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NAD T 571 DVD/CD/MP3 Changer

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May 2002

The choices for high-performance gear in the moderate price range have drastically improved in recent years. By improving on parts and build quality and giving us practical features that make sense yet cost less, manufacturers are making it easier to improve our systems without breaking the bank. With a little knowledge, you can garner a component that will meet your budget and exceed performance requirements, yet not leave you lacking in the feature category, all for a reasonable price.



One component worthy of consideration is the NAD T 571 five disc DVD/CD/MP3 changer. The T 571 is 17-3/16 inches wide, 4-7/16 inches high, and 16-3/16 inches deep, with a MSRP of \$799.00.

The T 571 will play DVDs and CDs, as well as CD-RWs and CD-Rs. It will even decode MP-3 music files on either of the recordable CD formats. It also can deal with a mix of DVDs and CDs, as well as randomly playing any or all of the CDs that the T 571 can hold. Although the T 571 doesn't have the ability to play DVD-Audio discs other than the default surround track, the NAD player can decode HDCD discs through its 24-bit/96kHz DACs, which will afford you the extra resolution offered by this format.

The dark-gray chassis has the distinctive visage of all NAD products, giving the T 571 more of a commercial grade look than a product intended for the home. Don't get me wrong, I like the design, and despite its slightly industrial appearance, you won't get that glare from your spouse that suggests the T 571 would be better placed in the garage than in your living room.

Examining the back panel, you'll see the typical connections, such as Optical Digital Audio out, Coaxial Digital Audio out, Composite Video out, and S-Video out. What sets this player apart from other players is the ability to output a progressive signal, which is superior to component video or S-Video, provided you have a TV or projection system that can take advantage of it. There are just one set of connections for the component video out/progressive scan, as they share one set of connections, so you need to choose which output you desire using the onscreen menu. There is also a switch that lets you utilize either S-Video or component video out/progressive video. If you are using the S-Video output, this switch must be in the right position to get a signal to your display. You will also find a 12-volt trigger input to remotely activate the T 571 through another NAD component or any remote that has this feature.

The few black buttons that adorn the front panel are large and easy to use. The lettering, albeit a bit small, is concise and readily understood. The oval-shaped multicolor display handles the visual information such as title and track number, total playing time and elapsed time, what type of disc is being played and the location of that disc in the tray.

The disc tray itself is made of plastic and slides out smoothly. Once out, the number one slot is accessible to place your disc of choice in, but the T 571's tray slides out only far enough to put one disc in at a time. You get a partial glimpse of the adjacent discs, but they are not accessible until you rotate the platter, which doesn't operate quite as smoothly as the open and close mechanism, which makes a plastic-on-plastic rubbing sound.

On the video side, the T 571 offers progressive component video output for TV and projection systems that can utilize this superior signal delivery. By effectively doubling the scan rate from 15.734 kHz to 31.5 kHz, the T 571 produces smoother images and eliminates the majority of the jagged edges most noticeable on rear- or front-projection systems. For a more in-depth explanation on the specific benefits of progressive vs. component video output, see Bryan Southard's review of the Kenwood DV-5700 covered in the December 2001 issue.

The on-board 4x10 bit 54 MHz Video DAC improves picture detail as well as color definition and contrast. The 3:2 pull-down provided by the T 571 is also useful when employing an HDTV source or separate line doublers. 3:2 pull-down is the conversion of 24 fps (frames per second) that film uses, as opposed to the 30 fps that is required for NTSC video.

The T 571 also has a memory capable of remembering where you stopped on a DVD, then automatically recalling that info at a later date, even if you took the disc out of the player and reloaded it. My kids loved this feature as they are always stopping a movie and later picking up where they left off.



Music

I started off utilizing the T 571 in two-channel mode, using my reference system comprising of my Audio Research LS2B MKII pre-amp, Bryston 7B-ST mono-blocks, and the Revel Ultima Studio loudspeakers. This setup allows me to really define the differences in components I'm auditioning, down to the finest detail. It may seem a bit overboard, but because I'm so familiar with this system, it is easy for me to pick out the differences without swapping around a lot of components.



For midrange and bass, I chose Seal's second self-titled CD (Sire). "Dreaming in Metaphors" has a nice, taut opening bass line that has a sweet resonance in the lower octaves. My first impression was that the T 571 has a softer presentation than my current reference, the \$1,499.00 Toshiba SD-9100 DVD player, but it didn't lack in resolution. The T 571 did a better job of delineating the more complex sonic layering of the guitar parts on this track. Seal's voice on a "Kiss From A Rose" came across with more life than I've heard it on the SD-9100, sounding more vibrant and detailed. The midrange had a liveliness to it, and the upper bass was warm and inviting. The treble was very smooth throughout that range and never seemed edgy or fatiguing.

I then moved on to some jazz, cueing up Flim and The BBs' This is a Recording (Warner Bros. Records). The string-plucking style of Jimmy Johnson on the track "According To Anthony" demands a resolute system to truly capture the attack and leading edge transients heard throughout this track. The T 571 handled the complicated musical interplay with player can handle the large amount of decoding necessary a deftness that belies its price point. I believe that the T 571 would make a good music-only player, but to add the ability to play video as well makes the T 571 a special piece indeed.

