



Naim's new Uniti range includes a sophisticated storage device and excellent player, says Jon Myles

Total Uniti



"with Bjork's brooding 'Black Lake' the sound punched out of a pair of Spendor D9s with total authority and a wide, enveloping soundstage."

There's no doubt that the original Naim Uniti was a ground breaking product for the Salisbury company. First introduced in 2009 it became an immediate best-seller and kick-started a trend for all-in-one units featuring a CD player, amplification, streaming and internet radio connection.

In the wake of its success Naim expanded the family with the likes of the UnitiQute and SuperUniti. The original Uniti was my first major Naim purchase and is still going strong after a recent service (well worth considering if you bought one of the first models).

Now, though, the range is changing – and it's not just a minor revision but a thoroughly new set of components. Naim say they have spent some

£3.7 million designing the products from the ground up with new components, software and improved circuits.

First off the production line are the two on view here - the Uniti Core and the Uniti Atom. Both are compact, half-width designs in Naim's traditional aluminium black casing but gone is the company's iconic green logo, to be replaced by an illuminated white version (which has provoked no end of comments on some internet forums).

UNITI CORE

Taken in turn, the Core is a dedicated CD ripper/server that can store tracks including high-definition downloads, then stream them wirelessly to any computer with UPnP ability. It supports most popular file

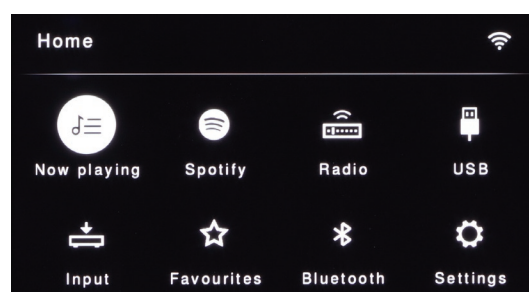
The solidly-built remote control is one of Naim's best yet.



formats including WAV, FLAC, DSD, Apple Lossless, AIFF and AAC.

USB sockets are provided at front and rear for connecting other storage devices and there is also a digital S/PDIF output on the rear, meaning the Core can also be connected directly to your own existing DAC or integrated amplifier with digital inputs.

But it gets even more interesting with the Core. Shipped from the factory there's no internal storage fitted - giving the buyer the opportunity to specify the make,



Internet radio, Bluetooth, digital and analogue inputs are all available from the set-up screen.



A user accessible tray allows storage drives to be swapped in and out of the Core.

model and size of disk fitted. This can be either a Hard Disc Drive (HDD) or Solid State Disc drive (SSD), and because of a slip-out caddy can be done yourself or specified at the dealer. As costs of storage keep falling this is a handy feature and also means

Inputs on the rear include two optical TosLinks that accept 24bit/96kHz, a coaxial RCA (24bit/192kHz), USB and a single RCA analogue input with three selectable sensitivities (1v, 2.5v and 6v). There's also a pre-amp out for connecting an external power amplifier if you require a bit more drive for your loudspeakers.

If you'd prefer to supply music to the Atom wirelessly it supports UPnP devices such as NAS drives, Google Chromecast, Apple Airplay and Bluetooth aptX, as well as built-in support for Tidal and Spotify Connect.

If you're wondering where the wireless aerials are, they're hidden in

Favourite radio stations

- ☆ Naim Radio 320K
- ☆ Deep Vibes Radio
- ☆ Radio Paradise 320k
- ☆ Classic FM
- ☆ KCRW 89.9 HD2 Eclectic 24

The Uniti Atom also allows users to access a full range of internet radio stations - a great way of discovering new music from around the world.

control that first appeared in the £125,000 Statement amplifier. It's a gorgeous piece of engineering – a large, rotary dial with an illuminated outer ring that operates so smoothly and accurately it's a pleasure to use.

If you're sitting on the sofa, though, control is via a supplied remote or – as ever nowadays – a free app for Android and iOS. Naim was one of the first hi-fi companies to produce a fully-featured app and the latest version is among the best available. It provides access to all music on a network as well as internet radio stations, streaming services and playlists, as well as offering artist discographies and biographies.

SOUND QUALITY

Any new Naim Uniti product is going to be compared to those that have gone before - and here the Atom and Core combination is not wanting I found. The Core makes ripping and storing files easy, while the Atom is an insightful and



The rear of the Atom has both digital and analogue inputs - although the latter is routed through an ADC (see Measured Performance for further details).

if a drive fails it can be taken out and replaced.

Ripping from your CD collection is an easy matter – simply slot the CD in and the Core reads it, stores the music and also downloads album artwork. I tried 250 CDs with an average rip time of 4 minutes per disc, so if you have a large CD collection you'll need to dedicate some time to it, but they will all be stored in one location once done, alongside any high-resolution downloads.

UNITI ATOM

The Atom comprises a streaming device, DAC and amplifier, all housed in a 10cm x 25cm x 27cm chassis (H/W/D). The class A/B output amplification is derived from the company's Nait series of integrated amplifiers and is rated at 40 Watts per channel - although, as ever, this is Naim Watts (see Sound Quality for more on this).

a panel behind the heatsinks on the side and support both 2.4GHz and 5GHz frequencies.

