



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Naim Audio ND 555 and 555 PS

The Naim Audio ND 555 streamer was launched in the Spring of 2018. It represents the absolute pinnacle of state-of-the-art digital audio, designed to partner both Naim's flagship 500 Series and the acme of amplification – the mighty Statement! It also acts as a *de facto* ambassador of both network streaming and Naim's electronic engineering 'smarts', by showing just how uncompromising the performance of this top player can be both in and out of a top Naim system.

With everything from floating circuit boards mounted on heavy metal plates suspended on springs to Naim's six-layer Faraday caged NP800 streaming section and ClockMaster circuitry to reduce jitter, the ND 555 is the archetype of Naim's 'New Platform' for network audio.

The ND 555 requires a matching 555 PS power supply to operate. And to date, most people used just one of these large, 13 discrete regulator power supplies with their giant Burndy connecting cables. But, there is an option to use two power supplies, taking the device to new levels of performance... and price!

If the performance of the ND 555 with a single power supply is already at the limit of what is possible from digital audio, what could two power supplies do? It turns out, a lot! In our test, Stephen Priest highlighted that the existing ND 555/555 PS (his reference digital platform) was "impressive", moving to two power supplies was "an effect like that of switching to a more powerful amp and better speakers, such was the added resolution of detail, the extended and more tightly controlled bass, and the sheer dynamic impact." And the sound went from "Impressive" to "jaw-dropping".

Whether playing delicate classical music, airy jazz club sounds, or raucous rock, Stephen Priest felt that "the ND 555 with single PSU almost gets there, but this is the full-on effect," and admitted that "In truth, I didn't find a single album (or indeed track) that sounded better without the extra power supply in place."

He concluded his review by saying, "Given the advance the ND 555 represented over the NDS, I wasn't expecting too much of the 'twin power' strategy on the newer player, but Naim has done it again. Just when I thought I was enjoying things as much as I could, it sidled up, branded hoodie tightly in place and hissed 'Now, do you want to try the really good stuff...?'"

Perhaps even more than the performance itself, it's more what that performance represents. This is the zenith of good audio – not digital audio, not streamed audio – just damn good music played properly. Granted to get to that zenith of audio takes a lot of big, black, and expensive boxes... but those who have heard it know it's worth it! +

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