



Above QUAD 3 integrated amplifier – classic hi-fi for the modern age

Celebrate the past. Embrace the future.

Taking its stylistic cues from QUAD’s iconic 22 and 33 preamps, the new QUAD 3 integrated amplifier mixes lashings of classic QUAD DNA with a generous portion of cutting-edge tech

Cambridgeshire, England -- Six months ago, QUAD celebrated its illustrious past by launching a new, modernised version of one of its most iconic products: the 33/303 two-box pre/power amplifier, a groundbreaking design from the 1960s. Demand for the new-edition 33/33 has been exceptional since launch, the concept capturing the imagination of discerning music lovers in the UK and around the world as QUAD’s classic pre/power amp became a best seller once again.

To follow this success, the company is introducing an integrated amplifier dressed in similarly classic style: the new QUAD 3. Unlike the 33/303 project, which was all about updating a classic whilst retaining key elements of the original, the QUAD 3 is an all-new creation – albeit one with a familiar look.

With industrial design by David McNeill – the man whose aesthetic update of the 33/303 has garnered so much acclaim – the new amp’s look is ‘classic QUAD’ elevated to the level of build, fit and finish expected of a premium audio component in 2025. It takes stylistic cues not only from the 33 preamp of 1967 but also from the 22 which launched eight years earlier, presenting them in enticingly updated form. For example, its design echoes the 22’s fascia layout and contours, with the 33’s two-tone grey colourway – although here it is more of a matt silver, contrasting beautifully with the dark grey main enclosure.

Flush-mounted rotary controls were a feature of both the 22 and 33, and the use of orange as an 'accent' colour was a key part of the 33's iconic 1960s design. Because of these design echoes and rich endowment with classic QUAD DNA, the company decided to designate its new integrated amplifier with the numeral '3' – a clear association with the 33/303.

In terms of its circuits and facilities, however, the QUAD 3 is an entirely new design. While the 2024-edition 33 preamp is analogue-only in keeping with its heritage, the new integrated amp can be connected to digital sources thanks to its built-in DAC. Its range of inputs includes HDMI, USB and Bluetooth, and the inclusion of a phono stage and headphone amp makes the QUAD 3 an all-inclusive integrated amp for 2025 and beyond – all packed into a chassis with a footprint just 30cm wide.



Left Classic QUAD design, cleverly updated with impeccable fit and finish –the QUAD 3 oozes modern-retro appeal

QUAD 3 classic design elevated with the latest tech

Like a classic sports car fitted with the latest high-performance EV drive unit, the QUAD 3 is an enticing fusion of classic British audio engineering and cutting-edge technology. The row of flush-mounted rotary controls dates back to the 1960s, but here they are digital encoders to control a variety of functions – source selection and bass, balance and 'tilt' adjustment. The latter was created by QUAD's founder Peter Walker and introduced in 1982 as a more sophisticated form of tone control.

Walker believed that traditional bass and treble controls were a rather ham-fisted way of adjusting tonal balance. The tilt control differs by adjusting both ends of the frequency spectrum together, either attenuating the bass and lifting the treble or lifting the bass and attenuating the treble in 1dB steps. Essentially, it rotates – or tilts – the audible frequency range on a 650Hz axis, thereby adjusting the overall sound balance with 'warm' or 'cool' hints without altering volume or adding colour to the sound.

The tilt control works in tandem with independent bass adjustment, accurately applied from -3dB to +3dB. These subtle, precise and consistent methods of tailoring tonal performance are tremendously useful given the differing characteristics of the music sources we listen to today, from streaming services to vinyl to hi-res digital files. They also help to tune the sound to suit different acoustic environments and, of course, personal taste.

While the rotary encoders for tilt, bass and balance provide the precision of digital control, they act entirely in the analogue domain rather than resorting to DSP (Digital Signal Processing). These are classic QUAD features, respectfully updated and authentically engineered, accompanied by a larger rotary control for the analogue volume stage encircled with LEDs to show the current level.

The long, thin LCD display beneath the rotary controllers is a striking design touch. Its orange backlight - which can be dimmed or turned off completely - echoes the printed, orange-coloured strip under the rotary controls on the original 33 preamp. This display, with its digital watch or pocket calculator font style, adds to the QUAD 3's modern-retro design appeal.



Left The QUAD 3's design incorporates signature features such as the flush-mounted rotary controls and orange accent colour

QUAD 3 equipped for a modern sonic menu, from vinyl to hi-res digital to TV integration

Designed to form the beating heart of a high-performance, multi-source audio system, the QUAD 33 offers an impressive array of inputs. On the digital side, a USB Type B port caters for hi-res audio to the highest specification, alongside two S/PDIF inputs (coaxial and optical).

QUAD has also included an HDMI ARC port (compliant with HDMI 2.1/eARC) for seamless AV system integration. This allows the amp to connect to a TV using a single HDMI cable, with the added convenience of being able to use the TV remote to power the amp on/off with the TV, adjust volume and so on. Thus, the TV and everything connected to it – from streaming devices to video game systems – receive a huge sonic upgrade superior to any soundbar.

High-Performance Bluetooth is included for convenient wireless streaming from smartphones, tablets and the like, with support for multiple codecs including aptX HD, and Bluetooth 5.1 compliance for optimum range and speed.

Analogue sources are catered for by two line-level stereo RCA inputs, plus another for a turntable. The amp's built-in phono stage is an ultra-low-noise FET-based design, perfectly matched to the output voltage of MM cartridges. A cut above the phono stages commonly found in integrated amps, it delivers all the detail dug from the grooves of a vinyl record with engaging clarity and verve.

