

NAD C515BEE and C315BEE

NAD C515BEE CD player (\$399) and C315BEE amplifier (\$549)

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Back in 1983 I purchased a second hand NAD 3020 amplifier – yes, *that* famous NAD amplifier – for the sum of \$350. While I was looking at the NAD components under review I wondered what that would be worth in today's money. A quick trip to the Reserve Bank's on-line inflation calculator and – crikey! – I paid \$987 for that second hand amp!

That makes the \$549 asked for the modern equivalent, the C315BEE, seem incredibly good value. And the \$399 price for the C515BEE CD player is almost a giveaway.

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Hi-fi pricing has been on my mind lately. There are far fewer sub-\$1000 components around these days, which makes it harder for music enthusiasts to put together their first real hi-fi system. So I welcome the introduction of these two components from NAD,

particularly as both can be purchased for under a grand.

Features and specifications

The 315 amplifier offers a lot on a compact package. There are six line level inputs (no built-in phono stage), a headphone socket and a remote control. Perhaps in recognition that ancillary equipment may not be of high quality or setup may not be optimum, the 315 included tone controls. But there are no flashing lights, silly featuritus or multiple speaker outputs. Just a focus on reproducing music.

There's not a lot that can be said about features on CD players these days, as they're much of a muchness. Except that the 515 can play back MP3 and WMA files burnt to a CD-R. I used this facility to play back a talking book I had in MP3 format.

Performance

The C515BEE is a more than ad-



equate performer at its low price. It may lack the heft, detail and ease of more expensive players, but then that is why they are more expensive.

The 515 shows a clean pair of heels to my DVD player in its ability to play music – to make you think that there are human beings involved in the production of music. This is an area where DVD players usually suffer and why I always recommend a CD player for a music oriented system.

The 315 amplifier is the stronger of the two components. It easily drove my 86dB sensitivity Epos speakers to surprisingly loud levels in my lounge – much better than the Arcam Solo Mini I reviewed in the previous issue. NAD have long achieved a reputation of producing amplifiers that drive speakers better than their specifications may suggest. The 315 carries on that tradition.

NAD's characteristic warmth comes

through nicely with the 315 amplifier. The broader midrange and treble are clear and easy to listen to. The bass is a little soft, though.

Plugging my Meridian CD player into the 315 showed a good performance bump in sound, showing that NAD's smallest can support better sources.

In combination the 515 and 315 are a potent music making machine. The single-box Arcam Solo Mini reviewed last issue may sound more refined, but it struggles at volume levels that the NAD amp handles with ease. The NAD combo also sells for a lot less – the NAD distributor offer a package including a pair of Energy speakers for less than the Arcam *sans* speakers.

I really welcome this combo from NAD. It shows that a good sounding component hi-fi system can be put together at a reassuringly low price.

—Michael Jones