

AWARDS  2001

SPEAKER TO £4000



QUAD 988 £3400

LEGEND HAS IT that Quad founder Peter J Walker started developing his second full-range electrostatic speaker in 1963, which is why — although it didn't go into production until 1981 — this model was known as the ESL-63. It was intended to replace the original Quad Electrostatic, in production since 1957, and now regarded as the classic speaker of all time.

The '63 was designed to overcome the usual directivity problems of panel loudspeakers, which tend to 'beam' the sound so that the listener has to be in exactly the right position to hear. The solution was a simulated point source, achieved electronically by making the electrostatic panel radiate as a series of concentric 'rings', each with a tiny successive time delay. Since then, the ESL-63 has itself become a classic. The Quad company has changed hands twice, but the present owners fully recognised the value of the heritage they'd acquired, and set about the daunting task of re-engineering the ESL-63 as a viable modern product.

Although the 988 essentially is a '63, many internal parts had to be redesigned, and from a production engineering point of view, it is a new model. Yet almost incredibly, it retains the transparent, natural and (in the mid and treble) overwhelmingly 'right' sound which, yet again, caused our judges to choose it over all comers.