The fascia features a 5" LCD colour screen for showing album artwork, where available. The top features Naim's latest volume



The volume control on the top of the Atom is derived from Naim's flagship Statement amplifier.

rhythmic amplifier/streamer.

Starting with Joy Division's 'She's Lost Control' the opening electronic drum pad crack had biting impact and when the bass came in was both deep and tuneful. In typical Naim fashion the amplifier punched the sound along but there was also a good deal of detail on offer.

On Philip Glass's 'Heroes Symphony' by the Bournemouth

Overall the sound was leaner than that of my resident Supernait 2 – but it did not lack substance. With Bjork's brooding 'Black Lake' the sound punched out of a pair of Spendor D9s with total authority and a wide, enveloping soundstage. There was a realistic tone to Bjork's subtle inflections and I could even pick out her intakes of breath between lines – something amplifiers at this price



The Core has ethernet, USB and S/PDIF digital links on its rear panel.

Symphony Orchestra (24/96) I could easily discern the layers of instruments – and track the individual musicians in even the densest of passages.

What also impressed me was the sense of control the amplifier exerts. At 40 Watts per channel it is not the most powerful amp at the price - but it didn't sound strained even when I pushed volume up.

often mask. These characteristics stayed true no matter what form of digital input was used (streaming, Bluetooth, optical, coaxial). There was, though, a slightly warmer sound from the analogue connection with a touch less detail, probably due to the fact that the signal goes through an ADC first so there's an extra processing stage. It's a subtle difference though

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Naim Atom amplifier produced 45 Watts into 8 Ohms and 72 Watts into 4 Ohms, enough to drive modern loudspeakers to very high volume. The output stage is a classic Class A/B, but was better than most in possessing a very stable level-related distortion (0.02%) pattern, free from high harmonics, even at 10kHz – classic analogue done well.

Sensitivity of the Aux input was low at 400mV, insufficient for low gain external phono stages. Low sensitivity usually gives a noise figure around -100dB but the Atom managed a mediocre -83dB. Frequency response showed why: it is hard band limited by an 24/48 input ADC that turns the Atom's analogue Line in to digital – and ADCs are a tad noisy. All the same, linearity was very good (i.e. low distortion) and overload high at 3V, so it will accept the analogue output of any silver disc player (2V).

The digital (S/PDIF) input gave an unimpressive 106dB dynamic range with hi-res (24bit) digital, little better than

CD (102dB). Noise was again the issue here. Frequency response was again curtailed to 19kHz (-1dB) even with a 192kHz sample rate input.

The optical S/PDIF input was stable up to 96kHz sample rate maximum from a QED glass optical cable, glitching at 176.4kHz and 192kHz. The electrical (BNC socket) input accepted 192kHz without problem.

The Atom has been band limited through all inputs to give a classic smooth Naim sound and this is also why Class D has been avoided. The digital section is 'budget' in performance. **NK**

Power (8 Ohms)	45W
Frequency response	3Hz-19kHz
Distortion (10kHz, 1W)	0.02%
Sensitivity	400mV
Noise	-83dB
Digital (S/PDIF/USB)	
Frequency response	7Hz- 19kHz
Distortion (24bit, -60dB)	0.1%
Separation	88dB
Dynamic range	106dB
Noise	-102dB



System settings allows you to tailor the Naim Uniti Atom to your individual preferences.

and replay was remained impressively coherent.

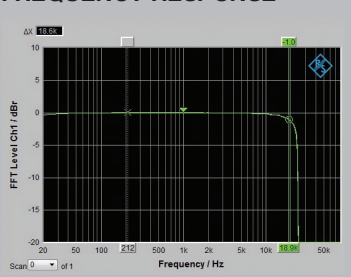
Throughout the listening period I had the Core on one side of the room and the Atom on my rack at the other end a good 12 foot away – and never once did the wi-fi signal drop out.

Put all this together and the Naim Uniti Atom/Core are a potent combination. Take a listen and you will be seduced.

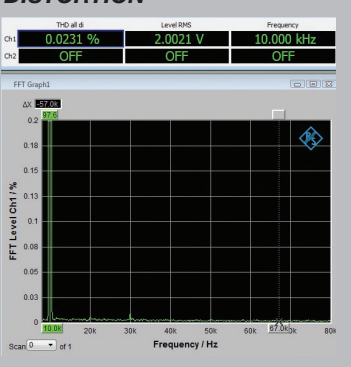
CONCLUSION

Although these new Naim components can be used as standalone packages, put together they are a joy I felt. They are feature-packed yet easy to use and have a simply superb sound. If the original Uniti range was ground breaking these updates take everything to a new level.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



DISTORTION



NAIM UNITI ATOM £1999

OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT
A compact amplifier/DAC/streamer whose small size belies its big, detailed and authoritative sound.

FOR
- versatility
- clarity
- great timing
- ease of use

AGAINST
- nothing at the price

NAIM UNITI CORE £1999

OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT
Easy to use ripper/storage device that can hold all your CDs and high-resolution files.

FOR
- compact
- accurate ripping
- wi-fi enabled
- automatically downloads artwork

AGAINST
- nothing

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