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AUGUST 2013

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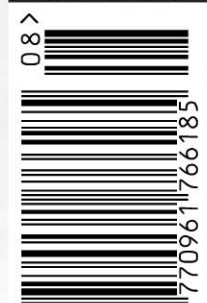
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**14 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF KEF Q100 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)**



# White Light

**German loudspeaker specialist Quadral has revamped its popular Platinum range – and they're sounding better than ever says Jon Myles.**

**Q**uadral will be a familiar name to regular readers of Hi-Fi World. The German company's up-market Aurum range of loudspeakers has garnered enthusiastic reviews with us – especially for its in-house designed ribbon tweeter.

But the Quadral product line is nothing if not comprehensive. So if your pockets (or, indeed, living space) cannot stretch to the likes of the massive £6,600 Aurum Vulkan VIII then the company can offer up its Platinum range for consideration – and more specifically the new Platinum M50 floorstander I am reviewing here.

The model sits at the top of the Platinum series and is a replacement for the well-regarded M5 – with significant improvements aimed at lifting its overall performance. Changes include new drivers for the high and low frequencies and a reworked crossover.

Berlin-based designer Sascha Reckert says the main goal was to develop an exceptionally clean and accurate speaker while retaining the dynamism that is a natural attribute of good metal-coned drivers. "The main changes on the new speaker are in the woofer and tweeter design. "The woofer has new motors and cones for a better frequency response. The M5 was



slightly bloomy around the 100Hz mark. With the M50 we've tuned the speakers for a smoother but deeper and cleaner bass".

The RiCom-M tweeter used in the M5 was also reworked. Its RiCom-V replacement is a ring-dome unit said to give better dispersion and also extending lower in frequency to give better integration with the mid-range drivers (for technical details see Measured Performance).

Sascha explains: "The tweeter is a ring radiator with a titanium diaphragm that is stable and clean, playing up to the highest frequencies of about 50 kilohertz. Acoustically for us this is the best alternative to ribbons because the sound characteristics are similar".

Standing 113mm tall, the Platinum M is a full three-way, reflex-loaded five driver design. That tweeter is placed D'Appolito-style between the

flush to the fascia and an understated Quadral logo adorning the top of each cabinet.

### SOUND QUALITY

Quadral's claim to have voiced the Platinum M50s for a smooth, natural sound certainly rings true. But if you think that's a euphemism for laidback and polite then think again.

Instead the Quadral's reproduce music with a confident, unforced ease but with plenty of dynamic thrust, without imposing too much of their own character on it.

Sited firing straight down the listening room and powered by a pair of Quad QMP monoblocks, the M50s produced a rich swathe of sound with a hear-through quality that evinced masses of detail.

The textures and delicate sonic touches of Radiohead's 'Kid A' were finely etched and easy to follow

required sub-sonic punch.

It is perhaps a little drier in the lower registers than some other speakers. Bass notes stop and start without any obvious bloom – although replacing the Quads with a Naim SuperNait for a while did add a touch more fruitiness in this area.

Playing some Eleanor McEvoy saw her voice relayed with sparkling clarity and precision. Being hyper-critical you could argue the slightly hard-edged sheen of metallic drivers can be detected at times – but all cone materials have their own characteristic and here it is very well-controlled, the midband never

"Only a special few manage to put it all together in one elegant, eminently enjoyable package. But that's exactly what the Platinum M50 does"

two 135mm mid-range drivers which in turn sit above a lower chamber housing the pair of 180mm bass drivers that are recessed slightly from the fascia and protected by a row of seven metal struts.

All four cone drivers – the two midrange and the two bass units – are made of an in-house developed membrane constructed from a high-strength aluminium-magnesium alloy.

The front of the cabinet features chamfered edges to aid sound dispersion and the grille affixes to the front via concealed magnets to cover all the drivers.

Round the back are a large bass port and two sets of speaker binding posts to facilitate bi-wiring. In a nice touch Quadral supplies a set of Real Cable jumpers for those opting for single-wired operation – an improvement on the pressed metal links provided by many other manufacturers.

The supplied units came in a white gloss finish – although black is also available – and the whole package is undoubtedly well-finished and elegant for the price, with the drive unit's metal surrounds fitting

– with the mid-range drivers snapping into action with admirable precision when the music moved up a pace.

It's clear the ViCom-R ring-dome tweeter is a well-designed unit. Its ability to go lower than conventional units means there's never a hint of crossover suckout ensuring smooth integration with the relatively speedy mid-range drivers.

And those mids can deliver the pace when the music demands. Parts of Acoustic Ladyland's 'Last Chance Disco' collection positively charges along with a sax/drums/bass/keyboards frenzy but the Quadral's never missed a beat. Nor did they miss any of the detail in the mix – managing to delineate the little flourishes and background sounds which can often be missed by lesser speakers.

