

# Once driven, forever smitten

Quadral's Chromium 5.1 set makes a very good impression on **Ed Selley**

Quadral is not a UK household name. The German brand has been in business for nearly 40 years, but has only ever intermittently appeared in this country. Now the manufacturer is making a serious attempt on the UK market with its full range of products, of which the Chromium range is the second most pricey in the sizeable lineup. Tested here is a package comprising the £1,160 Chromium 50 floorstanders, £650 Chromium 30 standmounts, £410 Chromium 10 centre and £475 88DV sub. All parts are available separately.

From the moment that you extract them from the (well thought out) packaging, the attention to detail is superb for the price. The black gloss finish is flawless and extremely attractive and the attention to detail in the fit and finish of the cabinets is of a very high standard, including the must-have feature of the moment, magnetic grille tabs.

There are some interesting design details as well. The floorstanders have no provision for spikes to be fitted to the base. Instead a large, circular piece of glass attaches by screws. This base means that the Chromiums pass stringent German stability legislation and prove to be extremely hard to knock over. Another interesting feature is that none of the speakers can be bi-wired. All of them share the same terminal panel that sports a pair of hefty WBT plugs. For those keen on using bi-amp functions this might be a problem, but it suggests that Quadral do what they think will perform best rather than following the herd.

The Chromiums are described as a 'Style' system. In other words, much time has been spent making the product's looks live up to its sound quality. Quadral either didn't get this

memo or decided to ignore it, as the insides of the Chromium's are far more interesting than the outsides. Most noticeable is the use of ribbon tweeters throughout. This isn't unheard of at the price, but rather than off-the-shelf units, the Quadral ribbons are bespoke and descended from the flagship Aurum units. The ribbon is folded inside the enclosure to increase the surface area, and the whole assembly is moved by a double magnet assembly.

The main driver is also used across all the speakers. This is a 135mm unit that is once again proprietary. The dish is a polypropylene assembly coated in a specially mastered titanium mixture and that's not a combination seen anywhere else. As the cabinet enclosure is relatively small it is a long-throw design that manages to give the 94cm tall Chromium 50's an eyebrow-raising frequency response of 35Hz to 65kHz. An identical driver complement throughout bodes well for a seamless handover between the units.

## Burly chassis

Amongst all this technical wizardry, the 88DV subwoofer is relatively conventional. In an area increasingly dominated by Class D and Class T designs, it uses a conventional class A/B amp with attendant heatsink on the rear panel. There is no additional EQ software or notch filtering, and we gained the best results leaving crossover and level settings to the AV receiver. The downward firing driver feels pretty burly and the front port made it easy enough to place in a number of different locations.

Setup of the Quadral's proved relatively simple from the outset. They are rear ported so placement some way from rear walls helps, but otherwise they are unfussy. The



**High pedigree:** Chromium's ribbon tweeter tech has filtered down from Quadral's flagship Aurum range



**AV/CV**

**Product:**  
5.1 midrange  
speaker system

**Positioning:**  
Second in the  
Quadral lineup

**Peers:**  
PSB Imagine  
Series;  
XTZ 99 5.1;



**Alluring build:**

Magnetic grille tabs and the gloss black finish mean these cabinets look good in your room

ribbon tweeter gives a relatively large sweet spot so there is little sign of 'beaming' in their presentation, and it is possible to be in a variety of listening locations and not feel out of place. They are not hugely sensitive so will benefit from a reasonable power output to show what they are capable of, but the impedance seems to stay nearer the 8Ω mark than the 4Ω, which means they provide an easy electrical load.

**Ab fab**

Given this is one of the most keenly contested price points for speaker packages, why should you seek out the Quadral's over the countless other brands that can produce something similar? The answer is because the Chromiums sound absolutely fantastic.

Set up and with a few hours under its belt, this is one of the most cohesive sounding speaker systems out there. Ribbon tweeters can occasionally have trouble integrating with conventional pistonic drivers, but the fact the Quadral has developed these drivers entirely in-house and in partnership with one another gives them incredible top-to-bottom cohesion. It is very difficult to determine where tweeter ends and mid bass begins and the use of the same driver everywhere makes for a superb handover from left to right and front to back.

The awards magnet that is the *The King's Speech* is not an explosion fest, but the soundtrack is a feast of incidental details that combine to create a wonderful sense of atmosphere. The Quadral's are able to reproduce this detail with an effortlessness that is apparent only when you compare other speakers. What is simply background effect for many systems is a wealth of individual details. They manage to sound uncannily real, as well. Voices and sounds are rarely less than utterly believable. This combination of scale, realism and detail means the Quadral's are able to get the best from pretty much any soundtrack you throw at them.

Switch to the more muscular mayhem of *Unstoppable* and the Quadral's maintain the same incredible insight into the soundtrack. They happily step up as the action does, too, going very loud indeed without signs of stress, while conveying the action with real vigour. Compared to some subwoofers, the 88DV trades absolute depth for speed and agility, not least because it needs to keep up with the loudspeakers. There are some designs available for a little more outlay that will go lower and drive harder, but you will need to make sure that they can match the speed and clarity that the 88DV possesses.

**In a typical UK lounge, the Quadral's manage to fill a room with sound without dominating or overpowering it.** If you live on a diet of pure action you may want more low-end heft. If your preferences are in any way more varied than that, the Quadral's are supremely accomplished all-rounders. This extends to music, where the same smooth handover between drivers and excellent tonality puts them very near the top of the tree for two-channel work.

**Can't get wood**

There are very few negatives to this package. A dedicated effects speaker might best the Chromium 30 in a surround role and those seeking a wood finish will need to go elsewhere. But if you are looking for some of the very best drivers available at the price in a beautifully finished, handsome enclosure, the Quadral's will take a huge amount of beating. There is no shortage of choice in the £2,500 speaker package category, but when a new arrival is this good, there is always space for one more ●

**→ Specifications****Chromium 50 Floorstander**

**Drive Units:** 2x 135mm Polypropylene/Titanium sandwich, Titanium ribbon  
**Enclosure:** Rear Ported  
**Frequency Response:** 35hz-65kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 88dB  
**Power Handling:** Not disclosed  
**Dimensions:** 166(w) x 941(h) x 242(d)mm  
**Weight:** 12.2kg

**Chromium 30 Standmount**

**Drive Units:** 1x 135mm Polypropylene/Titanium sandwich, Titanium ribbon  
**Enclosure:** Rear Ported  
**Frequency Response:** 40hz-65kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 87dB  
**Power Handling:** Not disclosed  
**Dimensions:** 166(w) x 319(h) x 242(d)mm  
**Weight:** 5.5kg

**Chromium 10 Centre**

**Drive Units:** 2x 135mm Polypropylene/Titanium sandwich, Titanium ribbon  
**Enclosure:** Rear Ported  
**Frequency Response:** 49hz-65kHz  
**Sensitivity:** 88dB  
**Power Handling:** Not disclosed  
**Dimensions:** 550(w) x 166(h) x 242(d)mm  
**Weight:** 7.7kg

**SUB 88DV Activ**

**Drive Unit:** 250mm Fabric coated paper woofer  
**Enclosure:** Downward firing ported  
**Frequency Response:** 22Hz-150Hz  
**On board power:** 150W  
**Dimensions:** 319(w) 395(h) x 400(d)mm  
**Weight:** 14.8kg

**HCC VERDICT**

Quadral Chromium  
Approx £2,700

**Highs:** Superb performance; easy placement and setup; strong build and handsome aesthetic

**Lows:** Subwoofer trades speed for absolute depth; no wood finish

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5