

Exclusive reviews of the latest kit

FIRST TESTS

THREE OF THE BEST



Q Acoustics 2010i
£120 **Page 12**
Excellent performers that set a new price standard



Sony VPL-VW95ES
£5000 **Page 15**
Sony's flagship 3D projector offers awesome images



Onkyo TX-NR3009
£2000 **Page 20**
This tech-packed amp has an iron fist in a velvet glove

THREE OF THE REST



TDK ST700
£150 **Page 15**
Watch out, Beats and Wangs: TDK is coming



Sony Tablet P
£500 **Page 19**
Sony thinks different - but the gamble hasn't paid off



Dune HD Max
£400 **Page 19**
Troublesome performance mars a good streaming idea

We've tested and rated all of the newest and best kit, including **world exclusives**, in our **£1million reviewing suite**. Read on for more...



The Viso 1 sports curves in all the right places: it might look a little derivative overall, but it's still an attractive design

MORE EXCLUSIVES!

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Cocktail Audio
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NAD
C356BEE DAC
£695 p22



EXCLUSIVE

NAD raises the quality bar for iPod docks

NAD Viso 1 | iPod Dock | £500

Given how popular iPod docks have become in recent years, it's surprising that hi-fi specialist NAD has taken so long to launch one of its own - but its new Viso 1 system has been well worth the wait. In fact, it's good enough to worry class-leaders such as the Geneva Model M, which is some achievement for a first-time effort.

Of course, not being the first to market does have its advantages, and it's clear that NAD has spent a lot of time poring over its competitors' efforts to help hone its own product. If you can see hints of the B&W Zeppelin in the Viso 1's design, we're not at all surprised: everyone in the office made precisely the same observation the moment the NAD emerged from its packaging.

That's not necessarily a disadvantage, mind you. The Zeppelin is a looker, so it follows that the Viso 1 is, too: while it's surprisingly light, especially compared with the hefty B&W, it certainly looks as upmarket as it ought. As an added bonus, its slightly squarer proportions (48cm wide and 26cm high, against 64cm and 17cm for the Zeppelin) mean it occupies a smaller proportion of your desk, shelf or table.

The Viso 1's docking cradle provides further evidence of NAD's thorough benchmarking. Like the similar assembly on the B&W Zeppelin Mini, the Viso 1's can rotate through 90 degrees to allow for landscape orientation of your iPhone or iPod Touch (see below), a desirable asset for fans of iTunes' Cover Flow feature. But here, it's made all the more attractive because NAD has incorporated a clever clamping mechanism to lock your portable in place, avoiding the unwelcome 'sagging' effect that can afflict the Zeppelin Mini's dock.

Attention to every detail

Even the arrangement of key controls is superior to the Zeppelin: alongside volume up and down, there's a dedicated source button on the Viso 1's central metal ring, so - unlike the B&W - you can easily switch between inputs without having to use the remote control. That's handy, as is the fact that the NAD's simple remote works well.

The Viso 1's internal arrangement is just as thorough. Its drive-unit configuration has been deliberately kept simple, with just a pair of (relatively) full-range

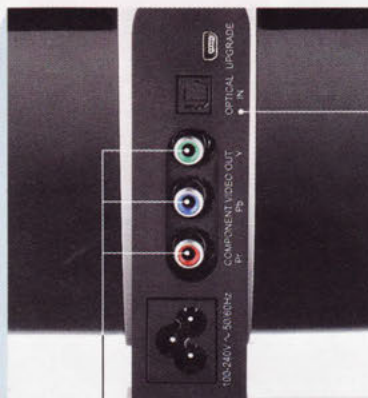
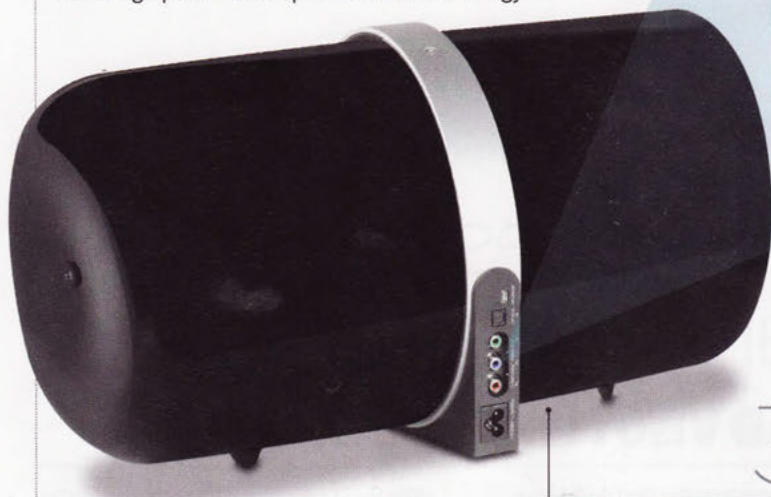
Twist to play

Rotating the Viso 1's docking clamp through 90 degrees is worthwhile for Cover Flow fans. It looks great and, thanks to the NAD's well-engineered clamp, it works smoothly too.



