



Record Store Day Drop:
Black Sabbath, Fleetwood
Mac, Cure, Pulp & more...

Hot stuff: Line Magnetic
LM-845IA valve
integrated amplifier



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

Issue No. 513

April 2024

SUPER SAVERS

GROUP TEST

We try out six sensibly-priced,
space-efficient standmounts –
which best suits your room?

**BUYING
GUIDE**
100+ Essential
Components
p109

**BRISTOL
HI-FI
SHOW**
Full report
page 32

**NEWS
SPECIAL:**
Launches from
**Q Acoustics, Leak,
Cambridge Audio,
KEF, Fyne Audio,
& more...**

New kit on the block
Arcam's Radia A25 integrated amp

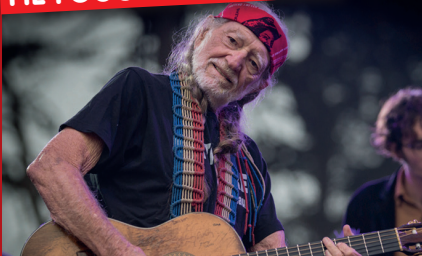
WHAT'S THAT SONG?
The weird and wonderful
life of the earworm

"HELLISHLY GOOD!"



**iFi Audio's iDSD Diablo 2
DAC/headphone amp**

HE FOUGHT THE LAW...



**Hats off to the country
music legend Willie Nelson**

"TRULY REMARKABLE"



**Eversolo's do-it-all DMP-A8
streamer/DAC/preamp**



GROUPTEST STANDMOUNT LOUDSPEAKERS £900-£1,800



Quad Revela 1 £1,800

Coming in at twice the price of the cheapest offering and with heritage in spades, this is the one to beat

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Quad Revela 1

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
2-way bass reflex
standmount

WEIGHT
12kg each

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
246 x 395 x 312mm

FEATURES
• 27 x 60mm true
ribbon tweeter
• 165mm Reveal
paper mid/bass
driver
• Quoted sensitivity:
86dB/1m/1W (6ohm)
DISTRIBUTOR
IAG

Despite Quad being an acronym for 'Quality Unit Amplifier Domestic', this historic British brand was making speakers very early on in its history. Readers may have heard of the ESL-57 electrostatic and its many descendants. The Revela 1 is the latest in a long line of speakers and indeed the company's first new design for seven years. It comes with a floorstanding sibling unsurprisingly called the Revela 2, by the way

The biggest and most expensive design here, its standout feature is its 27 x 60mm true ribbon tweeter; not quite the same as an electrostatic panel, but the aim is identical. With any speaker, the lighter the drive unit is, the better it should sound. Its ribbon of thin aluminium foil sits in a high-strength magnetic field and makes sound when an electrical (audio) signal energises it. This type of driver is very fast and low in distortion. It's not a new thing for Quad; the company's first ribbon tweeter appeared in the Fifties-era Corner Ribbon speaker. Partnering this is a 165mm mid/bass driver

using a special 'Reveal' wood pulp and artificial fibre cone. These are divided up at 2.9kHz by an Acoustic Butterworth crossover network.

The big and beautiful 17.6-litre cabinet uses specially braced panels; radiused edges are employed to reduce unwanted diffraction effects. A single bass reflex port forms part of the rear baffle. The internal damping package includes both acoustic foam and long-hair fibre; these are carefully placed for maximum vibration absorption. There's a choice of black and walnut finishes both of which are excellent quality. Bespoke stands are offered as an optional £800 extra, or the speaker and stands cost £2,500 as a package. In our listening room, the Revela 1 works best about 30cm from a rear wall, slightly toed-in.

Sound quality

The Quad proves that in hi-fi, as in life, you get what you pay for. The most expensive speaker here is also the best, albeit not in every respect. It sounds bigger and more open than the other group members, and this is doubtless helped by its larger cabinet

and mid/bass driver and ribbon tweeter. Open and airy, it delivers a wealth of detail that really unlocks the recording.

It conveys the texture of instruments and voices better than any speaker here, with a wonderful grain to the vocals on Journey's *Girl Can't Help It*. The guitar solo is immaculately carried, with a tactile, wiry feel to the instrument yet no distortion or screech. Hi-hat cymbals are a delight, with a silky, feathery quality. Arguably they're just a little too refined, but it could be that the distortion is gone. There's a great sense of spatiality too, with no feeling of the music being squeezed out of a toothpaste tube, so to speak.

