

HOME THEATRE/AV RECEIVERS
NAD T765 HD

A chip off the NAD block



VITAL STATS

Channels	7.2
Power output	140 watts x 7 (Minimum Continuous Power)
Surround sound formats	Dolby TrueHD, DTS HD Master Audio
DSP chips	TI Aureus 32-bit DSP
Audio DAC	5x Burr-Brown 192 kHz/24-bit stereo DACS
Frequency response	20 Hz to 20 kHz ($\pm 0,8$ dB)
Signal-to-noise ratio	>92 dB (rated power, 8 ohm, A-weighted)
HDMI inputs/outputs	4/1
AV inputs/outputs	6/3
Digital inputs/outputs	3 coaxial +4 optical/1 coaxial + 1 optical
Dimensions (WxHxD)	435x170x431 mm
Weight	24,7 kg

VERDICT An AV receiver that does most things just right in both home cinema and sheer sonic terms. Easy set-up and intuitive use add to the overall appeal.

PRICE R 25500

SUPPLIED BY AV Specialists 021-946-1441

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AV receivers can be daunting components, especially for those venturing into the home theatre arena for the first time. They bristle with buttons, switches and displays, while the rear panel looks like something out of a Star Trek fighter diagnostic panel.

However, considering just how much signal switching, amplification, control and manipulation actually takes place, your average AV receiver is actually a marvel of modern electronics. And besides, it all looks a lot more complex than it actually is.

From an installation perspective, the obvious solution is to get the supplying dealer to connect and set up the unit. But even novices should find that a thorough read of the manual, and a fair amount of

patience, are the key elements of a successful installation. Besides, it's a good way to get to know what is a comprehensively equipped piece of kit.

NAD has always prided itself on simplicity, and on placing the real focus on performance. That's as true of this latest T765HD receiver as it was of those early, now highly collectable 3020 integrated amps of the 1970s.

Yes, the T765HD has a lot of front-panel switchgear. And yes, the rear panel real estate is fully occupied with inputs, outputs and speaker binding posts. But all of it is neatly laid out and clearly marked. It really doesn't require rocket science to understand.

One benefit of the extensive input/output array is that the NAD will cope with a variety of audio and video signals, both analogue and digital, and is therefore likely to be compatible with most existing components in a system. The inclusion of a front-panel media input adds further versatility.

A 7.2 line-level analogue pre-output set allows the NAD to be augmented by off-board power amplifiers, while a 7.1 analogue input set is also provided.

Before we get into what it's like living with the NAD, it might be useful consider some its key attributes. These include compatibility with the latest high-def audio and video standards, upscaling of analogue video to HDMI, and cross-conversion between analogue video formats,

Depending on how the T765 is user-configured, it can form the core part of a multiroom system, with up to three additional zones. A dedicated Zone 2 remote handset is provided, while IR outputs, 12V triggers and an RS232 all ease the custom installer's task.

As this a receiver, the NAD includes a RDS FM/AM tuner with 40 presets. **But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the T765 is its modular construction, which allows both audio and video modules to be swapped out as and when upgrades become available.**

This addresses the almost inevitable obsolescence of most AV receivers, and together with accompanying software updates, **can ensure that the core investment in the NAD is not compromised by changes in formats, standards or technologies.**

As tested, the NAD was equipped with the latest AM100 Audio Module and VM100 video module. The former uses latest-generation dual-core floating-point digital signal processing, and allows compatibility with high-def audio formats such as DTS HD Master Audio and Dolby True HD.

Similarly, the video module provides for full HD operation via custom-designed FPGA video processing and upconversion, while ample HDMI inputs encourage the use of this single-cable digital signal transmission interface.

While Blu-ray is naturally supported, the module isn't currently HDMI 1.4a compliant, although this is likely to become available via a future dealer-implemented software upgrade.

Okay, so we have a full-featured, versatile AV receiver with lots of inputs and outputs, future-proof modularity, and NAD's brand-typical overriding commitment to sonic and video quality. But how does it perform in practice? And, from many a novice end-user's perspective: how easy is it to use?

The first good sign is the inclusion of Audyssey set-up software -- a system that has proven to be among the best in this genre. It uses a small microphone to measure the acoustic parameters of the room the NAD is being used in, as well as the way the speakers interact with the room.