I next challenged the T 571 to multi-channel music. I ran the T 571 through the B&K AVR 307 A/V receiver via a Monster Cable optical interconnect, which drove the NHT ST4s as the main speakers, the NHT SC1 center channel, and the NHT SB3s for the rear effects channels.



I looked through my collection of multi-channel recordings and chose Sheryl Crow's The Globe Sessions (DTS Entertainment) is a DTS ES 6.1 surround recording that is a good test of how a DVD to provide all of the channel information required to make a good presentation. On "My Favorite Mistake," the T 571 did pretty well

sorting out the vocal harmonies, presenting a wonderful space around each voice, while controlling the other three channels' worth of info, maintaining the pace and rhythm. This was an area where the Toshiba SD-9100 didn't fare as well.

Movies

I had to run the component video out of the T 571 into a Silicon Image iScan Pro to my Sony VPH 1252 seven-inch CRT projector, as the older Sony was not equipped with a progressive scan input card. You can't run a progressive signal to the iScan pro, as it converts a component video input to a progressive or line-doubled output. Progressive into a progressive converter does not quadruple the amount of lines you get. Just for grins, I tried doing this. The results aren't even worth going into. I use an 84-inch 4:3 diagonal screen approximately nine feet away from my viewing position.



Using "Toy Story II" (Disney) for color saturation and definition, the T 571 immediately impressed me with the purity of colors and the contrast and definition between lighter and darker hues in the opening scene, when Buzz Lightyear zooms out of space to land on an alien planet. The robots that surround him when he lands have a pebbled texture that was much more detailed than they appeared on my reference

Toshiba DS-9100. I would go so far as to say that the T 571 had nearly the same impact as getting contact lenses to correct my vision. In darker scenes where Buzz drops through to the underground lair of the dreaded Zurg, I didn't notice any smearing or jagged-edged artifacts from light to dark transitions that sometimes make themselves present under these conditions. Additionally, the picture exhibited very good black levels.

For intense dark and light scenarios I turned to the Rouge City scene in "A.I.: Artificial Intelligence" (DreamWorks). The neon and bright lights in this scene are a retinal assault on the senses. At times, the T 571 had trouble defining some of the contrast information, leaving the color a bit washed out, but I have yet to see a DVD player in this price range do a better job than the T 571.

The jacket on the streetwise character Gigolo Joe (played by Jude Law) has a metallic quality to it, capturing the play of lights in Rouge City on the surface of the material. With the Toshiba SD-9100, the reflections looked like moving blobs of color, but with the T 571, the reflections were much more realistic, as I could see what was in the images.

For texture rendition, I loaded "Shrek" (DreamWorks). Shrek's eyebrows and the donkey's fur took on new life when experienced through the T 571. Colors were vivid and gave greater clarity to the scenes themselves.



To see how well the NAD player could handle variety of tasks, I loaded the T 571 with several DVDs. First I started watching one film, then changed to a different disc, to see how the T 571 handled this aspect of movie watching. From the time I hit disc change on the menu, it took an average of 15 seconds to proceed to the next movie.

That is good performance. I don't see multi-movie watching at one setting being a feature that a lot of people would take advantage of, but if you're given the ability to do this, perhaps it will become a desirable option.

The T 571 did a nice job with the tasks of pausing, freeze-framing, or providing slow motion viewing, never flickering or jumping, and the scene information stayed cohesive throughout all of the view manipulation.

The Downside

Besides the plastic on plastic sound of the disc tray, the only other complaint I have with the T 571 is the remote. There is no provision for lighting the keys. This is something the industry has clearly failed to recognize. For me, it required the use of a flashlight or turning up the lights to see the functions I needed to control the T 571. With a projection system, there is nothing that kills the movie-watching vibe more than turning on a light to control the video play of your system. Although the remote is logically laid out, the buttons are small and too numerous to feel like you could find the right one in the dark.

Conclusion

Given the flexibility and performance that the T 571 affords, it seems that NAD has found a balance between performance, cost and convenience. Although not cheap at \$799.00, you really get you money's worth with the T 571. For playing DVDs, CDs, or a mix of the two, as well as CD-R and CD-RW and MP3 encoded discs, you'll find that NAD hasn't left anything to chance. Sonically, the T 571's performance is very good, both in stereo and multi-channel music, on both HDCD and DTS-encoded material. The video section is excellent, especially the progressive scan video output, which would have cost several thousand dollars for a player with this feature a few years ago. This is a must-use feature to get the fullest benefit the T 571 has to offer. If you have a newer TV or projection system that will accept a progressive scan signal, you'll be amazed by the picture quality the NAD T 571 provides. I'm not sure how useful the carousel feature is for DVD movie watching, but cueing up five CDs' worth of music for a party is a sweet option. So, if you are using a high-resolution TV and you don't have a progressive source, do yourself a favor and audition the T 571. You may end up putting your old DVD non-progressive player on eBay and finding a way to own this NAD product.