

AUDIO
FILE

Three-way floorstanding loudspeaker with rear-facing ABRs
 Made by: International Audio Group, China
 Supplied by: IAG Ltd, Cambs
 Telephone: 01480 447700
 Web: www.quad-hifi.co.uk; www.internationalaudiogroup.com
 Price: £1500

hi-fi news
EDITOR'S
CHOICE

Quad S-5

This top-of-its-range Quad S-5 delivers so much bang for the buck at £1500 per pair that we had to double-check the price. Even its Far Eastern origins cannot account for the remarkable value.

The speaker looks good too with the top edges rounded at the front and rear (if not to Italian design extremes). Our review samples came in black wood veneer but Quad also offers the S-5 in sapele wood veneer or hand-lacquered piano white and piano black.

Its front baffle has a 125mm mid driver crossing over at 570Hz to two 165mm bass drivers, while the back contains a bass fanatic's dream: three 165mm ABRs. These augment the bass, but they also force the user to situate the speakers at least two feet from the walls. Too close, and the sound becomes muddled.

'There was a room-filling spread which recalled classic Quad dipoles'

But the most important element of the S-range is its 12x45mm ribbon tweeter. Quad has turned the clock back to the late-1940s, when Peter Walker used a ribbon tweeter in his now legendary Acoustical Corner Ribbon speaker. The new ribbon developed for the S-Series is of sandwich construction and sits in a powerful magnetic field. The added power handling capability should avoid the fragility of its great granddaddy.

In practice the S-5's vertical array, narrow front baffle and the ribbon behaviour create a curious sound image unless you don't mind hot-seat listening – although severe toe-in in the manner of Sonus fabers, and certain Wilsons, benefited the focus.

UNCANNILY '3D'

All that ABR-acreage suggests copious amounts of bass, and,

yes, the S-5 convincingly passed the Kodo test. Kodo's *Heartbeat: Drummers Of Japan* [Sheffield Lab] is percussion on steroids, and the Quads performed so admirably that we could only marvel at the way level and scale were balanced. Best of all, the ribbons were able to convey the air and space that are signature qualities of this recording.

This was repeated with the exquisite SACD of Miles Davis's *Nefertiti* [Mobile Fidelity] which sounded uncannily '3D', with a gorgeous bloom and a room-filling horizontal spread that recalled Quad's classic dipoles.

The punch and attack also demonstrated the S-5's ability to reproduce transients with just the right, crisp edges and smooth decay. The trumpet had all of the metallic punch, as well as Miles-ian nuances related to his breathing and mouthpiece control.

As there is no smoother, silkier set than Lou Rawls' *At Last* [Blue Note], there was always the possibility that the S5s might be too 'nice'. Would the super-cool

Rawls be too seductive?

Can anything be *too* seductive? The mix of vibes, keyboards, rich bass and – above it all – those duets with Dianne Reeves, provided the evidence that the S-5 respects textures and does not shave off anything. No rolled-off highs, no removal of necessary aggression. And when Reeves joins in during 'Fine Brown Frame' you heard the sort of vocal power that can embarrass a weak component. The ribbons loved every phrase...

VERDICT

The S-5 delivers so much speaker for £1500 that – were we living in different times – they would have caused a revolution. But we live in the MP3 era, so these are bargains of which too few will know. And what everyone will be missing is an astounding performer where there's a touch of the ESL magic, too. ☺

RIGHT: Quad's new 'sandwich' ribbon tweeter is joined here by a woven kevlar-coned midrange and two 165mm bass units. The slim, tall cabinet is bolted onto a metal base with spiked outriggers to improve its stability. Bi-wireable, the S-5 employs three rear-facing Auxiliary Bass Radiators in place of a port



HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	91.9dB/90.9dB/90.6dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	3.0ohm @ 151Hz 14.2ohm @ 38Hz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–54° @ 79Hz 35° @ 25Hz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±1.1dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	60Hz / >40kHz/>40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.7% / 0.3% / <0.1%
Dimensions (HWD)	1070x205x330mm