What makes it special?

NAD has thought long and hard about how to improve on the specification of other iPod docks with its Viso 1. Its amplification is all-digital, as is the sonic pathway from your iPod, iPod Touch or iPhone to its DAC (which is an integral element of its amps, and operates at 35-bit precision). If you prefer wireless transmission, it uses high-performance aptX Bluetooth technology.



1 Optical digital input
You can connect any suitable digital source here: it would work well with your TV, for example. It also supports 24-bit/96kHz audio from your computer.

2 Component video output
Most iPod docks have composite video outs at best, but the Viso 1 includes component outs to help optimise your iPod's video quality.

3 Wall mount bracket
The optional wall bracket mounts to the Viso 1's base, complete with a fitting that can securely mount an Apple TV into the same cluster. Neat.

NAD's attention to detail with the Viso 1 sets it apart from other docks in its class

7cm drivers plus a 15cm subwoofer: NAD's argument is that this configuration helps produce a clearer, more articulate sound than a design with more drivers can muster, although the firm also (rightly) pinpoints that opting for fewer drive units allows for more to be spent on the quality of each.

This drive unit array is fully exploited by the NAD's all-digital amplifier topography. It's based on tech used in NAD's Direct Digital platform, as found in the company's high-end M2 hi-fi kit. Here, each amplifier is directly coupled to a specific speaker, doing away with the need for a passive crossover. That's matched by a direct digital input path for your iPod or iPhone, plus a digital volume control.

There's also an optical input which, uniquely for a product in this class, can accept high-bitrate audio files of up to 24-bit/96kHz quality. There's no provision for AirPlay but, if wireless music is your thing, you'll find the Viso 1's aptX-enabled Bluetooth technology works just as well, and is also compatible with a wider range of portable devices than Apple's system.

The result of all this attention to detail, claims NAD, is the "best sounding smart music system in the world". Perhaps that's going a bit far but, as we said at the outset, the Viso 1 is certainly hugely talented. It sounds massive, for starters: even in one of our biggest listening rooms, it can muster bass to humble its rivals.

Enjoyable and precise to listen to

There's tremendous agility and grip to its bass, too. It doesn't wallow its way through rhythms, and there's a fearsome intensity to its approach with music such as Rage Against The Machine. The soundstage it can conjure is just as hefty, with instruments carefully placed within a tall, wide and room-fillingly cohesive presentation.

Of course, not everything in music is driven by volume and frequency extension, and with more spare, vocally driven tracks, the Viso 1 continues to entice. Some folk might prefer the Geneva Model M's more focused presentation and its crisper treble, but there's nothing wrong with the way NAD goes about its business. In fact, it's a very commercial and appealing balance, with just the right amount of zing (and no more), plus a naturally warm and inviting

vocal character. Perhaps that doesn't necessarily fully exploit the sonic potential of 24-bit files, but it does mean that the NAD is an enjoyable and forgiving listen, even with Bluetooth-streamed Spotify.

As you'll have gathered, we're seriously impressed. If you're after a new iPod dock, you owe it to your ears to try the Viso 1.

TECH SPECS

Plays iPod, iPod Touch, iPhone • Wireless aptX Bluetooth • Power 2 x 15W, 1 x 50W • Frequency response 33Hz-28kHz • Inputs Optical digital • Outputs Component video Size (hwd) 26 x 48 x 30cm • Weight 5.6kg

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Smooth, cohesive and hugely powerful sound; extensive specification; fine looks

AGAINST Very little, save that it doesn't include AirPlay support, unlike some rivals

VERDICT A bold and brilliant newcomer to the dock class, the Viso 1 is an all-round success

REVIEWER'S NOTES... 5 DAYS WITH THE NAD VISO 1

DAY 1 In hi-fi, weight is normally regarded as an indication of quality: it's a brave company that chooses to do different. But NAD is light - so light that we almost dropped it when we first took it from its box. Note, we said "almost"...

DAY 2 It might be light, but the NAD's sound is amazingly heavy. From the off, and despite only a moderate amount of running-in, it's clear that the Viso 1's limits are far higher than you'd think. It goes *seriously* loud.

DAY 3 Playing with the various features a little more throws up some unexpected treats. The aptX Bluetooth works really well, but even 'regular' Bluetooth listening is OK. Of course, it also works with almost every portable.

DAY 4 Seems odd feeding 24-bit/96kHz into an iPod dock, but it works pretty well. It isn't as remarkable a sonic leap forward as you might expect, because regular file formats sound so good, but it's great to have the option.

DAY 5 Head-to-head time: the Viso 1 goes up against the Geneva Model M. Interesting results: the Viso 1 goes louder and has bigger bass, but the Geneva sounds crisper. Which approach you prefer is probably a matter of taste.