access to in-depth music information using the UPnP feature. You can simply scratch the surface or go deeper and discover discographies, reviews, similar music recommendations and more.

Connectivity is only the beginning

As you move through the range the core functionality is retained but the sound experience becomes increasingly immersive: music has more depth and detail; the power to move you and connect you completely with the music intensifies.

The journey starts with the Mu-so® wireless music system. It draws on the digital signal-processing expertise developed for the Naim for Bentley in-car audio system (see p.26) and innovative speaker design, combining six drivers with 450 watts of digital amplification. Whether as an ‘extra room’ system for the Naim enthusiast, or the perfect introduction to the company’s digital audio technology, Mu-so offers real versatility with performance: it can stream music from your computer or network storage, connect your smartphone or tablet audio library via AirPlay or Bluetooth, or access internet radio and music-streaming services. It even allows you to create multiroom audio, either with multiple Mu-so systems or by utilising other Naim network audio products.

For those that crave more, the Uniti range of all-in-one players offers a first step into the world of two-channel hi-fi. The NaimUniti 2 sits at the centre of a range of products that feature full Naim streaming functionality alongside integrated amplifiers inspired by Naim’s iconic NAIT design, all hand-built in Salisbury in a classic Naim aluminium enclosure. The NaimUniti 2 also houses a CD player with Naim’s unique radial arc draw and clamping mechanism that can make the most of your treasured collection of silver discs. *Continued on p.08...*





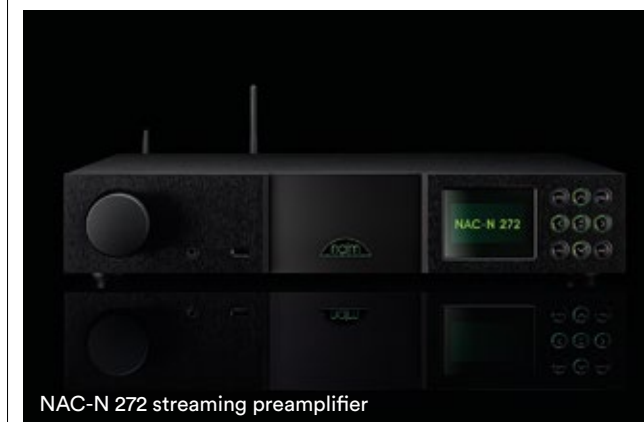
The next stage up in terms of musical performance is the move to a Naim integrated player system. The ND5 XS is a dedicated network player that takes the lead in an attractive dual system when used with one of Naim's legendary NAIT integrated amplifiers. It's a ticket to the kind of level of musical performance that only separates can bring. Equipped with the same high-spec digital signal processing (DSP) as Naim's flagship NDS network player, it reaches new heights of digital performance and comes complete with the ability to play back DSD64 (Direct Stream Digital) files.

If the ND5 XS gets you a front-row seat to see all your favourite artists then the NDS is an access-all-areas VIP pass. It was designed and engineered for pure performance and when partnered with separate pre/power amplifiers and power supplies from the Classic and 500 Series, makes for an awe-inspiring experience.

From an all-in-one system to full separates hi-fi, Naim's uncompromising attitude to engineering enables listeners to hear every single note in equal measure, to go deeper into the music. These systems capture the difference between listening to a simple recording of sound and actually hearing the reality of the musical performance, as the original artists and engineers intended for it to be experienced.

The HDX and UnitiServe hard disk player/servers complete the digital chain, from the creation and storage of the digital file to its playback. The HDX, combining the functions of CD ripping, playback, storage and server in a Classic Series enclosure, is built around achieving the best possible copies of your compact discs, as well as storing downloaded content, and is available with an internal 2TB hard disk or a low-noise solid state drive for use with external storage devices. Designed from the outset as an excellent player as well as a reliable server, the HDX was the world's first audiophile hard disk music player and represented Naim's first step into digital music delivery. The HDX also incorporates internet radio, and can be controlled from either the front-panel touchscreen or a dedicated iOS app.

To complement the Uniti range, Naim introduced the simple UnitiServe, offering the same bit-perfect ripping, storage and UPnP server functions as the HDX in a compact, half-width enclosure. As with the HDX, the UnitiServe can serve music to a wide range of devices. The standard UnitiServe comes with a 2TB internal hard disk, but for those listeners with a collection that goes over 2,400 CDs there is the UnitiServe-SSD which forgoes internal storage and must be used with an external NAS (network attached storage) device.



‘There are hundreds of hours of listening invested in each Naim product to evaluate each potential design idea individually and as a whole.’



Meet the Engineer Behind the NAC-N 272

The 272 is the latest addition to Naim's digital audio range. It's a no-compromise network audio preamplifier, designed to bring you even closer to the music when used in conjunction with one of Naim's power amplifiers. *Connection* caught up with lead engineer Jon Green to discuss his inspiration for the project.

What is your approach to design in digital audio – where do you start with a product like this?

Sound quality is everything and high-speed digital signals can easily pollute the sensitive analogue circuits. A lot of time was invested initially in the floor-planning of the main board to optimise the signal flow and power supply architecture for the digital and analogue sections.

The inclusion of the SHARC digital signal processor (DSP) provided massive scope for optimising the digital path, drawing on our experience of RAM buffering of SPDIF sources and our custom over-sampling filter from the Naim DAC. The Statement project has really moved on our thinking – 272 is the first product to benefit directly.

How do you know when you've cracked it?

A decent suite of laboratory measurements is a given for all Naim products. We know that this is only the first step, however. Listening to every new design idea, followed by careful algorithm or circuit analysis to identify the root causes to a change in perceived sound quality, is the only way.

During listening tests, when you find yourself being drawn into the performance, you know you are making the right kind of gains. There are hundreds of hours of listening invested in each Naim product to evaluate each potential design idea individually and as a whole.

Why did you incorporate DSD?

Primarily to give the customer maximum choice in their music library. There is some very clever Digital Signal Processing involved to optimise all digital formats (not just DSD) before finally presenting the 1s and 0s to the DAC. We wanted the product to be as (format) flexible as possible and of course upgradable. As an example, the latest software release supports TIDAL lossless streaming.

