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TOTAL CONNECTION



Quad's multi-talented Platina Integrated amplifier

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Platinum service

After a spate of retro delights, Quad has a reminder it can do modern too. **Ed Selley** checks out the Platina Integrated

As the overseer of one of the most impressive legacies in audio, Quad can be forgiven for dipping into its back catalogue for new products. The 33/303 (HFC 524) combination and spin-off Quad 3 integrated have provided a generous dose of nostalgia and in turn enjoyed considerable success. It's now time for the pendulum to swing the other way and for some modernity to ensue. The Platina Integrated is Quad showing what it can do when it focuses on the present with (almost) no nods to the past.

The connectivity on hand is entirely in keeping with an ethos of 'connect what you want, how you want'. A single XLR input is supported by a pair of RCA connections and a JFET-based phono stage that supports moving-magnet and coil operation. We've witnessed moving-coil-capable phono stages from Quad before, but the Platina gets some features we've not seen. It can have its gain adjusted through three different settings, with impedance settings for moving-magnet and coil models; something you won't find on rivals.

These analogue connections are supported by a digital board fitted

with two optical and two coaxial inputs supporting a USB-C and an HDMI eARC connection. Decoding is via an ES9038PRO chip with separate filter and clocking arrangements with filtering mainly being performed by a post DAC Class A implementation. Sample rate handling is PCM to 768kHz and up to DSD512 via the USB connection. Such is the completeness of this board, the matching streamer has its work cut out justifying its existence – but this does nothing to change the perception that the amp is very well specified.

The actual amplifier section is no less burly. It is Class AB and disposes of no less than 200W into 8ohm. This increases to 300W into 4 and the circuit can deliver a peak current of 20A – which is substantially more powerful than either of the retro-themed devices released of late (even when the 33 Power Amp is used in bridged mode) and puts the Platina Integrated at the upper end of what is available at the price.

It's more than raw power, too. The amp employs a toroidal transformer that has been specially designed for the Platina. This combines a large filter capacity in the power supply

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Quad Platina Integrated

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
Integrated amplifier

WEIGHT
17.1kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
445 x 135 x 348mm

FEATURES

- Quoted power output: 2x 200W (8ohm)
- Inputs: 2x RCA; XLR; MM/MC phono stage
- Digital board: 2x coaxial; 2x optical; USB-C; HDMI ARC

DISTRIBUTOR
Quad

WEBSITE
quad-hifi.co.uk

(44,000uF per channel) with cascaded voltage regulators. The output stage uses specially developed bespoke capacitors. It's also fully balanced from the front to the back, with Quad going to the effort of fitting a four-channel rotary encoder for the volume as it simplifies the process of keeping the signal balanced throughout. This matches with the digital board so any digital input the Platina receives is treated as balanced.

In contrast to other recent Quad products, the Platina looks absolutely up to date in an understated but very appealing way. What I find clever is that it still keeps some lovely little

It doesn't take long for its positive qualities to make themselves felt

touches from previous models. That long standby button is a nod to the 99 Series components produced at the turn of the century and other detailed aspects hark back to then as well. If you know your Quad history, it will delight and even if you don't care about such things, it still feels elegant and well engineered.

One of the more surprising parts of the Platina is that it's quite a bit larger than you might expect. It looks quite compact, but is actually 445mm wide. Combined with the beefy 17.1kg weight, it's a more imposing thing than our pictures might suggest. At the front, you'll find a full-colour display that allows access to various setup menus and can show VU meters as desired. We've seen versions of it before; particularly on sister brand Audiolab, but it's slicker and more stable here. Perhaps the only real annoyance is that, with 10 inputs

available, the lack of direct input selection on the remote control or front panel is a touch inelegant.

Sound quality

With a Chord Electronics 2Go (HFC 465) and 2Yu running as a Roon Endpoint and feeding the output into a pair of Focal Kanta No1 (HFC 454) standmounts, the Quad isn't the sort of device that immediately wheels out the shock-and-awe treatment – but it doesn't take long for its positive qualities to make themselves felt. The Kanta No1 is not a hard speaker to drive, but it benefits from being given the current and control that allows it to shine. The Platina delivers this so unobtrusively that you can find yourself running things a lot harder than you expect, such is the lack of apparent strain.

The Platina looks absolutely up to date in an understated but appealing way

The Platina maintains a delicacy and articulation that means it never sounds like a blunt instrument. *Through This Fire Across From Peter Balkan* by The Mountain Goats has surprising heft that underpins its gorgeous, folk-adjacent tracks. The Quad generates the weight of this entirely analogue bass in a way that effortlessly underpins and never impinges on the upper registers. John Damielle is an easy focal point without any sense of embellishment. The internal decoding at work here is the equal of some extremely talented standalone digital sources.

These abilities don't wilt when you reach for something altogether more aggressive. The eponymously titled debut from Belgian techno DJ Charlotte De Witte is a flurry of huge electronic noises delivered with relentless speed. The Platina neither withers nor softens the blows, neither does it display the merest hint of



The Quad is £500 more expensive than Arcam's SA35 (HFC 537), which offers a similar spec augmented by both onboard streaming and Dirac – both of which the Quad lacks. The Arcam has the clear advantage as a standalone device and it's a fantastic product, but as an amplifier the Quad has it beat. The SA35 isn't short of grunt, but it can't match the power of the Platina – giving it effectively a free choice of speakers because there is very little it cannot drive. The Arcam's decoding is good, but the Quad's is better still and, while it lacks the convenience of onboard streaming, it can be partnered with whatever interface you prefer. The Quad's phono stage is also better. While it's less self-contained than the Arcam, the Quad is the superior amp.



reticence to delivering the album as it should be. What I find consistently impressive is that the Platina really does emulate the famous 'straight wire with gain' ethos of Peter Walker across both decoding and amplification.

Once I give up attempting to wrong foot it, I settle into a happy state of appreciating quite how broad its abilities are. At my most critical, I'd say that partnering it with an extremely flat-sounding speaker might result in a listen that's a little too matter of fact, but – given that pretty much any speaker likely to be partnered with it exhibits at least a few character traits of its own – this is more of an abstract concern than something I experience during testing.

As a final set of parting gifts, the phono stage and HDMI ARC connection are also strong performers. Unlike a few other moving-coil-capable designs where the moving-magnet performance is superior, the Quad does an excellent job with the

MC-equipped Audio-Technica AT-LPA2 (HFC 528), combining excellent levels of gain with no noise and the same fundamentally transparent tonal balance as the rest of the amp. The ARC connection is more than capable of doing justice to a huge variety of film and TV material. It never feels like an incongruous addition to the spec, simply another feature that broadens the scope of its abilities.

Conclusion

And these abilities are very considerable indeed. The Platina Integrated is very clearly a statement of intent that Quad is more than a maker of pleasant but ultimately retro-tinted devices that trade on past glories. It offers a bang up-to-date spec and implements it with an assurance and sheer ability that makes it very hard to beat for less than £5k ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Huge spec; effortless performance; build and finish

DISLIKE: No direct input selection; needs source equipment

WE SAY: A supremely talented integrated amplifier that does a huge range of things extremely well

