



CULTURAL EVOLUTION

// Lothar Brandt

**To all appearances, the Quadral Titan VIII hardly has anything in common with its mighty predecessors. Its new look matches a new, highly cultivated sound:
This superbox is a master of both loud and soft tones.**

Quadral Titan – a living legend. But not a fossil. Because instead of a hopeless, petrified existence in technology museums and dusty bachelor pads, this quintessentially masculine speaker has undergone a real evolution. Now, in its eighth generation, it can occupy the regal throne on the super-speaker Mount Olympus. This is a contrast to its brutish namesakes born of the earth goddess in Greek mythology, whom the king of the gods Zeus wiped from the face of the earth.

But as befits true heroes of evolution, the Titan has also gone through several stages of internal and external development. With ancestors dating to 1981, and a true leader with a 30-inch bass speaker, a transmission line, and a colossal, broad-walled appearance, today's great-great-great-great-great grandchild has more in common with an Arabian stallion than with a Germanic warhorse.

At 31 cm wide and barely 1.40 m tall, the young Titan is comparatively well proportioned. How-

ever, the its approximately 60 cm depth and considerable 88 kg weight — not to mention its price of 14,300 francs per pair — give it away as the titan flagship of the Aurum series.

TRUE RIBBON

Launched in Germany with pricey materials. After a long dry spell, the old CEO Edmond Semmelhaack has taken charge again and put Quadral back on the road to success. Thus his developer

A dazzling appearance: The Quadral Aurum Titan indulges the eyes with its high-gloss finish in black or white. But it also cuts a stunning figure in brown or red.



Sascha Reckert had the leeway to create something so new that the eighth generation has barely anything to do with the seventh, other than the name.

It starts with the tweeter. While its predecessors still had magnetostatics for reproducing the upper octaves, the new Titan uses a true ribbon. This type of transducer is as rare as it is expensive. In magnetostatics, a conducting path meanders along a non-conductive foil that is clamped tightly in a magnetic field. However, a true ribbon is a fluted piece of metal on which the music (AC) voltage is applied and is thus completely traversed by the signal current. In time with the music, it moves forward and back in the directed magnetic field, thus creating sound. To achieve reasonably good efficiency, however, the tweeter requires very strong magnets — and here, to his chagrin, Semmelhaack has to splurge on the rare earth neodymium, whose price has recently spiralled upward as steeply as the Greek economy has swirled downward.

For the midrange speaker — which is responsible for almost the entire voice range of 200 to 3000 hertz — and for the 25-inch basses in their own pressure-chamber bass reflex housing, Quadral puts its money on the traditional cone shape. It minimizes distortion using an alloy of aluminium, titanium and magnesium — from whence the artfully coined term Altima. The frequency separating filter is a true work of art — in the literal sense of the word: You can even see this richly equipped trailblazer right through a transparent piece in the rear wall, but only the

imposing portion for the mid and high ranges, because the bass filter plunges deep inside.

One exciting feature is the room adjustment what Quadral allows separately for all channels: Toggle switches let you increase or decrease by two decibels. In especially dry, smaller or heavily insulated rooms, switching can provide either more or less bass volume, pressure, transparency or brilliance.

In *Home Electronics*' listening room, everything could be left in the middle position. The exercise with spikes or sub-feet could be dispensed with, because the mounted base plate belongs with the bass reflex guide. This is the best place for the Titan to sit, with the slightly rearward leaning baffle angled a bit toward the listener. And it should stand freely in the room, if possible. Pushed too close against the back wall or in the corner, this big box can provide too much of a good thing in the bass range.

TRULY DEEP BASS

And the Titan did well. Not just in the bass range. But while we're plumbing the depths: Although this superbox doesn't look so titanic anymore, it goes especially low. Our colleagues from German sister magazines have determined the lower limit frequency — where the level drops six decibels from the average — to an abysmal 22 hertz. This is just barely above the lowest tones reached by acoustic instruments. The lowest octave — from subcontra C to contra C — extends from approximately 16.4 to about 32.8. >>



Fine separation: The imposingly equipped mid to high portion of the frequency separating filter can be seen at work behind the plexiglass. The toggle switches underneath adjust the level.

» And only large organs, grand pianos and very few wind instruments can reach this far. By comparison: With its thickest string, a jazz bass produces 44.1 hertz. Sound techs trim radio-friendly pop music at no lower than 50 hertz, and not without first raising to 60 hertz, which should mimic real bass.

As always: A large drum, like the one thundering so massively in the “Dies irae” movement of the Verdi Requiem, literally delivers a blow to the gut. Even in recordings, it is always impressive when this instrument is tuned to about 32 hertz and struck hard. Playing the still standard 1968 Georg Solti recording (also see p. 16), the Titan delivered the desired impact.

ABSOLUTELY UNDISTORTED

And it did so without distortion during the massive choral entrances. Above all, the Titan was exemplary in its clarity throughout the frequency range. Even our colleagues in the laboratory confirmed that, all the way up to party volumes, they couldn’t make out a hint of distortion even in the ribbon. The author — whose tastes run from classical music to progressive rock — could easily cut loose with Dream Theater’s “Train of Thought” CD at a volume that would cause neighbours to file a complaint for disturbing the peace.

