

QUAD L-ITE COMPACT PACKAGE ADDS A TOUCH OF CLASS

It's not the first conventional speaker design from Quad but this is one of its most competitive buys yet, says Tony Williams

MENTION THE WORDS 'Quad' and 'loudspeakers' to an audio enthusiast and from their reaction you could more or less tell blindfold the age of the person you're addressing. Those with a long memory will get nostalgic for the classic electrostatic designs that formed the mainstay of the company's range for four decades from the late 1950s; for younger buyers, the story starts with the beautiful little 11L monitors, a two-way standmount design finished to a superb standard in real wood and layers of piano lacquer.

Quad remains committed to its electrostatic speakers and it's one of the worst-kept secrets in audio that new designs of this kind are on the way. They broke cover at the Milan show last year and should be available soon.

Meanwhile, the 'new Quad' speaker range continues to grow. To the original models in the new L range – there were 77L box speakers a long time back – the company has added a dedicated centre speaker; and now there's a new £1000 package of miniature Quad speakers called the L-ite and aimed at the home-cinema market.

The L-ite uses variations on the drive units found in the 11L: an upgraded 25mm soft-dome tweeter and a 10cm woven Kevlar drive unit, in a cabinet just 22.5cm tall. A matching centre speaker doubles up on the bass drivers, as is usually the way in speakers of this kind, and the system is completed with a subwoofer using a 25cm 'Tri-laminate' carbon/glass-fibre sandwich cone and a 300W amplifier. But all of the niceties of the bigger versions are retained: the speakers come in a choice of piano black, silver, rose-wood or cherry finishes, all coated with high-gloss lacquer; the small speakers are biwireable and magnetically shielded; and the subwoofer comes with full remote control for set-up and adjustment. The standard package comprises a centre speaker, two pairs of satellites and the subwoofer, while extra pairs of satellites are available for £150 for extended surround.

Performance

The Quad 11Ls have picked up more than their fair share of awards. This new compact system builds on their strengths with a sound that will please those wanting the full surround sound experience without either filling the room with huge speakers or going for one of the more eye-catching 'designer' packages, and will amaze those who believe there's no substitute for big speakers when a full-scale sound is called for. Listen to them with some powerful home-cinema amplification – one of the current crop of over-achieving integrated receivers would do very nicely – and you could be convinced that you were enjoying much larger loudspeakers.

Part of the secret of the Quads' success is the near-perfect integration between the smaller speakers in

the system and the excellent subwoofer: it takes very little time to set up this package and tune it, and after that the illusion of convincing bass from tiny enclosures is really rather magical. Whether playing action movies at full tilt or music from SACD, the L-ite system sounds sweet and refined, while at the same time able to deliver dramatic dynamics on demand without any loss of composure. Indeed, there's very little else to say about this set-up, so well does it fit its brief: this is an excellent no-compromise speaker system for multichannel sound – only smaller! 

Quad L-ite system

Type 5.1-channel speaker system

Price £1000

Drive units 25mm soft dome tweeter, 10cm mid/bass (two in centre), 25cm bass unit in subwoofer

Frequency response 70Hz-25kHz, subwoofer 25-95Hz

Nominal impedance 6 ohms

Power handling 20-150W; subwoofer has 300W amplifier

Dimensions (HxWxD) 22.5x13.5x16cm satellites, 13.5x34x16cm centre, 48.5x28.8x42.5cm subwoofer

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The Quad L-ite system comprises compact satellites, a slimline centre speaker and a scaled-down version of the L-series subwoofer

