

Awesome Aurums



Quadral's new Aurum Rodan 9 floorstanders are one of the German company's finest yet, says Jon Myles.

I'll make no bones about the fact that I'm a fan of Quadral loudspeakers. A number of the German company's models have passed through the Hi-Fi World listening room over the past few years and each one has been well-built and well-engineered with a natural sound free of artificiality.

So I was more than keen to get my hands on the latest product from their range – the £4999 Rodan 9 floostander. It's part of Quadral's upmarket Aurum range but sits below the biggest models such as the Titan and Vulkan. Compared to those two it's positively compact – measuring a slim 22cm wide and standing just over three feet tall. Those dimensions though, mean it will fit easily into the confines of the average British living room.

The cabinet itself is built to Quadral's usual exacting standard with chamfered edges at the front to help sound dispersion and sturdy gold-plated twin binding posts at the rear – connected

nasty metal plates favoured by other manufacturers for those opting to go single-wired (which I do).

It's a true three-way design with a pair of 155mm bass drivers situated above the front-firing reflex port backed by a sealed cabinet. Above sits a similarly-sized midrange unit and an in-house designed isodynamic ribbon tweeter. The three mid/bass units are all constructed from Quadral's Altima composite – a combination of aluminium, titanium and magnesium that the company says is both light and strong to produce ideal 'oscillation behaviour' without any intrinsic colouring.

One other feature worth noting is the use of a toggle switch at the back of the cabinet to increase or decrease treble (it can also be set to neutral): it had a subtle but nonetheless noticeable effect on the sound.

SOUND QUALITY

An immediate plus point with the Rodans is they are not overly fussy about positioning. Whether pointed straight down the room or angled in towards the listening seat their basic character remained the same - so in the end I opted for the former.

Hooked up to Longdog Audio's new muscular P6 monoblock power amplifiers (see review elsewhere this issue) I'm quickly struck as to just how much detail these loudspeakers

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can unearth on even the most familiar of recordings.

The background chatter at the start of The Clash's 'Jimmy Jazz' from 'London Calling' sounded as clear and distinct as I've ever heard it - sounding just as if I was sitting in the middle of a smoky club.

It was the same with the thundering sound of The Arctic Monkeys' 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor' where vocals were so explicit I could make out every word, while the guitar lines had space around them so it was possible to delineate each instrument.

There's no doubt those Altima



Twin binding posts are at the rear of the Qudrals, connected by high-quality wire jumpers for those who prefer a single-wired set-up.

cones and ribbon tweeter are almost forensically detailed with real bite to them. But it's not a sound that is edgy or harsh - just very, very clean and precise. So on Nigel Kennedy's 'Polish Spirit' I could close my eyes and picture the bow sliding across the strings.

On everything I played – from the grunge of Nirvana to the soothing tones of Arvo Part's 'Tabula Rasa' - the leading edge of notes had presence and attack while the decay seemed to last just a millisecond longer. Put together that translates into making music sound extremely lifelike.

With the Neil Cowley Trio's 'The Face Of Mount Molehill' (24bit/96kHz) the echo around the gentle piano figure was totally atmospheric and haunting. But it's not all about detail as when the next track 'Rooster Was A Witness' kicks in with its up-tempo beat the Qudrals display a superb sense of timing, latching on to the rhythm and punching the track along.

Moving on to King Tubby's 'Dub Fever' and the Rodans can't match bigger loudspeakers for sheer low-end power. Those two 155mm drivers just aren't big enough to truly shake the walls. However, the bass is still clean and punchy and won't leave you wanting for more unless you crave having it punch you in the stomach. On Bruce Springsteen's 'Badlands', for example, with the volume turned up Gary Tallent's bass guitar was rich and full, superbly underpinning Clarence Clemons' soaring saxophone solo.

It's on tracks like these where there's a lot going on that the Rodans really come into their own, letting me hear deep into the mix to follow each instrument.

What they don't do is impose any of their own character on the music - no artificial highs or pumped-up bass to give a seemingly 'exciting' but ultimately coloured sound.

It does mean those who like their loudspeakers to have a warm presentation might want to look elsewhere. That said moving the rear toggle switch to its minus position to reduce treble output did soften the sound a little - but without sacrificing that crisp, clean

The Qudrals feature a mid-range driver allied to an in-house designed ribbon tweeter.



sonic signature from the isodynamic tweeter. Setting it the + position brought some extra brightness but again not so much as to make the music sound harsh or edgy. On the whole, though, I preferred the switch set to neutral where the Rodans operated at their best to my ears.