What would be your favourite track to play to show off the potential of a Naim system?

What Difference Does it Make? by The Smiths, from the May 1983 John Peel Sessions recorded at BBC Maida Vale Studios.

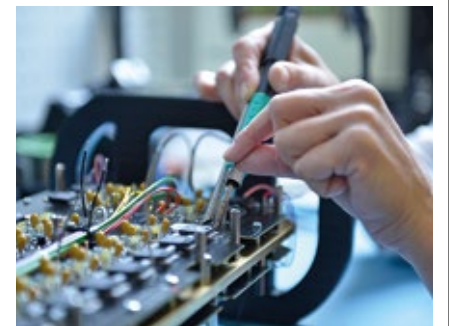


Building the World's Best Amplifier

The Statement amplifier was first dreamed of in 2002.
But when the design was signed off, the challenges
were just beginning



Engineering an amplifier
able to deliver 746 watts
– or one horsepower –
per channel means
having a 4000 VA power
transformer in the base
that weighs in at 25kg,
the same as an entire
NAP 500 power amplifier.



Ask Naim Chairman Paul Stephenson about the challenges involved in bringing Statement – the flagship amplifier combination of NAC SI preamp and NAP SI power amps – to market and he explains that it wasn't just a case of designing a world-leading product. Ways had to be found to actually build the system, not to mention ship it around the world.

Development started in 2010, after Electronics Design Director Steve Sells had been working for almost a decade on ideas for an ultimate amplifier, designed to advance Naim's aim of an ever-closer communication with the music.

The first Statement made its debut at CES Las Vegas at the beginning of 2014. Long before that, plans were put in place to deliver on the promise of the design with highly skilled assembly and testing beyond even that used in the rest of the Naim range.

Statement is big – and very heavy. Simply handling the amplifier during production was a major challenge: the preamp weighs 70kg and the power amps 107kg each,

while the substantial packaging in which they arrive – each unit comes in its own flight case – ups the total shipping weight to 385kg. Engineering an amplifier able to deliver 746 watts – or one horsepower – per channel means having a 4000VA power transformer in the base that weighs in at 25kg, the same as an entire NAP 500 power amplifier.

The solution was to build a dedicated assembly area within the Naim factory, staffed by some of the company's most skilled and experienced engineers and production workers. Like the rest of the Naim range, Statement is assembled by hand to precise standards, but its complexity and physical dimensions make the task even more demanding. Building one Statement set takes the team at least three weeks.

Sub-assemblies are built with reference to 3D computer displays, enabling every aspect of the construction to be examined and verified, while everything from the tightly specified components to the major building blocks of the Statement are tested at every stage of the build.

Only then is the chassis of each unit lifted into the shell of its tailored flight case using a specially installed heavyweight winch, and then tilted onto the case wheels using a hydraulic lift, before undergoing final testing and assembly of the distinctive finned casework.

Visit the Statement assembly line, tucked away in a quiet corner of the Salisbury factory and you realise that, along with the chats and laughs as the team answers your questions, there's a serious commitment to building Naim's best-ever amplifier to your highest standards.

Want a taste of Statement in your system?

Naim Super Lumina interconnects and speaker cables were developed to meet the performance demands of the Statement amplification system when our engineers realised that a new system of high-performance cables was needed to maximise its potential. However, they are equally at home in Naim Classic and 500 Series systems. See your local Naim retailer for more information.

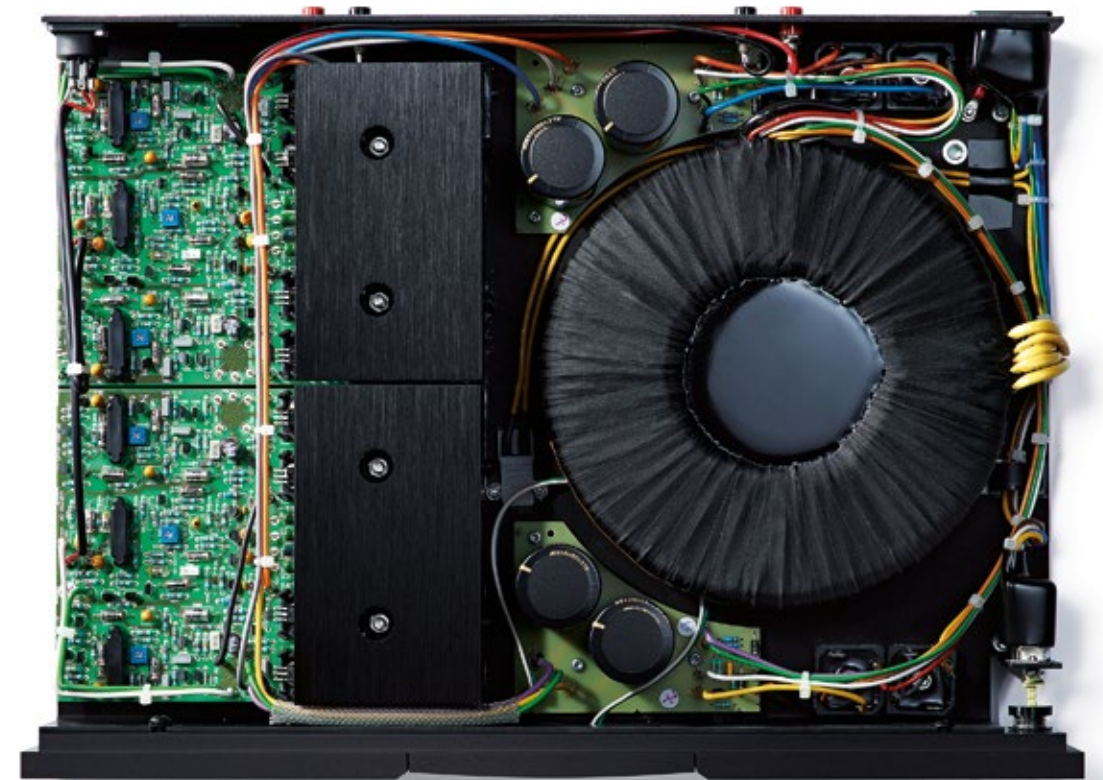


The New Classics

Naim started with the NAP 200 power amp.
Over 40 years on, it's still improving and refining
its designs. Now, Naim has introduced discrete
regulation and Statement technology to the
Classic and 500 Series range



NAP 500 power amplifier



Inside the NAP 250 DR power amplifier

From its roots in 1973 all the way through to the massively powerful Statement NAP S1, the history and development of Naim is inextricably linked with amplifiers.