The measured data is then applied to adjust speaker levels and delays. It also diagnoses problems and wrong connections, including out of phase speaker connections.

In our AVSA reference studio, the system worked to perfection, requiring very little further tweaking to optimise the receiver's delivery. And it did so seamlessly. The NAD has a good on-screen user

interface with menus that are easily navigated, and so, running the Audyssey set-up was a quick and intuitive process.

Of course, full manual system set-up, complete with test tones, is also offered for those who prefer to do it all themselves. Even better, the NAD's remote control has individual buttons for adjusting the level of the individual channels -- a very useful feature, as soundtrack levels and mixes vary tremendously.

The remote control handset itself is full-featured and ergonomically laid out, with backlighting easing operation in darkened rooms.

Let's talk power for a second. NAD's way of quoting power output can be confusing, but if anything, understates what its amplifiers are capable of. The specs suggest a minimum continuous output of 140 watts per channel, and a full disclosure output of 80 watts (all channels driven into 4 or 8 ohm at 20 Hz to 20 kHz at 0,05% THD) a tough set of parameters.

But regardless of the specs, the NAD sounds authoritative and muscular. And it never, ever appears stressed or dynamically challenged, even when pushed hard. It takes the most taxing of effects in its stride with almost disdainful ease, and always displays a penchant for pace and punch.

My reference discs included the current Dolby TrueHD sampler, which has some clips designed to put an amp through the high-def mill, as well as old favourites such as 'The Matrix', 'Fifth Element' and 'Blackhawk Down'. I also used the Jeff Beck 'Live at Ronnie Scott' and 'Legends of Jazz' discs, both on Blu-ray, to add some musical challenges to the evaluation.

The NAD ran in conjunction with our regular Atlantic Technology surround sound speaker system, including a single subwoofer, and dual surround back speakers. A LG BD370 Blu-ray player acted as the source component, while the top-end Samsung UA55C9000 LED TV was on display duty.

Let's concentrate on the sonic side of the T765's performance first. And the best way to describe this receiver's delivery is to say that it bears the typical NAD sonic signature.

It's a sound that is bold and exciting, with good pace and grunt. The tonal range is wide, with plenty of meat in the upper mids, and a solid foundation of bass. The treble is clean and accessible, but never cold or sharp. And the soundstage is open and inviting, with the more than enough dimensional clues to provide a believable, immersive soundstage.

The T765 never seems to run out of steam, and always sounds in control, although there's never any sense of restraint: there's a flow and a momentum to the receiver's delivery that adds to its overall sonic appeal.

In surround sound terms, the decoding is meticulous, with an ample harvest of fine detail, and excellent treatment of dialogue. The ability to recreate space and ambience can be spine-chillingly real at times, and the NAD really does create a believable sense of 'being there'.

However, the T765 also fares well in the stereo stakes -- and that's something not all AV receivers are capable of. It seems able to extract as much pertinent detail as in surround mode, but applies that detail so cohesively, and so convincingly, that the resultant stereo soundstage reflects an even more convincing, and less contrived, three-dimensionality than what is experienced with most effects-driven movie soundtracks.

Also, the way that the NAD contextualises fine detail, retains textures and hues, and manages to adopt an almost organic approach, makes its overall performance both memorable and convincing. Indeed, I do believe that the T765 retains some of the DNA that made that old 3020 such a special unit.

No complaints then on the sonic front. But the NAD also rises to the occasion in video terms.

Upconversion was effective, and on-board video processing excellent. Colour rendition was brilliant, with bright and cheery hues, but with fine graduation and ample range to allow for a smooth, natural picture quality. Shadow detail was well rendered, and the nicely solid blacks allowed ample contrast.

Add the versatility of the NAD's multizone talents, a tuner that sounded pretty good (but deserves a decent aerial to show off its full potential) and an optional iPod interface, and the NAD leaves virtually nothing to be desired.

If you asked me for a single highlight, I'd say that the T765 treats music and two-channel material with greater deference and emotional accuracy than most receivers I've heard. And that, after all, is exactly what one would expect from a receiver wearing the NAD badge ...

Deon Schoeman