

## Moon Nēo ACE

By [Simon Wilce](#). Published on 3 October 2016. [0](#)



This is the Moon Nēo ACE, an All-in-One music system of the highest quality. It features a fully asynchronous DAC that supports DSD and PCM to 32 bits/384kHz. With the integrated amplifier, also featured are line level inputs and digital inputs, including AptX Bluetooth, as well as a moving magnet phono input for turntables. This really is a world class piece of equipment that I have had the pleasure of listening to over the last week. Released earlier this year, it represents an entry to Moon electronics in the same way as the Uniti series offers the entry level for Naim products, as I know only too well.

### Design – Feature List

The Moon Nēo ACE is an all in one music system that streams, takes many Hi-Res digital and analogue inputs and is network connected either wirelessly or wired. The ACE has an integrated amplifier supplying a beefy 50W per channel into 8 Ohms. It does not feature a CD player which I am minded to say as I used to own a Naim Uniti 2 which is a similar price, specification and quality. As a family we had the need of the CD option because other members of the family are less tech/streaming-savvy than myself and so a CD player offers a means of justifying the expense at this price level, although this is a small issue and the Moon Nēo ACE makes up for this gap in other ways. So, as with the Uniti 2, just add speakers (and Tidal) and you are away.

The ACE, meaning ‘A Complete Experience’ goes from box to ears in minutes if you have speakers ready and waiting, although I would advocate a period of running in. A full list of features is listed below:

- Fully asynchronous DAC that supports DSD to DSD256 and PCM to 32 bits/384kHz, both through USB
- integrated amplifier, Class A/B, 50W per channel into 8 Ohms
- 3 line level inputs
- 7 digital inputs, including AptX Bluetooth
- a moving magnet phono input for turntables
- WiFi or networked connectivity
- MiND, Moon’s intelligent Network Device module for streaming. This includes Tidal and vTuner music services, controllable through the App, iOS or Android.
- Headphone output to 1/4 inch jack
- 3.5mm music player input
- OLED screen
- HT Bypass to accommodate home theatre processors or by-pass inputs, although I’m bound to say, this is something I have not tested or reviewed.
- CRM-3 remote control

## Quality

The Moon Nēo ACE radiates quality, from the OLED screen and the volume knob at the styled front to the terminals at the back and the remote control, which is compatible with other Moon products, CDs and DACs, by the look of it. At this price level we would expect the look and feel to be of ‘that’ standard, and sure enough, the ACE is just that. It is astonishingly weighty, with a brushed finish banishing pesky fingerprints.



## Review Set-up

My listening set-up for reviewing this Moon Nēo ACE includes KEF R700 speakers, the new Rega Planar 3 turntable into the MM phono input, a Naim Unitiserve (digitally connected), Tidal Music Streaming and Atlas Mavros speaker and Eos power cables. I’m using an Oppo BDP-105 as a CD player with Atlas SPDIF interconnect.

## Performance

the Moon Nēo ACE is a marvellous piece of equipment...the Moon electronics are terrific

Overall, after a fair amount of leisurely, then critical, listening I have to say the Moon Nēo ACE is a marvellous piece of equipment. As a Naim owner who has moved up the ladder from the Uniti 2 to other upgrades including the blockbuster NAC-N 272, the Moon Nēo ACE presents a wonderfully soft, rounded presentation for my ears and I really do like it. I get a fair amount of stick from those who feel the Naim sound can be overly harsh and really until you have prolonged access to other pieces such as this it is hard to get the argument but for sure the Moon electronics are terrific, I noted down that the softer bass notes are presented with more 'care' than my Naim system which is interesting because my current Naim system was killing my KEF R700s but here they are performing very nicely indeed, thank you very much.

Back to the Moon Nēo ACE, it is wonderful, incredibly well balanced and it handles the bass frequencies with a great deal of ease giving an overall deeper tone, for example in 'Budapest', by George Ezra. With Coldplay's "Everything's not Lost" the piano is softer and maybe more accurate and the snare in the 'Girl from Ipanema' by Amy Winehouse makes you come back again and again.

### **MiND, Server and Tidal**

I have downloaded the MiND App from Google Play and it is great, dead easy and connectivity is solid. Using a NAS drive is a piece of cake and the artwork is pulled through nicely (generally). If I sound surprised, I shouldn't really because these companies have proper App development teams these days and the App is a key feature of these hands off streamers and players.

The iPad App is really good too and connectivity has been faultless. I'm not clear how the App knew my Tidal password but I'll not get too stressed about it!

I've just realised that Spotify Connect is not mentioned anywhere in the documentation. I don't use Spotify so it is not a big deal for me, I guess the Bluetooth quality is sufficient to cover off Spotify, Deezer, etc.

### **MiND, VTuner**

The VTuner built into the MiND App is excellent, there's no bother with registration and passwords, it just works and even Radio 4 sounds great on the ACE, although you do get microphone breathing by some presenters, such is the playback quality!!