The company's first ever product was the NAP 200 power amplifier, and the same model (albeit in an updated form) is still a cornerstone of the modern Naim amplifier range. For thousands of enthusiasts, the company is synonymous with amplifiers – whether it's the long-running NAP 250 (used everywhere from hi-fi systems to broadcast studios), the classic 'six-pack' used in a complete active Naim system, the mighty NAP 500 or the Statement NAP S1, whose output is measured in horsepower.

The job of Naim amplifiers has always been the same: to provide the power that's required to drive speakers without any loss of musical information. Sounds simple? Well, as an ideal it is: the difficulty is in getting ever closer to that ideal of low distortion, wide bandwidth and consistent output whatever speaker you choose to use – and however loud your music.

Those qualities – along with an enduring reputation for almost bomb-proof reliability in engineering, manufacturing and consistency – have made the Naim NAP amplifiers all-time classics.

The next leap forward

Four decades on, Naim's designers and engineers are still looking at ways of getting ever more performance from those familiar products. The latest breakthrough came about as a result of the development of the flagship Statement amplification system.

Naim first upgraded its range of power supplies with discrete regulator technology. In short, this meant designing and building a discrete-component voltage regulator whose technical performance and enhancement of the sound quality of Naim audio circuits surpassed that of commercial, three-terminal monolithic voltage regulators.

Naim has now applied this low-noise approach to its power amplifiers, from the NAP 250 to the NAP 500. In simple terms, a regulator uses a DC reference to

generate the voltage required for each section of an amplifier – if you like, it's an amplifier within an amplifier. Discrete regulation technology provides not only a quieter reference but also better voltage amplification, giving an output that firstly has much less noise, and secondly is also better able to cope with the demands placed on it by speakers and the music you play.

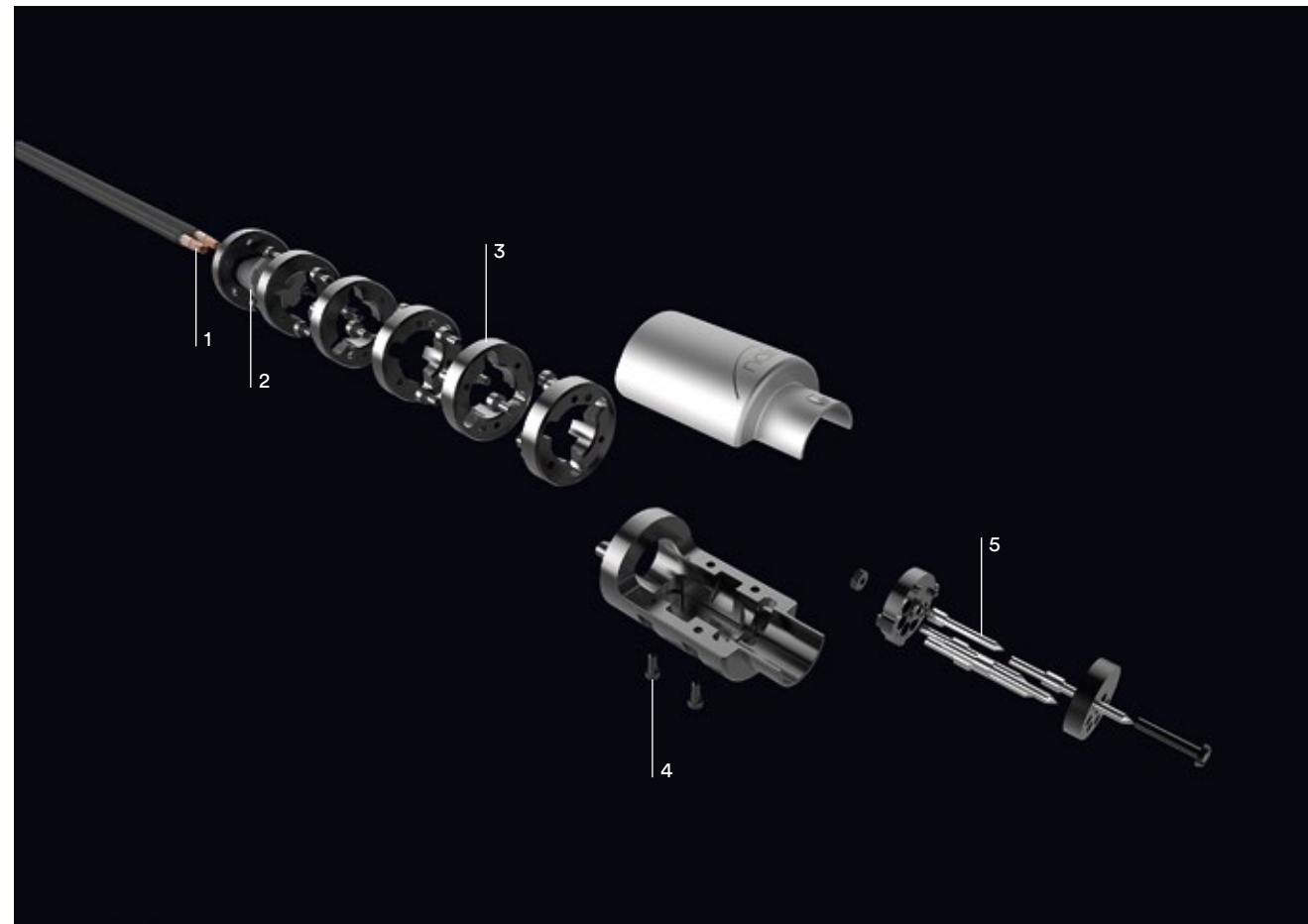
In the NAP 250, 300 and 500, this provides a power supply 30 times quieter than that in the original NAP 250 – and with even greater stability when driving dynamic loads.

