

Simplicity is king

A DVD receiver that sacrifices little in performance terms? **Martin Pipe** is seduced by the simple elegance of NAD's Viso Five



Traditionally, the serious home cinephile has been faced with one option – separates, and their associated boxery. After all, package systems are a lifestyle-driven compromise, surely?

NAD's Viso Five, therefore, represents a sort of Third Way. This piece of modernist AV sculpture combines a DVD player and 5.1 AV receiver, both of which aspire to approach the quality of separates. Just the job, then, if you don't like cabinet and equipment clutter.

All you need to get your home cinema singing is a 5.1 speaker array

of your choice. Pretty much any speaker setup based around an active-subwoofer will be a compatible partner, and this is another area in which this system scores over the traditional all-in-one package. After all, the latter's typical lack of speaker-upgradeability can lead you into an AV cul-de-sac.

Discworld

The DVD player section offers MP3, DivX and DVD-A compatibility. It's well-served in connectivity terms, too: output options include component, RGB Scart and HDMI

Supermodel: NAD's Viso Five is a unique alternative to a traditional all-in-one system

(albeit only upscaling to 1080i, rather than the *de rigeur* 1080p).

As for the receiver, you get Dolby Digital/DTS decoding, Pro-Logic II for two-channel sources, a DAB-upgradeable FM/AM tuner, optional iPod hookup and five output channels claiming to deliver 45W simultaneously at full-pelt.

Although many rival standalone receivers are better-specified in this regard, the NAD's amplification should have no trouble taking on average-sized lounges – and, anyway, our Tech Labs deemed NAD's output claims as conservative, measuring



The built-in DVD deck will upscale over HDMI to 1080i

the Viso Five's power output at 65W with all five channels driven, rising to 75W when in stereo mode.

Connectivity also noteworthy. In addition to the two digital inputs **there are analogue 5.1 inputs. Just the ticket for adding a Blu-ray player,** should you later decide that you can accommodate that extra component after all. Not that you've an alternative to that clumsy sextet of wires: there's no HDMI input, and you can't pick off high-res multichannel sound from a connector that's not there. It also means you'll need to find a spare HDMI port on your display, because by definition there's no switching. Nor is there any conversion of analogue AV sources into upscaled HDMI (or any analogue alternative).

Another practical consideration is that the cover for the handy front-panel AV inputs is untethered, and will inevitably disappear. But to carp about these things is to rather miss the point.

The Five is beautifully-built and simple to install. If you want a high-quality introduction to DVD-based home cinema, and are seeking a superior alternative to a complete system that arrives in one carton, then this NAD product might just hit

your target. It may lack the flexibility of separates systems, but has a greatly-reduced footprint, genuine hi-fi credibility, and unexpectedly punches above its weight to deliver a most satisfactory performance.

The DVD-spinning aspect lacks the absolute resolving-power of good mid-range players, which admittedly helps to mask some varieties of artifact, but in terms of contrast and depth its pictures cannot be faulted. Colours are given the respect they deserve, while noise is pretty much absent. Audio fidelity is excellent, too. It's meaty, yet can reveal subtle detail when called upon to do so. With busy soundtracks, my speakers never sounded strained or stressed. And, as Charlie Brooker's *Dead Set* on E4 demonstrated, its Pro-Logic II decoder is also up to scratch.

Box of goodies

If you want lifestyle design without lifestyle sacrifices, then NAD's Viso Five should be high on your audition list. It's very well built and has an above average performance. Blu-ray hedz should be cautious, though, as they'll need to partner it with a spinner with 5.1 analogue outputs and internal decoding. Overall though, a superior system solution ●

AV/CV

Product: Top-of-the range design-led DVD receiver

Positioning: The better-specified of two Viso products

Peers: Denon Smart 302 (2.1, with speakers); Onkyo DR-S501



→ Specifications

- Multichannel amplification:** yes 5 x 45W (2 x 60W stereo mode)
- Multichannel outputs:** yes 5.1 phono
- Video upscaling:** yes up to 1080i
- Progressive scan:** yes 480p/576p/720p
- Multiregion:** no Region 2-only
- HDMI:** yes HDMI v1.3
- Component:** yes 1-in, 1-out
- Scart:** yes 1 RGB output
- Audio decoders:** yes Dolby Digital/DTS 5.1
- Phono audio outputs:** yes stereo
- Digital audio outputs:** yes coaxial and optical
- Dimensions:** 435(w) x 135(h) x 370(d)mm
- Weight:** 12.6kg
- Features:** Tuner with DAB upgradeability and 30 AM/30 FM presets; connector for optional iPod dock; learning remote, RS232 port; 12-volt trigger output; optical digital output; dynamic-range control; bass management; on-screen setup; plays MP3/DivX/XviD/JPEG

→ Tech Labs

Manufacturer's output: 45W x 5 into 8Ω

- 110W (2 channels driven, 4Ω, 0.5% THD) 1 2 3 4 5
- 70W (5 channels driven, 4Ω, 0.5% THD) 1 2 3 4 5
- 75W (2 channels driven, 8Ω, 0.5% THD) 1 2 3 4 5
- 65W (5 channels driven, 8Ω, 0.5% THD) 1 2 3 4 5
- Fidelity firewall: 70W (0.02% THD, 8Ω, 1kHz) 1 2 3 4 5
- THD @ 50W: 0.038% THD (1kHz, 8Ω) 1 2 3 4 5
- Frequency response 20Hz-20kHz: +/- 0.1dB 1 2 3 4 5

A good multichannel Tech Lab performance from the NAD Viso Five, with power easily outperforming the brand's own 45W claim



HCC VERDICT

NAD Viso Five £900 (Approx)

Price check: www.techradar.com/476955

Highs: Excellent build quality and styling; great audio performance
Lows: No video conversion or HDMI switching; Blu-ray version would go down a storm...

- Performance: 1 2 3 4 5
- Design: 1 2 3 4 5
- Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5