Amidst the pure pleasure of John Petrucci’s insanely agile guitar runs and Mike Portnoy’s incredible drum escapades, my brain never told me to turn it down. Assuming good health and a good mood, our ears and the hearing centre connected to them are ultimately the most reli-

able instruments for, delicately embedded with a guitar, the quality of a hi-fi system. When you’d rather not hear your favourite music “so loud”, it’s usually a dead give-away that the equipment is no good.

There’s no trace of this with the Quadral — even though at first the recently introduced “Aurum” electronics took control. Edmond Semmelhaack has decided to introduce his own CD player and amplifier under the august trademark. At the time of testing, the A5 integrated amplifier (3,550 francs) and the C5 CD player (2,780 francs) were available. Both components proved themselves more than worthy of the Aurum banner: The CD player delivered highly sensitive, delicate voice reproduction and powerful but never intrusive brilliance. The integrated amplifier provided magnificent but casual, very responsively rendered sound of impressive depth and colour.

FOR SOFT VOLUMES, TOO

Thus, the jury didn’t hesitate to submit the proprietary electronics to a portion of the test that may seem somewhat strange for speakers so large. Nonetheless, it says a lot about tuning and overall quality. That was listening at medium and even soft levels. But for one thing, sensitive singer-songwriters and finely chiselled chamber music is not intended to be heard at brutish volumes. For another, even owners of detached houses are careful not to wake the wife and kids at night.

With the Titan, it was even a pleasure to listen to soft music, like the legendary “Ester” by FIM, now remastered and reissued with outstanding

sound quality (see p. 44). Esther Ofarim’s bell-like voice, delicately embedded with a guitar or the Munich Chamber Orchestra, enchanted with all their nuances, all their intimacy, zeal and passion. Probably all the world’s hi-fi testers have squeezed most of the enjoyment out of recordings that are now 40 years old, but with the Titan, the new ultra-HD disk makes them worth listening to again.

Dug up from the archives, “Sleeper” was definitely no snoozer. This highly refined 1979 “European” chamber quartet by jazz great Keith Jarrett, as well as other LPs and SACDs, showed the enormously airy, effortless, high-precision joy of this premium box from Hanover. Most inspiring was the seamless transition from mid-range speaker to ribbon. Singers would describe it as perfect “register balance”. Neither piano nor saxophone runs, high hat rides nor hard cymbal crashes fell apart acoustically. Definitely not a given with the combination of dynamic and ribbon conversion. But head developer Reckert has achieved excellence. Kudos!

To top things off, when it came to amplifiers, it was time to bring out the heavy artillery. With an efficiency factor of about 86 decibels per watt at a one-metre distance, the Titan is considerably less power hungry than its ancestor (78 dB), but the low-watt transistor amps and single-ended triode tubes quickly reached their limits. With a possible undistorted maximum level of 115.5 dB, one can even go for powerful output stages. Even with mono-blocks from Classé, the premium German box dashed like a harnessed Arabian stallion. Though not available in the HE



Family ties: The C5 CD player and A5 integrated amplifier bring honour to the Quadral name. Swiss distributor Sacom can deliver both, and soon a pre-amplifier combination will follow.

listening room, the resounding, refined power of the gigantic T+A M10 sounds good to the author's ears. These tube-transistor hybrids can form dream combination with the Titan.

VERDICT

Even when not driven by super amplifiers, the new Quadral Aurum Titan storms the Mount Olympus of speakers. It is a bass-rich, very neutral, unspectacularly tuned box for almost any level, any musical style and almost any listening room larger than 25 square metres. If required, highly cultivated sound goes along with midriff-massaging dynamics. Special praise goes to the exemplary blending of a dynamic transducer and ribbon, and extra praise to the excellent workmanship. [↗](#)

PROFILE

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Manufacturer | Quadral |
| Model | Aurum Titan |
| Price at testing (per pair) | 14,300 francs |
| Info www. | quadral.com; sacom.ch |

EQUIPMENT FEATURES

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimensions (H × W × D) | 139 × 31 × 58 cm |
| Weight | 88 kg |
| System | Three-way bass reflex |
| Tweeter | True ribbon |
| Mid-range/woofer | 1/2 cone; 17/26 cm |
| Sensitivity (dB/1 W/1 m) | 86 |
| Impedance | Min. 2.9; 4 ohm cut |
| Recommended amplifier output | 50 watts at 2 ohms |
| Bi-wiring | yes |
| Finishes | high gloss black, high gloss white, cherry, nature oak, choco oak |
| Special features | Other colours at additional charge; pressure-chamber bass; cover with magnet attachment |

RATING

| | |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| + | fascinatingly balanced, highly cultivated sound |
| + | extremely deep-reaching, contoured bass |
| + | transparent, fine-resolution, unstrained brilliance |
| + | good efficiency factor and good spacialization |
| - | requires at least a middle-sized room and free set-up |
| - | may be a little too cultivated for heavy metal fans |