Also new for these amplifiers are Naim's NA009 power transistors, developed for Statement and the result of more than a year of development. They deliver advantages in material properties, thermal stability and die-matching over the previous reference, together with being a higher power device. They're a perfect example of the way Naim's pure research creates real, tangible improvements across its range, and makes the amplifiers work harder for your music.

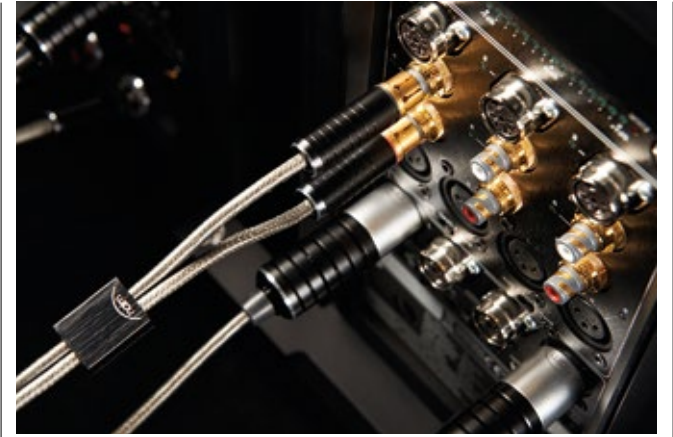


Super Lumina Uncovered

Connection gets under the skin of Naim's new high-performance range of interconnects and speaker cables



‘They’ve proven very popular with customers so far. It’s a chance for them to benefit from the gains we made in research from the Statement project in a very simple and effective upgrade.’



In a quiet corner of a busy workshop in Salisbury, England, a Naim technician carefully crafts what will become a new Super Lumina interconnect. Roy George, Naim’s Technical Director and lead engineer on the project, explained the origins of the range as he guided me through the busy production area.

‘The door was always open to accepting that better cables were possible, but the catalyst for the Super Lumina development project was the extraordinary level of performance being shown by the prototype Statement pre and power amplifiers – we needed better cable systems to expose the true heights that those products could achieve.’ In a process that takes hours of intense concentration, the cables are carefully cut to measure and then the terminations constructed from constituent parts to exacting standards. ‘The biggest engineering challenge was to persevere until all parts of the cable assembly and build procedure gelled together, allowing its full potential to be revealed and, more importantly, up to the standards we were striving for.’ Roy explains, ‘Many hundreds of prototype assemblies were built to get to this point.’ The choice of materials was a vital consideration in the design. Each was selected for its particular properties and for its effect on sound quality. ‘We use silver plating for conductors and connector pins throughout the range,’ Roy points out. ‘Apart from one or two situations (in other Naim products) we have always preferred the sound quality of silver compared with gold or rhodium plating. This was purely a subjective judgement; it is difficult to attribute a definitive cause-and-effect material property or measurement explaining the

preference.’ And why aluminium for the Air-PLUG? ‘The Air-PLUG advantage depends on the lossy interfaces between the rings that make up the body of the plugs. Due to the materials’ properties there is an improvement in the way this lossy mechanism works for the aluminium rings, compared with the plastic ones in the original Hi-Line application.’ It seems all the hard work has paid off as we finish the tour, as is the Naim way, with some music in the demo room. ‘They’ve proven very popular with customers so far. It’s a chance for them to benefit from the gains we made in research from the Statement project in a very simple and effective upgrade.’ Super Lumina speaker cables are available with both 4mm plugs or spade connectors and interconnects are available in combinations with DIN, XLR and RCA terminations. All are available for demonstration today at your local Naim specialist retailer.

Exploded CAD drawing key

- 1 Several individually insulated multistrand silver-plated copper conductors enclosed in a tin-plated copper shield make up the cable.
- 2 Multiple listening tests have refined the selection of the cable grip compound.
- 3 The unique Naim Air-PLUG consists of multiple aluminium rings screwed together to form an articulating section to inhibit the passage of unwanted energy.
- 4 Each screw is fastened to the optimum torque for best and consistent sound quality.
- 5 Silver-plated copper contacts which float within their sockets define the point of entry to the Naim product.



The Beatles: Rediscovered in Mono

Restoring an original mono recording to its intended state – essentially getting it back to the form in which it was meant to be heard when it was first recorded – is a painstaking process, part artistic restoration and part sonic archaeology. And the ultimate example of this can be found in the recent project undertaken at Abbey Road to remaster the Beatles' original mono studio albums (*Please Please Me* to *The White Album* plus *Magical Mystery Tour* and the *Mono Masters* collection of non-album tracks) directly from the analogue masters.

Engineer Sean Magee and mastering supervisor Steve Berkowitz went back past the 2009 *Beatles in Mono* CD box set (which was created from digital remasters) and set about working from first principles: to recut the records to 180g vinyl using the same procedures that were available to their 1960s counterparts, referring to detailed transfer notes left by the original team as they did so. 'All cutting engineers made notes – about lathe settings, what EQ you might have used etc, so if you had to recut in future you could use them,' explains Magee. 'So at Abbey Road they have that for every single job. We've got filing cabinets full of them going back to the 1950s. I think that was just Abbey Road's way of doing stuff.'

This takes the Beatles' music back to how it was intended to be heard. Up until 1968, each album was given a separate mono and stereo mix, but the mono version was always regarded by the group as the main one. Magee found the original master

tapes to be in remarkably good condition – 'You obviously have to be careful with a 50-year-old tape, but this stuff has proved very robust' – bar a section of *Please Please Me*, where some glue from the edit tape had seeped through. 'The intention was to create these how they would have liked, to replicate the original intention. But we've now got much better cutting lathes than there were in the 1960s, better circuitry, better pressing. We can get more off the tape.'

To celebrate the launch of the mono remasters, a special playback session took place at Abbey Road Studio 2 in September 2014. A select group of fans and audiophiles had the chance to hear the Beatles' music, in the very place it was recorded, with a Naim Statement amplifier driving Focal loudspeakers doing justice to Magee and Berkowitz's work. 'I was sceptical, because you look at a big pair of speakers and a very big room,' admits Magee. 'But when the guy finally got it set up my jaw hit the floor. I'd not heard it like that before. We'd had some playbacks with an earlier system, but then hearing the Naim one in Studio 2 it took it up a few pegs. It was incredible.'