Bass response is also impressive. There may not be the visceral slam of a 12-inch driver but the large rear port enables the M50s to go impressively low when the music demands. The beginning of Bach's 'Passaglia in C Minor' spirals down with real power through the Quadral's until its final organ note hits you with the



*A large rear bass port provides in-room response down to 25Hz.*

sounding anything but civilised.

While there's no midband lift to project vocals artificially forward, image placement is nevertheless supremely natural and true to life. On well-recorded acoustic material you hear not only where the musicians are placed but also just how they are playing their instruments. When William Parker solos on the Gayle/Parker/Ali collection 'Touchin' On

Trane' you can sense his fingers moving along the double bass before Charles Gayle's saxophone cuts in, seemingly suspended just in front and above his playing partner.

OK, it's a sonic illusion – but it's exactly what a good loudspeaker should do. And the Platinum M50 is a very good loudspeaker indeed.

Some may crave a little more edge or so-called zing to their sound – which is probably where Quadral's ribbon tweeter-equipped models come in to their own. Toeing-in the M50s does lift the treble to a degree – but essentially this is a superbly neutral and well-balanced speaker that just sounds right.

**CONCLUSION**

Some speakers impress with clean



**Quadral's new RiCom-V ring dome tweeter gives an exceptionally smooth and flat response.**

treble, low-end power, mid-range detail or out-of-the-box imaging. Only a special few manage to put it

all together in one elegant, eminently enjoyable package. But that's exactly what the Platinum M50 does.

Quadral's engineers have managed to integrate its five drivers superbly to produce a cohesive whole that sounds clean and musical from top to bottom without over-emphasising any area of the audio spectrum.

It has both scale and control and the ability to get down and boogie when the occasion demands yet stay smooth and refined when that's what the music requires.

Other speakers may sound subjectively better in one area or other in the short-term – but the M50 is the one that will reward much more over the longer listening period.



**MEASURED PERFORMANCE**

Our frequency response graph told me immediately that the tweeter in Quadral's new Platinum M50 is of 'ring dome' construction, it is so flat. This new form of tweeter, comprising an annular ring driven close to its periphery, gives a smooth response free from the peaking of conventional domes, and none of their sharp sonic character.

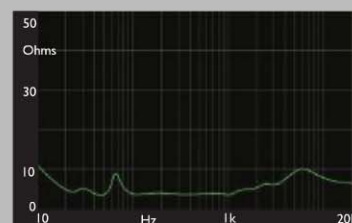
Quadral's own RiCom-V design uses a neodymium ring magnet and a silk diaphragm, set into a short horn to control dispersion, in order to give smooth off-axis response in the 2300Hz crossover region. Quadral point out that the RiCom-V goes lower than dome tweeters, easing the crossover transition due to the longer wavelengths involved. Our graph clearly shows an unusually

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE**



**Green - driver output  
Red - port output**

**IMPEDANCE**



smooth, flat response 20 degrees off-axis. On-axis treble lifts a little, by +1dB or so, in plateau fashion. So the M50 will sound most accurate when pointed straight down the room, but for those who find this too neutral toeing-in lifts treble a little. Absence of a crossover suckout means detailing will be strong, with no softness in the sound.

The important midrange region is smooth too, which suggests low coloration and correct tonal balance. Our 200mS decay spectrum (not shown) backs this up, showing little coloration exists.

Quadral do not lift bass output so the M50 may sound dry in its balance compared to some loudspeakers, but bass from the large port goes very low, the red trace of port output shows, down to 25Hz. This loudspeaker will produce subsonics, in a room large enough to support low frequencies.

The impedance curve shows the port damps the bass units superbly, resulting in an almost flat impedance plot below 100Hz. This will ensure good power transfer, whilst even electrical and acoustical damping suggests excellent bass quality. The rise in impedance below 20Hz is due to the use of a high value blocking capacitor; the M50 is not direct coupled and will resist subsonic LP warp information, suppressing cone flap.

The Platinum M50 is a thoroughly well engineered loudspeaker that measures superbly in all areas. It has not been tuned for showroom effect, but for a high degree of accuracy and neutrality, suiting long term enjoyment. **NK**

**QUADRAL  
PLATINUM M50  
FLOORSTANDING  
LOUDSPEAKER**

**£3,150**

**OUTSTANDING - simply the best**

**VALUE - keenly priced**

**VERDICT**  
A superbly engineered loudspeaker that combines low-end authority with mid-band detail and clean, spacious treble. Highly recommended.

**FOR**  
- smooth and accurate  
- powerful bass  
- detailed mid-band

**AGAINST**  
- nothing at the price

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