

NAD | C446 | £695

Who needs AirPlay when music sounds this good?

The C446 marks NAD's latest arrival at a network-music party that seemed a bit slow to get going, but now shows signs of getting mighty crowded.

The £695 device is pitched up against some solid competition - not least the Marantz NA7004, five-star recipient of this parish. Clearly it's got its work cut out.

Deceptively detailed sound

And at first glance, things are a bit ho-hum: the NAD doesn't have Apple AirPlay, and the USB on the front panel is designed for thumb-drives and the like: if you want to hook up your iPod you'll need a dedicated dock plugged into a rear-panel socket.

There's no dedicated iPhone app either, but the NAD does have a trick up its sleeve: as well as having FM RDS/DAB+/AM tuners,

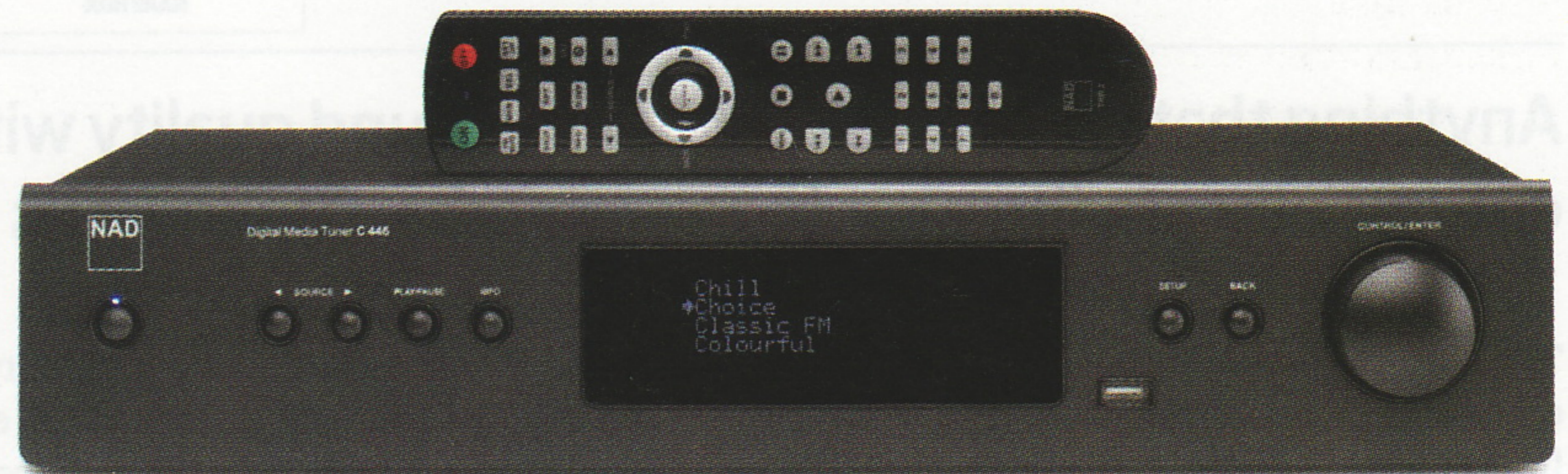
TECH SPECS

Type Streamer • **Wireless** Yes • **Inputs** USB, iPod dock, ethernet, Wi-Fi, FM, DAB and AM antennae • **Outputs** Line stereo, optical digital • **File formats** MP3, WAV, FLAC, AAC, WMA • **Size (hwd)** 44 x 10 x 34cm • **Weight** 4.7kg

internet/streaming radio access and the usual network functions (it can find and play music stored on UPnP/DLNA devices), it can also work as a network receiver, playing music streamed to it under the control of an external computer or portable.

We ran it with Twonky Mobile, a £1.99 iTunes download, on an iPod Touch, and while it doesn't have the 'point and squirt' appeal of AirPlay, it works smoothly and reliably - after a bit of familiarisation.

The sound here is the easy bit: like the design, it's deceptively detailed and powerful given the impression of ease and unflappability the player demonstrates. Everything's there, from gutsy bass to open, reverberant recorded acoustics, but it's not slung at you in a series of displays of ability; rather it reinforces the quality of the music.



Overlook the NAD C446 at your peril: this is both a deceptively flexible addition to the music-streaming ranks, Apple issues notwithstanding, and a fine-sounding one. It deserves a serious listen.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Flexibility; big, powerful and well-detailed sound; fine value for money

AGAINST No AirPlay; no dedicated control apps - if those are important to you

VERDICT NAD does it differently again, and comes up with a streaming bargain