

Hifi Insights

Quadral Chromium Style 6 loudspeaker review by Dominic Marsh

If you have never heard of the brand Quadral, then let me say you are missing out on some excellent sounding products. Made in Hannover in Germany, the company has a portfolio of products which ranges from amplifiers under the Aurum brand name, to a comprehensive range of loudspeakers for almost every conceivable purpose from floor standing to stand mount and bookshelf models, to portable speakers plus accessories like stands and mounting brackets. They have a worldwide market with no less than 40 international distributors which in turn supply many dealerships.

Unlike other loudspeaker manufacturers though, they don't actually build a giant behemoth of a loudspeaker standing metres tall and weighing tens of kilos, instead they pride themselves on building compact high performance speakers that blend in well with modern lifestyles and you won't find any impressive gimmicks either.

Here under evaluation then is their Chromium Style 6 compact floor standing model which falls roughly halfway down (or up) their extensive range.



CONSTRUCTION

If it looks like a compact floor standing speaker in the picture above, then it is exactly that in the flesh, standing a mere 92 cm tall, a maximum width of 17cm and a depth measurement of 29cm. The review samples was supplied in a high gloss black finish which seems to add to the perception of compactness and a white high gloss finish is also available. That same high gloss finish provided an interesting interlude in extricating them from the packaging, as they really are as slippery as Eels, both speakers being packed into a single box with excellent foamed supports at the top, bottom and centre so the speakers are sited well away from the carton walls, so less likely to be damaged in transit.

The speakers are supplied with plinths which are not much bigger a footprint than the speakers themselves and are secured by four wood screws per plinth. Interestingly enough, there are no threaded inserts for fitting floor spikes or any other feet for that matter, although a complete set of eight sticky backed pads is supplied. I would have preferred a bigger footprint for the plinth to aid stability and threaded inserts to accept spikes for people like myself who have carpets. I placed the speakers directly on my carpeted floor and they did sway quite a bit, so I put large heavy hardwood slabs underneath which added to their stability.

The carcasses are made of high density MDF and radiused to eliminate internal parallel reflecting surfaces. They are a reflex ported design with the port located on the rear of the cabinet, so it is recommended to allow at least 25cm away from the rear wall to minimize bass boom from the port reflections.

The driver complement is an aluminium foil ribbon tweeter of Quadral's own manufacture, as is the two bass drivers measuring 155mm which have polypropylene and titanium cones.



Speaker cable connection is by a single pair of binding posts which accepts bare wire, 4mm banana plugs or spade connectors.

Front covers are supplied as standard to match the cabinet colour and held in place by secreted magnets.

Price at time of test: 1600 Euros (Pair)

Specifications

Type	2-way
Design principle	bass reflex
Nominal/music power (W)	110/170
Frequency response (Hz)	35...55.000
Crossover frequency (Hz)	3.400
Efficiency (dB/1W/1m)	88
Impedance (Ohm)	4...8
Tweeter	Aluminum ribbon
Midrange	2 x 155 mm Ø Titanium-PP
Size (w x h x d) in cm	90 x 16,85 x 28,35 cm
Weight in kg	13,24 kg

SOUND QUALITY

This was another loudspeaker I had heard at a hi-fi show and even in less than ideal conditions they were playing some stunning music, so I had to have a pair in for review and many thanks to Quadral for supplying this pair for review.

Straight out of the box they sounded amazing and I was gladdened to know that after 100 hours of running time they would improve over that initial sound quality, which they did I am happy to report.

For such a (relatively) small loudspeaker they can certainly compete with speakers that are far bigger, with ease too I might add. Bass in particular had an awesome punch and real drive behind it and I really did look out for any curtailment in dynamics, but I couldn't detect any at all. Treble too from that ribbon tweeter was in a class of its own and I can say without hesitation it is the best ribbon tweeter I have heard to date. There may indeed be better ribbon tweeters out there but I haven't personally heard them first hand.