### **Bluetooth**

Using my Nexus 6P the connectivity is excellent, the Bluetooth is very effective and does not suffer from dullness that can predominate here. I don't think you would particularly listen critically or at high volume with the Bluetooth but it is as good as I have heard. The Moon takes Track information and puts it on the OLED screen at the front, which is large enough to read and can be dimmed by remote control. With my Nexus I was a good 9 meters away and the Bluetooth was very good with me moving about in front of the box taking pictures.

### **Digital SPDIF input from CD player, Digital SPDIF input from NAS drive**

One of the more haunting and arresting moments with the ACE was a good hour or so listening to my favourite Radiohead album, Amnesiac, and I have not heard the 'Pyramid Song' sound so amazing. With a CD input or the NAS drive inputs there is little to distinguish the two formats in my view, both are crystal clear with a wide dominant soundstage that is hard to beat.

## Planar 3 MM input

Once again the ACE just 'aced' it



Next I plugged in the latest Rega Planar 3 (that's the '2' next to it) with the Elys2 cartridge to the Moving Magnet input at the back of the Moon Neo ACE. Once again the ACE just 'aced' it, pardon the pun. Tons of detail and strong bass again predominate and the phono stage is at least as good as the Rega Elicit R into amplifier that I have been so impressed with over the last few months.

## Front Music Player In Jack

This was the least impressive performer for me with problems with two channel output from my Nexus phone. To be honest, it is not really a big one for me but if you are wedded to your playlists in an iPod, it is useful. I note further that there is no USB A style input to the ACE.

Our only iPod is permanently wired to the NAC (and the Uniti 2 before that) and the sound is stunning so I think if this is important to you, have a ponder.

## Headphone Out

Any disappointment of the MP In was forgotten when I plugged in my Oppo PM-2s with upgraded Atlas cables into the 1/4 inch proper jack output at the front. I was reminded of the fabulous [Moon Neo 230 HAD](#) headphone amplifier I had a while back. What a sound, breathtaking clarity and dynamics and this knocks the socks off the Naim products that usually have the 3.5mm headphone jack output, which I really struggle with (since I don't have any decent headphones with a 3.5mm jack!).

## Remote Control

The remote is nice, not great, but better than that on the 230HAD. It is multi-function by the look of it and appears to control other Moon products, amps, CDs and DACs. It does a few things well, mute is OK to find if you get a phone call and you can dim the display. It has a soft grippy base to stop it slipping off surfaces. I would like it to light up, as I do like low lighting if I'm listening to music only. No complaints here.

## USB DSD

Does anyone buy DSD? Where can you buy DSD tracks? I've downloaded some albums from HD Tracks but only for this site.

Coldplay, U2 or Ryan Adams and others are not available on DSD so why are we still here? Well, the answer, of course, is it does sound



really good, really really good with wide separation of vocals, instruments and it does feel like you are 'there'! I have a copy of Harry Connick's 'We Are In Love', jazzy, big band, funky and rhythmic. On the Moon it is crystal, fantastic, uncluttered and very lively, hugely impressive.

## MQA

For MQA read DSD. Popular music and MQA do not belong in the same sentence. The current library is very limited and it is very frustrating that you cannot get the MQA files you may want. The current build of ACE cannot support MQA with a firmware update. Moon say that future builds may do, but it will presumably depend on the growth of MQA. I gather the advanced DAC technology in the ACE might be compromised by MQA so there is a way to go with MQA. With such a good sound, why would you compromise?

## Other Competitors

this Moon Nēo ACE is a must listen, if you are contemplating a high-level entry into HiFi

I guess, if you are after a one box solution for you home the Moon Nēo ACE is in the same category as the Naim SuperUniti or, price wise, the Naim Uniti 2. Cyrus have/had the Lyric 09 which was OK and T+A had their Music Receiver, which is being updated to be the new E Series, and that will be well worth a listen probably borrowing from the very impressive R Series. I guess also that Linn do an all in one player but their site is so complicated I can't figure out what I'm looking at. But if you are entering the HiFi game and this is your entry point, you have a critical philosophical decision to make if this where you are. I went Naim several years ago because I loved the style and sound. My upgrades are thus predicated on this decision, Naim Phono stages take power from the boxes, I'm looking at separate power supplies now and they have to Naim because, well they just do. I can't see myself selling up and converting to another HiFi brand, it is just going to be too aggravating.

What I'm trying to say is this Moon Nēo ACE is a must listen, if you are contemplating a high-level entry into HiFi. I love the warmth in the sound and the bass control is impressive. I'm in the Naim stream but I wish this was around five or six years ago. I wonder what I would have done?

## Overall

The Moon Nēo ACE is easily one of the nicest and best performing boxes I have had the pleasure of listening to. As I have just said, if you are entering the higher end of the HiFi game, you really should listen to this. It does everything in the hands off digital world.

### Love

Warmth and care of the sound presentation

Phono input

Headphone output

Satisfying volume knob

### Like

The OLED display

The App

Wish - It was here six years ago