Pressed to pick a favourite part of the catalogue from the mono series, Magee settles on *The White Album* ('a revelation'). 'Musically, I'm still getting surprised by these recordings. You suddenly hear something different that jumps out at you. And it reminds you of how creative they were – things that they were doing in the 60s, we're still getting in modern music.'

Find more information on the releases at beatles.com

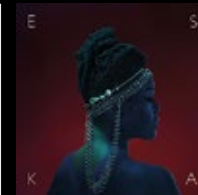


Magee found the original master tapes to be in remarkably good condition – 'You obviously have to be careful with a 50-year-old tape, but this stuff has proved very robust.'





Albums of the Year



ESKA is out now
eskaonline.com
naimlabel.com

ESKA: The Future Sound of Soul



Eska Mtungwazi's story has been one of relocation, adaptation and confounding expectations. As a toddler she moved from Zimbabwe to Lewisham; having been first schooled on her father's vinyl and Sunday-afternoon family sing-alongs (everything from Bob James to Madonna), her violin playing gained her a scholarship to a local conservatoire; and despite growing up thinking she couldn't have children, she's now the mother to a six-month-old baby girl. And she's very much back at work...

Close your eyes and ESKA's debut album sounds like it was beamed down from the lavish days of the 1970s; it's not retro, but adventurous, experimenting with structures and lyrics, big ideas and sounds, in a way that seemed more accepted back then, when her heroes Kate Bush and Joni Mitchell were considered mainstream.

Throughout this recording are traces of the odd, eclectic musical environment that made up ESKA's formative years. Not just the parental record collection (and the much-loved soundtracks to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Star Wars*), but a school madrigal group, the choir she started at her church, the violin training, perhaps even the sensible maths degree she obtained. This diverse education meant that once she started singing, she never had to look for a gig: similarly difficult-to-categorise people always came to her. She sang with Grace Jones, The Cinematic Orchestra, British rapper Ty, legendary Afrobeats drummer Tony

Allen, people who knew she could turn her hand to anything.

This ability presented its own problems, though. If you can sing anything to order, what does your own music actually sound like? ESKA started talking about her ideas with electronic musician and composer Matthew Herbert, whose Big Band she sang with. They put together a huge group of talented instrumentalists – one that Quincy Jones would have been proud of, she laughs – and took over Dollis Hill's Fishmarket Studios for 10 days. She hadn't sent the band her songs, though, not even sketches – a decision that may have made lesser musicians get up and walk, she knows now, but these high-calibre people stayed. They responded to her intricate, hook-filled compositions with the sensitivity, beauty and dynamism she was hoping for. They're also qualities that these songs demand.

ESKA presents an extraordinary soundworld, alive with inventive, beguiling instrumentation. There's the water-filled glass bottles, broomstick and wire on a tea chest on the languorous *This Is How a Garden Grows*. There's the prepared piano and percussive radiator on the glorious *Gatekeeper*. There are tubular bells, Speak & Spell machines, vibraphones, handclaps rushing through the air... and ESKA herself playing violin, cello, clarinet, harmonium, cuatro, organ, a glockenspiel. On the a cappella *Dear Evelyn*, she multitracks her voice to create all the harmonies. On this record, you could say, ESKA found herself.



Holy Ghost is out now
marcfordmusic.com
naimlabel.com
Read the full version of this
interview and see the video
at naimaudio.com/connection



Marc Ford: Americana Reinvented



Marc Ford's reputation was forged as the guitarist with the Black Crowes, at the helm of Neptune Blues Club and the Sinners, as a foil to everyone from Guns N' Roses' original guitarist Izzy Stradlin and soul legend Booker T to Ben Harper. He's also had a parallel career as producer for Ryan Bingham and Phantom Limb. Naim caught up with him to talk about his new solo album, *Holy Ghost*.

'I waited for a while until the timing was right,' says Ford. 'I knew I wasn't supposed to act on these songs for a while, so I kind of sat on them as a batch. Most of them are brand new, but a couple are 15 years old. I just needed to drop out for a little bit and get home back together. I had a daughter, this is the first time I got to be at home for the first five years.'

This marked a drastic change of pace for Ford, who had kept up an impressive work rate over two decades in music, recording, producing, writing and gigging wherever the creative urge took him. Having stepped off that treadmill, he began to re-explore the further corners of Americana, putting together arrangements built around pedal steel, Fender Rhodes, mellotron and banjo and reconnecting with the music of his west coast upbringing – Ford namechecks the likes of Simon & Garfunkel, Creedence, Jeff Beck's early solo albums and Band of Gypsies as formative sonic influences. 'A friend of mine took me to his house,' he recalls. 'His stepfather had this 400,000-watt stereo

and he sat me down and put on Band of Gypsies. It scared me to death, it changed everything for me. I was like, "I didn't know you could do this!"'

Ford speaks with mixed feelings about his early success – first with Burning Tree, then the Black Crowes – and the profile that came with it. 'There are a lot of factors involved when you're in your early twenties and everything you've ever dreamed of happens. I got swept up in it, like many people do. Drugs and alcohol were a giant cover-up for a lack of self and worth. So the only regrets I would have would be personal, wishing that I could have handled certain things better. But then again, I had to learn it.'

Although he already had musicians around him to help with his latest collection of songs – his guitarist son Elijah and vocalist wife Kirsten all ended up contributing – he didn't have a band as such. '(Then) it just dawned on me, Phantom Limb is the perfect band for this. I've used a couple of bands here, and although I could have made the record with them, there wasn't the perfect fit. I would have had to tailor people or songs, and it didn't seem to make sense.'

The results are inspiring, often upbeat, always reflective. 'It's hopeful, in a dark way sometimes. It's a reflection of my life. I pulled out of gigging and travelling, we moved to San Clemente, which is a little surf town, and the pace is slower. I think all that reflects in the record. Maybe people still want me to be a guitar hero and that's it.' But, he says firmly, 'I'm determined to change that mindset.'



