



You've heard the expression a million times, 'never say never,' and if you are like me you have probably ignored it now and then. I didn't say we would NEVER review home theater equipment, but I did say it would be a rare occurrence.

The Naim n-Vi is just the product I had in mind when I think of home theater. I'm a maniacal guy when it comes to two channel hifi, but home theatre or TV, really takes a back-seat in my home. That's the last place I want to think about gear, or worry about components and cables – forget it!

If you have been reading this magazine for some time now, you know that Marc Phillips and I are big fans of Naim. They make great equipment offering high performance wrapped in a smart package that is very user friendly.

Sublime Home Theater Integration! The Naim n-Vi

— Jeff Dorgay

The n-Vi is the coolest thing I have seen in a long time. Imagine a box not much bigger than a Naim Nait 5i that contains a 5 x 50 watt amplifier, preamplifier, surround sound processor and a transport that plays CD, DVD-v and DVD-a. This package of modest size but considerable versatility will set you back \$5750. Should you desire to add FM capability, you can purchase the n-ViFM version which is \$6300 and includes all of the standard n-Vi features as well as a built in FM tuner!

The only thing absent from the n-Vi is the very interesting Naim CD drawer that just swings out and uses the magnetic puck. In this application, there is a standard motorized drawer on the transport and I am assuming Naim made this choice for space and budget reasons. No matter, it works very well indeed.

ONE STOP SHOPPING

I own a pair of Naim Arivas and still have a pair of their smaller n-Sat speakers (with the cool stands), so all that was necessary was the addition of the n-Cent center channel system. I used the compact Tannoy TS-10 for subwoofing duties, but if you were starting from scratch, I'd suggest just keeping it all in the family and ordering the n-Sub to go along with the package. Total cost for everything including sub and cables would be about 13k.

No one does system integration better than Naim. Should you follow my lead and have it their way, you can come home from the Naim dealer with seven boxes along with some cables. An hour later (max) you will be completely styling, enjoying your new home theater system. It's that easy.

In the past, my video setup was cobbled together with leftover components from other things. Too many cords, cables, etc... The n-Vi system is smashing! All I have now sitting on the shelf is the n-Vi and the cable box, that's it!

If you want Wife Acceptance Factor, it does not get any better than this. The Arivas are voiced to go right up against the wall and the n-Sats will fit in a rear corner quite nicely.

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Then, just drop (I mean place, gently) the n-Cent directly beneath the TV. Your 12 year old can set it up, no kidding! I let my 12 year old daughter set up the n-Vi system and she did a fantastic job. A quick double check of her work (everything was spot-on) and we were watching the last season of America's Next Top Model on DVD.

Normally, this is the part of the review that I tell you about all the other associated components, interconnects and power cords, blah blah. Not this time, I used Naim speaker cables and the stock power cord-that's it. I told you this was easy. *(continued)*





While the manual is very well written and extremely comprehensive, the n-Vi system is very intuitive. Like all other components of this sort, you will need the remote to access all of the menus, but I was able to set the whole thing up in about another five minutes. The hierarchal menus let you choose what audio modes you want, as well as adjusting for the size of room and speakers. And because most of you will probably just use the n-Vi as your only component (besides your cable box) the back is nice and tidy, no superfluous wires. Don't forget the remote; Naim always provides a very smart remote and the one that comes with the n-Vi is no exception. Just DON'T lose the damn thing, because you can't control much without it!

The good news is that with all of this functionality in one modest sized remote, my Noguchi table is much clearer now! No more pile of remotes with this baby!

Once in operation, the proper round buttons with backlit green logos (exactly like all the other Naim components) let you know what is in operation. The front panel has a

fairly large green LCD screen that lets you know what sound mode you are in, along with a little diagram showing what speakers you have connected. I know this is a small but welcome touch; when you change the volume level, the readout is full screen and easily read from across the room as well as a bar graph coming up on the screen. Nice touch.

ROOM TO GROW

Should you decide to add a component or two there are a couple more inputs on the back. You can add a high level source as well as another digital one via an optical input. There are video outputs for interlaced as well as non interlaced which allowed me to use the n-Vi with my 42" Panasonic plasma screen as well as my Apple 30" HD Cinema monitor. I had an evil thought for a minute to use the n-Vi as my computer sound system, but that was just too decadent!!

If you wanted to make this your complete home audio and video control center, you could connect a phono preamplifier up to the aux inputs and still keep the box count to a

minimum. Not to mention that tuner idea...

PERFORMANCE TO SPARE

While I have a few friends with multi-kilo-watt home theater systems, I never found myself lacking for audio power with the n-Vi. I'm sure a little bit of that was in part to the 90db efficiency of the Naim speakers and the fact that the folks at Naim are always just a bit conservative in the way they rate their products.

Even watching the new version of **Casino Royale** at a fairly dynamic level, nothing was straining at all, especially during all of the shooting and the big explosion at the end. (don't want to give away too much for those of you that haven't seen it yet!!)

I also dropped in my favorite DVD from BMW Films with the first season of their shorts; featuring the incredible M5 short with Madonna called **The Hire**. Again, with the raging chase scene that ensued, I was able to hear the M5's V8 screaming at redline, just like it was racing around my living room. (heck, this disc is ALL chase scenes!!) *(continued)*

EVERYDAY DUTIES

As great of a DVD player as the n-Vi is, the real beauty of this device is that it is a great MUSIC system too. Not the world's biggest surround sound music person, it is still fun to investigate this world now and again, and I pulled out some of my favorite DVD-a discs to see how they did in multichannel mode.

I actually like listening to classical music a bit more than popular music in multichannel though. Some pop discs are just too trippy for me. Avoid Santana's Abraxas, if you don't like roller coaster effects, because Carlos' guitar pans all around the soundfield.

Gave me a headache, but I'm getting older; my daughter and her friends thought this was quite cool.

Two channel CD and DVD-a listening was excellent, with the internal amplifiers doing a great job with my Arivas combined with the Tannoy sub. Just to see how well the n-Vi did with speakers other than Naim, I substituted a pair of DeVore Gibbon Super 8s for the front channels and the B&W 805s for the rear. Again, excellent results, but this system is supposed to be about no fuss, no muss. Just go to your Naim dealer, get hooked up and forget about it.

YOU NEED AN N-VI

You probably get the picture that I'm nuts about the n-Vi. I would compare it to the Macintosh computer in the sense that it is an information appliance of the highest quality along with a very nice portion of personal style thrown in.

**Just go to your
Naim dealer,
get hooked up and
forget about it.**

No offense, but I review hifi for a living. The last thing I want to do on my day off is screw around with gear, or trip on cables. I want to crash on the couch and watch movies! (at least for part of the day..)

The n-Vi is as close to the perfect a/v device available on Earth today! It does everything that is required and it does it all very well, with the typical Naim understated excellence. Should you possess a gargantuan room, you may need more juice, but if you are like me and have a small to medium room, I can't think of a solution I would recommend more highly.

If you want performance, elegance, AND simplicity, the n-Vi is for you...●

MANUFACTURER INFORMATION

US: Naim USA 847-647-2293

www.naimusa.com

UK/Europe: Naim Audio Ltd.

www.naim-audio.com

ASSOCIATED COMPONENTS

Naim Ariva speakers (front), Naim n-Sat speakers (rear), Naim n-Cent speaker (center), DeVore Gibbon Super 8 (alternate front), B&W 805 (alternate rear)

Running Springs Haley power conditioner
Panasonic 42" Plasma TV, Apple 30" Cinema HD monitor

Slim Devices Squeezebox