Switching out the Longdogs for the new Prima Luna Dialogue Premium HP power amplifier in triode mode showed these Quadral are ideally suited to valve ampli-

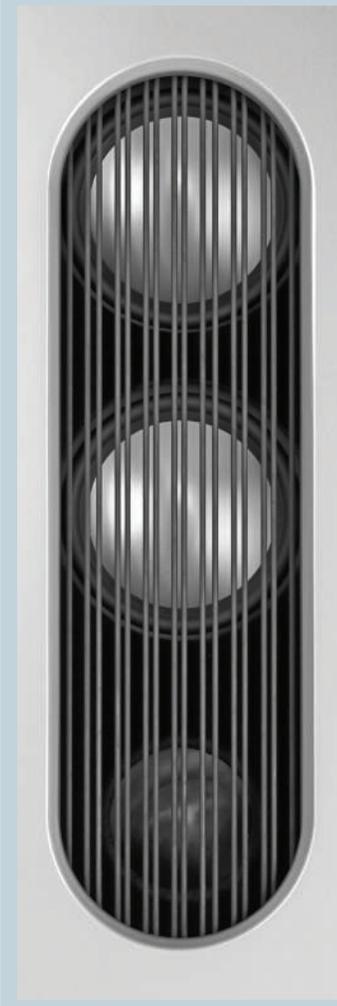
PRESSURE CHAMBER

The Rodan 9, like most Quadral loudspeakers, has matched metal cone mid-range and bass units, both made from their Altima metal composition cones comprising titanium, magnesium and aluminium. The idea behind this is to give a consistent sonic signature and thus a coherent nature.

At top sits a Quadral aluminium ribbon tweeter with wide dispersion for consistency of sound on and off-axis; the sound doesn't change according to placement of the speaker, or as you move around.

In all then, the Rodan 9 is designed to sound smooth and consistent.

The twin bass units sit in a forward pressure chamber Quadral say – a shallow recess – and are back loaded by a reflex chamber with forward firing port sited below the bass cones.



On the rear panel is a toggle switch to alter high-frequency response. It can be set to +/- or neutral.

cation. There was a slightly richer quality to the reproduction with a more supple bass but they still went plenty loud enough despite the reduction in power.

Slotting Lady Gaga's 'Bad Romance' into our Oppo UDP-205 universal disc player the vocals

were propelled high into the room while the electronic bass raced along with no overhang to slow the track. Similarly, with Filur's 'You And I (Trentmoller Remix)' the opening effects ricocheted left and right in a commendably wide soundstage while Pernille Rosendahl's vocals were deliciously sweet and haunting. So good was the presentation I just had to skip back to hear it again.

But that's what these Quadral Aurum Rodan 9s do to you. They are so well-balanced, detailed and simply right-sounding that they make you want to play music long into the night.

CONCLUSION

The Quadral Aurum Rodan 9s are exactly what a good loudspeaker should be – accurate, detailed and free of colouration. They'll make you see even the most familiar recordings in a new light with a clarity and innate musicality few at the price can match. As such they come highly recommended. I'd urge you to give them a listen.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Our third-octave pink-noise frequency response analysis of Quadral's Rodan 9 floor stander reveals an impressively flat response across the audio band. The lack of peaks and dips, caused by local resonances, tells of a clean, colour free and tonally even sound. The ribbon tweeter was smooth and in balance with the rest of the audio band both on-axis and off-axis, making positioning non-critical: it can be listened to pointing straight down a room or directly at listeners, and it will not change character when a listener moves. This is not a loudspeaker peaked up to sound bright when the rear balance switch is set to its middle position, but a neutral one. Integration between the ribbon tweeter and midrange unit is not a problem either.

Setting the rear toggle switch to + lifts treble by +2dB – a small but useful lift that'll add a little extra brightness. Set to - it applies plateau treble reduction by a similarly small but useful amount that will give an easy and amenable delivery, not overtly dull or warm.

Bass is well damped, extending flat down to 50Hz, dropping quickly below 30Hz. There will be no boom and there's no emphasis either; the Rodan will not have obvious bass but it does go low, helped out by the front port that peaks at 30Hz.

Sensitivity was good at 88dB, if not up to the 90dB or so of rivals. The Rodan 9 has a low impedance of 5 Ohms overall so it draws current and needs a sturdy drive amplifier. Our impedance plot shows a largely resistive characteristic with crossover into the ribbon tweeter at 4kHz. The bass unit has a 4 Ohm voice coil.

Measurement shows the Rodan is a supremely smooth and evenly balanced loudspeaker with no emphases at all. It will not be characterful but it will convey music truthfully. **NK**

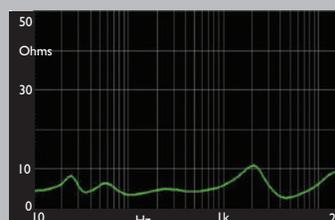
FREQUENCY RESPONSE

Green - driver output

Red - port output



IMPEDANCE



QUADRAL AURUM RODAN 9 £4999



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

Accurate, detailed and hugely enjoyable. These Quadral are exceptional value for money.

FOR

- detail
- clean sound
- free of colouration
- wide soundstage

AGAINST

- lacks subsonics

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