On to some real music to put the Style 6's through their paces and of course I began with my long term favourite 'reference' recording of Fink's "Wheels Beneath My Feet" live album. This album for me contains a whole raft of benchmarks that whatever component I review has to meet and hopefully exceed. Bass kick drum is adequately represented in this album, along with the rest of the drum ensemble including snare, toms and floor tom drums, high hat, ride and crash cymbals all have signatures that to me are a true yardstick of performance. In addition to that we have the warm tones

of Fink's voice but his diction leaves a lot to be desired, although you should be able to hear the soft rasp his voice has.



Then of course there is the wonderful venue ambiances within each track, each recorded at different locations during one of the band's many European tours, so has different "flavours", some recreating the drummer's snare rim shots so clearly echoing around the venue. If I put my mind to it I could probably find equally good recordings to use as tests, but I know this album intimately and I know that some readers have also bought this same album to follow my results.

The album begins with hearing the audience clapping and cheering when the band begins to play and that sound is very revealing of a speaker's performance. If it sounds like bacon sizzling in a frying pan then I don't usually hold out much hope for the rest of the album. Glad to say the Quadral speakers gave a very life-like rendition here so let's press on. Next, the drummer plays a short series of cymbal strikes as the intro, shortly followed by an acoustic guitar then some more cymbal strikes, all of which flowed seamlessly and effortlessly from the speakers. I won't go into a complete breakdown of the entire album, but I will move on to track 12 which is "Sort of Revolution" and that is my favourite track on the entire album, which also contains most of the bass benchmarks any component needs to meet and exceed.

When those floor tom whacks arrive I want my listening room to reverberate very strongly with each strike and the Chromium Style 6 speakers gave a stunning rendition of them all. I watched the bass cones during these events and they were so quick it was very hard to detect if they had even moved at all. Fast, lithe, taut, agile, none of those words comfortably describe the exact nature of the sound I was hearing and all too often the appropriate language isn't really forthcoming, much to my annoyance and I ask, no I implore you to audition these speakers for yourselves and if you find the words to match the emotions you feel then kindly let me know.

CD after CD went into the player and there wasn't one track or even one note that annoyed or irritated me, even the ones that I had down as my horror selection and the Quadral Chromium Style 6 speakers just shone and shone.

It wasn't until I had reached around the 60 hour mark in running time that I noticed a subtle change. The bass became even more expressive and insightful, so now I could clearly hear the fingers on bass guitar frets, the hard beaters on the drum set's kick drum, the double bass took on deep sonorous tones with underpinning dynamics from that instrument's body and it was like having another pair of speakers to evaluate. I couldn't say honestly whether the treble and midband showed similar improvements during the running in period because they were superlative to begin with. My estimate of around 80 hours showed no further improvements in sound quality.

CONCLUSION

If you are thinking about buying a great sounding and compact loudspeaker which isn't likely to upset your domestic harmony and fit in with your lifestyle, then I cannot think of a better loudspeaker in that role. It ticked all those boxes for me and it is one speaker that I really do covet to own.

The treble performance is without peer and as for the bass performance, well they truly are in a class of their own. Don't take my word for it, get yourself an audition and compare them to whatever speaker you like and if you choose something else I would be genuinely surprised.

But, there is always a "but" somewhere, I must point out that I have a fairly compact listening room which the Chromium Style 6 speakers filled with total ease. If however your listening room is larger than average then you should opt for the Style 8 model, which doesn't have a big price hike over the 6 model to worry about either.

Why Quadral have opted for a plinth that adds little stability to a tall thin cabinet, or not have the inserts for spikes is rather baffling. It wouldn't take much time or indeed money to drill out some holes and put M6 inserts in for the spikes, because if I owned these speakers then that is exactly what I would do.

I don't feel a Platinum Award is sufficient for these fine speakers and if I had a higher award to give, then the Quadral Chromium Style 6 loudspeakers would easily earn it on merit.



Hifi Insights Platinum (+) Award

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