Trevor Jackson: Celebrating the Format

For more than two decades, Trevor Jackson has been at the forefront of audio-visual culture. As an art director, designer, DJ, producer, remixer and moving-image maker, his work has appeared in galleries including the ICA, Guggenheim and Barbican and on the credits of records by artists as diverse as Massive Attack and U2. He conceived and ran the acclaimed Output label from 1996–2006, releasing groundbreaking music from artists including Four Tet, Fridge and Black Strobe, created an award-winning campaign for the Belgian band Soulwax and compiled the acclaimed *Metal Dance* series of compilations for Strut Records.

As someone so steeped in and around the entire culture of music, Jackson's latest release is the product of a lifetime not just working with sound, but thinking about how we receive it and how it impacts on the listener. *Format* is a limited-edition 12-track album, but with each track delivered on a separate format: 12", 10" and 7" vinyl; CD, Mini CD; Cassette; USB; VHS; MiniDisc; DAT; 8-track; and reel-to-reel. All are available individually, except the reel-to-reel, which comes with a special edition of the entire set. 'I'd prefer to have less things that are more important than

more things that don't mean as much,' said Jackson on *Format*'s release. 'The only way I want to put music out is conceptually, in a way that takes it beyond just the run-of-the-mill release.' This commitment extended beyond the packaging to the music itself, which saw Jackson carefully selecting, re-editing and remastering tracks from an archive of 150 unreleased tracks stretching back over the last 15 years.

Format charts the recent history of physically recorded music in an uncompromising, unique art project and is a reminder of the powerful relationship that existed for almost a century between the artist, the listener and whatever item contained the actual music. 'Every copy of a physical recording is different,' says Jackson. 'A real object that has its own little story – a one-of-a-kind, personalised by the effort you put in to purchase it, each time you touch it, and the unique ritual that goes along with playing it. I want the people who purchase these items to feel special; they will be the only ones who possess these tracks in any form at that time. The fact culturally everything's become so convenient and easily accessible, whilst in the process totally disposable, is an important subject I needed to address with this project.'

formatvf.com



'A real object that has its own little story – a one-of-a-kind, personalised by the effort you put in to purchase it, each time you touch it, and the unique ritual that goes along with playing it.'



Tom Hingston: Sleeve Works

Hingston Studio was recently invited to work with Naim in shaping a new creative direction for the brand. This meant developing a dynamic visual world that would communicate with a whole new generation of passionate music lovers, while reinforcing the deep, emotional and physical relationship that we at Naim have always had with sound and music.

Hingston Studio was Naim's choice of creative partner for this project (and also for the creation of this magazine) because of its long history of involvement in the world of music. *Connection* sat down with the Studio's founder, Tom Hingston, to talk about some of their most memorable work.

Massive Attack: *Collected*

For a 'Best Of', one could use just an existing image summarising a whole career. But what we thought was more interesting would be to revisit a process that we had used on *Mezzanine*, collaging layers and creating a multifaceted image, but applying it to new ingredients. We liked the idea of it being at first glance this thing of beauty, but then with all these other layers woven in.

Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds: *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*

This was a big double album released in 2004 by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds and was the first project that he and I ever did together. The cover – with the delicate image of the flower – was an intentional juxtaposition to the record, which was dark and brooding. Every copy was produced in the linen-bound box, there was no regular jewel-case option because we wanted to push the idea that the physical album was something worth owning, that had value – rather than just another download.

Chemical Brothers: *Born in the Echoes*

Born in the Echoes gives a nod back to the band's early Dust Brothers sound, so we wanted to create a sleeve that felt quite raw – almost tribal in some ways. The illustration is taken from an 1845 fabric design that we found in the National Archives at Kew. I love the idea that something that was created all that time ago has been re-appropriated for such contemporary music.

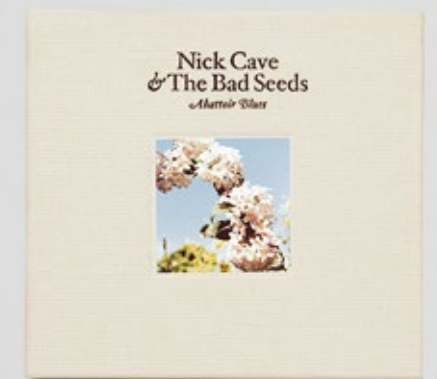
Grace Jones: *Hurricane*

Grace was interested in exploring this idea that she is her own creator. So we talked about self-cloning and placing her in a production line. We carried out extensive research into different manufacturing processes, from cars to furniture and even pottery before stumbling upon some pictures of a chocolate factory – Thorntons in Derbyshire. It was that set of images which triggered the idea that we could have Grace casting versions of herself from chocolate – which she loved. Thorntons got really excited about the idea and the resident chocolatiers, who make the higher-end couture chocolate, produced the life-size sculptures out of chocolate for us. It was a huge process that went in to creating that sleeve.

Rolling Stones: *GRRR!*

This was a fantastic painting of the silverback by Walton Ford coupled with our hand-painted type. We wanted to create a visual language that felt very raw, primal and charged with energy. Something particularly enjoyable about this project was creating the limited edition – we basically came up with the idea for a book featuring 50 objects from the band's archive (one for every year). Part of the curation process was us visiting the Stones' archive in west London. We spent four days there, sifting through and photographing individual objects – everything from Charlie's first drum kit to the Rolls-Royce that Mick and Bianca got married in St Tropez. Some absolute gems.

Clockwise
from top:
Massive Attack:
Collected; Grace
Jones: *Hurricane*;
Nick Cave:
Abattoir Blues;
Rolling Stones:
GRRR!; Chemical
Brothers: *Born in
the Echoes*
hingston.net





Inside the Bentley Bentayga

When Bentley decides to do something radical, you expect the results to be painstakingly deliberated...

The very notion of the British marque plunging into sport-utility vehicle (SUV) territory still takes some getting used to.

'This is one of the most significant launches in Bentley's history, while also stretching our comfort zone,' says the man behind the Bentayga's arresting new looks. That's no overstatement.

No luxury car manufacturer can ignore the explosion in demand for powerful, luxuriously appointed SUVs, given the world-wide interest in such cars. But Bentley is determined to out-do all comers in fusing sumptuous passenger accommodation with all-terrain gusto.