Bass is very good; it's tidy and taut, if a tad light compared with the likes of the Acoustic Energy AE500 and PMC prodigy1. It simply gets on with

Open and airy, it delivers a wealth of detail that really unlocks the recording

the job of underpinning the track without drawing attention to itself, feeling 'all of a piece' with the rest of the mix. However, as *Never Let Go* shows, it still isn't quite as tuneful as the PMC. The Revela 1's bass is pretty much beyond reproach, yet somehow it just doesn't make the speaker groove as well as the transmission line design of the prodigy1.

This is an extremely mature and highly accomplished design that's a great all-rounder; it's a sort of 'next-level' B&W, in a sense. So, you can throw any type of music at it – even the compressed, thin sounding *Shine On* and it delivers in a swish, engaging and super-revealing way. The clear winner, it's impossible to criticise even at its relatively high (in this group context) price ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

EASE OF DRIVE

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

LIKE: Powerful, detailed and highly expansive sound

DISLIKE: Nothing at the price

WE SAY: Seriously capable, classy design

Group test verdict

After days of comparisons, **Nick Tate** works out the final ranking and discovers a worthy winner for this standmount shootout

EVERY SINGLE ONE of these designs is seriously impressive in its own right. This shows the high standards you expect from affordable, mid-priced standmounts these days.

Q Acoustics' Concept 30 is at the bottom, but it's the lowest-priced. It's an extremely impressive performer considering its cost – with a warm, engaging and endearing character. It does a lot for relatively little money, and is way ahead of its cheaper siblings.

Acoustic Energy's AE500 is next up. Again, this is the second cheapest design here and does brilliantly for the money. It has a distinctively

smooth and silky nature, as well as being highly musically satisfying. Yet it doesn't have the sheer insight of the higher-ranking designs in the group.

Monitor Audio's fifth-generation Gold 100 takes fourth place; despite being on sale for several years, it's hard to see how it can comprehensively be bettered at this price. It's a very good all-rounder with a light, bright and engaging sound – and it looks superb too.

Bowers & Wilkins' 707 S3 comes third. One of the best 'jack of all trades' speakers here, it's a real class act. It's hard to fault in many ways.

Across all types of music it sounds clean, controlled and detailed. It just lacks a couple of things that mark out the higher-ranking standmounts in the group.

PMC's prodigy1 is the surprise of the pack and a very worthy runner up. It isn't as an accomplished all-rounder as the Monitor Audio or B&W, but is riotously musical – it's such a hoot to hear, especially with beat-driven music. Super-fast and expressive, it oozes passion and has great bass. It makes even the hallowed *Group Test* winner seem a little lacking in enthusiasm.



Quad's Revela 1 is the most expensive here, and sounds it. It simply outclasses all the others in most respects. Even at its price, it's going to be a headache for rivals costing a fair bit more. Highly insightful and sophisticated, it gives an impressively open window on the world.



Make/model	Acoustic Energy AE500	Bowers & Wilkins 707 S3	Monitor Audio Gold 100 5G	PMC prodigy1	Q Acoustics Concept 30	Quad Revela 1
Price/month	£1,050	£1,300	£1,600	£1,250	£900	£1,800
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Ease of drive	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Clean, smooth, detailed and refined, this punches way above its weight	Powerful, precise, engaging and upfront, this all-rounder is truly hard to beat	Superb out-of-the-box imaging, allied to a crisp, etched and enjoyable sound	The wildcard of the pack, this new baby box is enormous fun to listen to	Smooth, warm, musical and fun, this baby box is hugely capable at the price	As old as the hills, this is a minimalist design that continues to deliver the goods
Website	acoustic-energy.co.uk	bowerswilkins.com	monitoraudio.com	pmc-speakers.com	qacoustics.co.uk	quad-hifi.co.uk

Key features

Bass reflex	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Transmission line	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
HF dome	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
HF ribbon	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Bi-wire	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

TRY WITH THESE

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER: Cyrus Classic AMP £2,000 HFC 506

A very smooth yet open-sounding 91W per channel rated Class AB amplifier with plenty of power to drive any of these speakers. It also sports a myriad of inputs, including a moving-magnet phono stage and digital ins. Despite its svelte appearance, it packs a satisfying punch.



TURNTABLE: Rega Planar 6 £1,400 HFC 427

This is a wonderfully-proportioned thing of beauty. Design-wise, it's a case of less is more – it's a minimalist product that's totally devoid of frills. That means more of the cost of the product goes on the guts of the machine; you get a reliable belt-drive system and a highly respected arm.



CD PLAYER: Marantz CD60 £600

Lots of music lovers still have large CD libraries, so why pay a streaming company to hear music you already own? This beautifully built and finished budget player has a great quality transport, but its modest internal DAC still sounds good enough to sing with these standmounts.