A 6.35mm headphone output resides alongside the remote control's IR sensor in a separate section, cleverly underslung beneath the main chassis to maintain the fascia's appearance. This is fed by a dedicated headphone amp, its current-feedback design and high slew rate ensuring a dynamic and detailed performance with all manner of headphones. While the headphone outputs provided by integrated hi-fi amplifiers are often of rudimentary quality, the QUAD 3 ensures that cans are treated with a level of performance akin to its quality when driving loudspeakers.

The amp's connectivity array is completed by a stereo pre-out, a set of gold-plated speaker binding posts, a USB-A port for firmware updates and a 12V trigger input/output for system synchronisation.

QUAD 3 advanced 'digital engine'

The QUAD 3's DAC stage is based around the ES9038Q2M – a high-specification DAC chip from the 32-bit Sabre series. This is accompanied by circuitry to make the most of ESS Technology's HyperStream II architecture and Time Domain Jitter Eliminator for ultra-low noise and high dynamic range.

Proprietary clock and power supply circuitry elevates the DAC's performance, alongside a Class A post-DAC active filter – vital to the QUAD 3's superior sound quality with digital sources. Hi-res support is state-of-the-art, handling PCM to 32-bit/768kHz and DSD to 22.5792MHz (DSD512) via USB. Full MQA decoding is included and the QUAD 3 is certified as 'Room Tested' for use in a Room audio environment.

Listeners can opt to upsample digital audio data to 352.8kHz or 384kHz, while five DAC reconstruction filter settings permit sonic adjustment to suit the source material – particularly useful given the varying quality of digital formats and streaming platforms. Whether connected via USB, HDMI, S/PDIF or Bluetooth, every digital source benefits from the outstanding quality of the QUAD 3's 'digital engine'.



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QUAD 3 high-performance analogue circuitry

The QUAD 3's amplification and power supply circuits are critical to its engaging fusion of musical energy and finesse; QUAD's engineering team has created a clean-sheet design to deliver class-leading performance. Much effort has gone into the internal layout, fully utilising the amp's available real estate to preserve the integrity of the signal path and ensure sensitive circuitry is unsullied by interference.

The discrete Class AB output stage incorporates a CFB (Complementary Feedback) topology, ensuring superior linearity and excellent thermal stability as the idle current is kept independent of the temperature of the output transistors. This is fed by a 235VA ultra-low-noise toroidal transformer and delivers 65W per channel into 8 ohms (100W per channel into 4 ohms).

The preamp section is kept as simple as possible to maintain signal purity, with line input signals passing to a precision analogue volume stage. Independent low-noise power supplies are provided for each critical stage, optimising performance and contributing to the amp's detailed, expansive and expressive sound quality.

QUAD 3 price and availability

Celebrating the past while embracing the future, the QUAD 3 integrated amplifier is available from mid-June at an RRP of £1249.



Left Whether streaming from a laptop or spinning vinyl on a turntable, the QUAD 3 forms the heart of a high-performance audio system

SPECIFICATIONS

QUAD 3 - INPUTS	QUAD 3 - OUTPUTS
1 x USB Type B (32-bit/768kHz PCM; DSD512)	Gold-pated speaker binding posts
1 x HDMI ARC (HDMI 2.1/eARC compliant)	1 x 6.35mm headphone out
2 x S/PDIF (1 x optical; 1 x coaxial)	1 x stereo RCA preamp out
3 x stereo RCA analogue (2 x line-level; 1 x MM phono)	1 x 12V trigger
1 x USB Type A for firmware updates	
1 x 12V trigger	
Bluetooth 5.1	

QUAD 3 - OTHER SELECTED SPECIFICATIONS	
User adjustment - analogue	Tilt and bass tone controls (defeatable); stereo balance control
User adjustment - digital	Optional upsampling to 352.8/384kHz; five digital filter settings
Power amplifier type	Class AB with Complimentary Feedback design
Power output	2 x 65W (8Ω, THD<1%); 2 x 100W (4Ω, THD<1%)
Power amplifier distortion (THD)	<0.003% (1kHz @ 30W/8Ω)
Maximum current delivery	2 x 10A
Dimensions (W x H x D)	300 x 101 x 332mm

QUAD

Of all the British high-end hi-fi brands, QUAD (an acronym for Quality Unit Amplifier Domestic) boasts the longest and most distinguished history. The company has been at the cutting edge of audio since 1936, pushing back the boundaries of performance with continuous innovation. In 1953, the QUAD II valve amplifier set new standards for audio amplification and three years later QUAD invented the first full-range electrostatic speaker – later known as the legendary ESL 57.

Throughout the ensuing years, QUAD products have continued to win worldwide acclaim, building a reputation for excellence that bears comparison with the most distinguished brands in any field. QUAD has been part of the International Audio Group (IAG) since 1998, following its acquisition from the Verity Group (alongside Wharfedale). The company's design and technical support teams and much-admired servicing department continue to be based in Cambridgeshire, England, supported by key personnel who have worked with QUAD for decades.

IAG's exceptional resources and unrivalled audio manufacturing facilities ensure that QUAD's current range boasts many award-winning products, including the latest generation of ESL electrostatic speakers, class-leading valve amplifiers, dynamic 'box' speakers, planar magnetic headphones and a range of solid-state audio electronics that fuse high-end performance with elegant, versatile design. 88 years after its formation, QUAD continues to be driven by the philosophy of its founder, Peter Walker, to produce "the closest approach to the original sound".

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