Sang Yup Lee, Bentley's head of Advanced Design, poured passion and hard work into the car's four-year design development: 'It's the fastest and most luxurious and most exquisite SUV in the

world,' he explains. 'Actually, it's not a traditional SUV – more a crossover with off-road capability. Bentleys have offered traditional luxury, but this is what I'd call modern luxury – lifestyle-orientated for outdoor activities and city usability.'

With 550bhp from a reworked 6-litre W12 engine, 720Nm of torque waits to be exploited. That really is extremely powerful gripping and pulling capability for when the car is on tarmac – where it can reach an astounding 170mph – or using its four-wheel drive system in off-road situations.

Short overhangs and a lofty ride height mean the Bentayga can negotiate deep ruts and jagged boulders. Or it can use its 4SV stability system and optimised electronic steering to track true and steady when towing on uneven, slippery surfaces, be they shifting beach or rural backwoods. Yes, towing; never before has the Crewe-

based company spoken so boldly about a car's capacity to haul (3500kg) or, indeed, the offer of a neat, electric towbar. Your horses – or anything else you need to move – should be content.

The Bentayga interior is a home from home for Bentley owners, with its hand-crafted solidity, awe-inspiring fit and finish. No other SUV offers so many colours, leathers and wood veneers for configuration to suit individual tastes.

Naim is continuing its partnership with Bentley – now in its ninth year – into the Bentayga, with a premium upgrade for its existing in-car audio system.

Creating the Naim for Bentley extension to its capabilities was quite a challenge for the engineering teams from both companies – an opportunity to build a truly immersive sound experience in a much larger cabin than other models. The



Naim is continuing its partnership with Bentley – now in its ninth year – to the Bentayga, with a premium upgrade for its existing in-car audio system



21-channel, 2000-watt system is one of the most powerful of its kind. It uses active bass transducers, subtly augmenting the audio experience so that low frequencies are felt as well as heard.

Outside, the traditional, upright Bentley frontage imparts a sense of power. There are deep bodysides, a relatively low roof-line and big wheels – at 22 inches in diameter, they are the biggest on any SUV, and deeply dished for unmistakable presence.

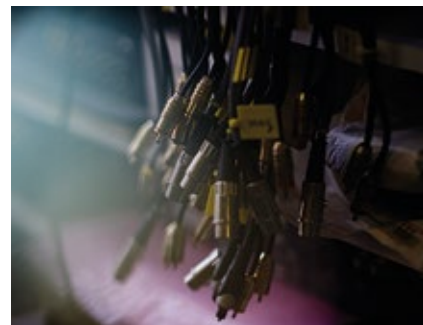
'It's an interesting interpretation of Bentley proportions,' says Lee, proudly. 'I love the fastback rear screen and also the way the front wing meets the headlights, in an all-aluminium matrix. Only Bentley can do it like this.'

bentleymotors.com
naimaudio.com/naim-for-bentley



Restoring a Classic

As his beloved system is restored at our workshop, Naim spoke to our long-time customer, audiophile and drummer, Gerry Freeman



Gerry Freeman's relationship with Naim goes back to the late 1980s, when his visits to Loughborough's Sound Advice and hi-fi magazine subscriptions inspired him to initiate his system around a NAP 250 power amp, eventually adding a pair of Naim SBL speakers.

'Sadly, my mother died in 1992. She left me some money, which I decided I would rather spend on one thing,' he recalls. This saw the purchase of the system that is now being repaired and restored – a CDS player, NAC 52 preamp, 2 x NAP 135 power amps and related power supplies.

Gerry has spent his entire life listening

closely to music. 'I've just retired from 50 years as a drummer, so I like to feel as though I'm sitting in the middle of the music,' he says. 'That's what I've been lucky enough to do for most of my career.'

'Once all the relevant components are replaced, the units are re-assembled. They are then recalibrated and tested. A full inspection is conducted against the wiring copies. Power soak and functional/listening checks are performed before they are returned to the customer,' explains Beverley Haysom, Head of Service at Naim. 'It takes at least 12 months to obtain the skills required to service and repair our classic products. Concentration and attention to detail

are very important as the orientation of the components and the re-assembly is critical for sound quality.'

With retirement comes relocation to Dorset and Gerry will once again have the space to do his newly restored system justice after several years out of action. 'I'm not sure what I'll listen to first when all is complete; I only know what a pleasure it will be and I'm looking forward to it so much.' With a vast, varied collection, Freeman is yet to decide what track will christen this new chapter of his listening. 'It just depends what sort of mood I find myself in on the day.'

naimaudio.com/our-story



Living with Naim

Peter Brookes is a graphic designer, living in Milton Keynes. *Connection* spoke to him about his home system and the role Naim plays in it



The heart of Peter Brookes' enviable system (*pictured*) is active Naim amplification – specifically, a NAC 552 and three NAP 300 power amps. There's a Linn LP12 turntable, a flagship Naim CD555 CD player and the ND5 XS for digital music, with Naim XLR interconnects, Ovator S-600 speakers with NAC A5 cables, and a SNAXO 362 BMR crossover.

'I bought my very first Naim system in 1994,' he tells us. 'Rega Planar 2 turntable, CDI, NAC 72 and NAP 180 amplifiers. I always loved the natural "live" sound that the system presented, which I couldn't hear from any other combination. I've

since passed this down to my 16-year-old son.' Having drifted away from his hi-fi habit for 'a few years', Brookes's interest was reignited eight years ago with a new turntable purchase and the repair of his original CDI. 'It was the catalyst that ignited the desire to create the best system that I could afford. Working closely with Tom Tom Audio of St Albans who facilitated the kit comparisons, loans, recommendations and upgrades, my system was born. The biggest sound upgrade came from introducing the 552 to the rig which was then capitalised by going active.'

To demonstrate the system at its best, Brookes chooses Rush's track, *Tom Sawyer*.

'It's as though the band are playing in the living room right in front of you,' he explains. 'Every time I listen to a piece of music I hear something new, due to the detail and lush, three-dimensionally layered sound.'

'I'm very happy with the system that I've built up over the years. The only thing that's tempting is to replace the interconnects and speaker cable with the new Super Lumina – I'll have to get a demo!' His words, not ours...

To arrange your own demo, find your nearest Naim stockist at naimaudio.com/find-a-retailer

Customer Letters

Thanks to modern technology, contacting us is easier than ever before, and with our Facebook group, Twitter and Instagram (all @NaimAudio) constantly updated, there are more ways than ever to get in touch. Plus, we'd love to hear your thoughts on the new-look magazine by email at connection@naimaudio.com.

Letter:
Just a note to say that our kitchen project is finally complete and the Naim system and Focal speakers are in. The speakers look really good and the system sounds great. The UnitiQute together with the power amp provide more than enough power. The new system in the lounge (the 272 and 200 power amp) sounds absolutely stunning. Of course, having upgraded to the Fraim stand and installed mains sockets with dedicated fuse I suppose everything has helped a bit with the improvement but I am highly delighted with the new units. Thanks once again for your help in specifying the two systems...
Steve Wilde

Letter:
Just want to say a big thanks for what must surely be the best hi-fi in the world! Apart from sound quality, and high build quality, it's really nice to know that any product made by Naim can usually be serviced and repaired. When I read that wonderful article about a lady returning a Naim NAIT some 30 years old, it really made me feel proud to be an owner of a complete Naim system. I have also been a customer of Naim for over 30 years, and I have no intention of changing, as long as the high standards remain. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.
G C Hart

Facebook:
I heard this (Statement) at TAVES and was immediately sold on the Naim sound. I auditioned some gear from my local retailer and just purchased a DAC-VI. While most of your entry-level gear is still on the top end of my budget, it brings me closer than any other hi-fi I have tried. You guys just get it.
Jason A Lesarge

Since Naim's inception in 1973, we've been in constant dialogue with our community of users

Facebook:
Absolutely epic sound from one component device, highly recommended to everyone. Not the cheapest one on the market, however, sound is truly awesome. So far, three weeks proud owner of my first Naim device, pretty sure not the last one. Well done guys!
Edvinas Krilavicius

Naim Forum:
I tried a SL interconnect between our CDS1 and 52 as a friend brought his one over. We replaced the Hi-Line. The Super Lumina is a very good improvement: it's faster, smoother and more accurate all at the same time. It's more exciting to listen to and doesn't splay out difficult sounds in the lower treble, rather it allows the dynamism of those sounds but not the harshness. It rounds the edges of the note, which is nicer on the ear. It's a big jump, and while I'm not massively into exotic cables, it is worth the upgrade money.
Regards & good listening
Devraj Benerji

Our new Mu-so wireless music system has attracted many new customers to Naim over the past year. Here are just a few of the messages we've received from customers on Twitter:

@AndrewMorsy @NaimAudio
The Mu-so is absolutely banging. I get so much joy from it. Well done.

@ScepticalStu @johnnybuckland
Well worth getting the Mu-so by @NaimAudio. Had mine for about 4 months and it's detailed and foot-tappingly brilliant.

@owensampson @NaimAudio
Still blown away every time I use my Mu-so. The sound quality is unbelievable. Totally addicted to internet radio now as well.

@tigerrector
If you haven't yet bought, audition a @NaimAudio Mu-so, shockingly good for the money. I mistook it for a £30k system!

Classic vs New Album Picks

The Naim team share the recent discoveries and the old favourites that power their listening experiences

Lee Jacobs
Production Operative
in the Statement Team



Classic: DJ Shadow – *Endtroducing* (1996)
New: Tame Impala – *Currents* (2015)

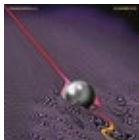
I first heard DJ Shadow's *Endtroducing* in 1997 – it blew my mind. It's a blend of electronic beats and hip-hop, soul, gospel and funk samples – my favourite track is *Midnight in a Perfect World*.

My new album is *Currents* by Tame Impala. This is the band's third studio album, and although the band have jettisoned the guitars in favour of synths on this release, it still has their stamp all over it.

Classic:



New:



Sharon Carr
Production Operative
in PCB

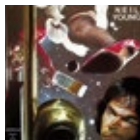


Classic: Neil Young – *American Stars 'n Bars* (1975)
New: Mark Ronson – *Uptown Special* (2015)

My dad's music was a big influence on me growing up and I am a huge fan of Neil Young. The highlight of this album is *Like a Hurricane*. On the occasions I've seen him live, the way he plays guitar takes you to another world (genius).

Ronson has worked on other people's albums, most notably for Amy Winehouse, but he is hugely versatile when performing – vocally, instrumentally and in his song writing.

Classic:



New:



Chris Abbey
Production Operative
in the Test Team

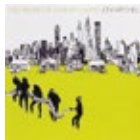


Classic: Joni Mitchell – *...Summer Lawns* (1975)
New: Florence and the Machine – *How Big...* (2015)

Joni Mitchell at the height of her song writing, blending the different styles she had developed by that time. Perfect music, with subtle social observations of the world in her lyrics. The highlight has got to be the title track.

I'm a long-time fan of Florence and the Machine. Her third and latest studio album combines influences from indie, soul, pop and rock, along with her uniquely powerful voice.

Classic:



New:



Patrick O'Shea
Marketing Executive

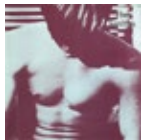


Classic: The Smiths – *The Smiths* (1984)
New: Vince Staples – *Summertime '06* (2015)

The Smiths' debut was released by Rough Trade four years before I was born, but I discovered it quite recently. Love or hate Morrissey, the music is incredibly original and emotive – and still relevant today.

Vince Staples is a rapper from California, and also part of the Cutthroat Boyz. *Blue Suede* has been the big hit, but this is dark, atmospheric rap with amazing production and lyrics. Addictive listening.

Classic:



New:



Let the voice of Naim take you
inside the music

naimaudio.com



Mu-so® is our first wireless music system. Designed by our specialist audio engineers in England, its powerful digital brain delivers the most exceptional quality in sound, commanding 450 watts of power through six speakers to create an immersive sonic experience that has to be heard to be believed.

Features: Airplay, Bluetooth®/aptX®, Spotify Connect®, TIDAL (NEW), UPnP™ (access your stored music), Internet Radio, Multiroom (NEW), USB, Analogue and Digital inputs, Apple iOS and Android App for complete control

Go Deeper



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