



# TriStar

**Noel Keywood soars skyward with Triangle's towering Quartet floorstanding loudspeaker...**

**W**e all want to hear an 'exciting' loudspeaker and this is one I bumped into some time ago at a Manchester Show. Standing well back in a largish room, I found it projected well, sounding lively and dynamic whilst also clean from top to bottom. There wasn't too much treble, the upper midrange didn't glare in a desperate attempt to emphasise detail and its bass in particular struck me as well integrated and tight. There were none in the UK so I asked Triangle in France to ship a pair to us direct. So here for your delectation is the Triangle Quartet loudspeaker, price £1,900. As you can see it's a big floorstander, good looking, well finished and thoroughly enjoyable I found. It's also competitively priced.

Regular readers will know I admire the big Tannoys for their ability to project and sound exciting whilst also remaining accurate under measurement. But my favoured Yorkminster costs £9,000. The Zu Essence was another take on this theme, less accurate but very engaging all the same, but again we are talking big bucks, nine thousand of them to be precisely, or £5,000 in old money! In spirit at least, the Quartets stand somewhere between these two loudspeakers, but at a more affordable price. So for all our readers that beg for something that's "exciting and engaging", here is one to consider...

What we have in the Quartet is a very large cabinet standing 117cms high (almost 4ft), and anything over a metre is *high*. It has a large upper bass/midrange unit near the top, sitting just below a purposeful looking horn loaded tweeter. Below sit no less than two bass units, each reflex loaded by a front-firing port sited between them. The cabinet has a glossy rosewood finish and the front, with grille off, has plenty of adornment set against a gloss black front panel, making the Quartet less bland than many



loudspeakers. If it's all too much then with the grille on the loudspeaker looks tall, slim and elegant.

Working from 250Hz upward, much of the sound comes from the upper two units so the stereo sound stage is high. Singers have an almost celestial presence and this always helps add a little drama to

consistently emphasised but although the tweeter adds a hiss to them it is obvious rather than unpleasant. On the less aggressively mixed 'Warwick Avenue' cymbals shimmer nicely, Duffy's vocals are clear and concise, delivered with a nice, insightful dryness, and underpinned by an equally dry bass line that holds the

power and control that so many of us strive for. With Sinéad O'Connor's tremulous tones loud and clear centre stage declaring "tis better to die under an Irish sky", the Quartet's had me locked in rapt attention. Strong dynamics and a conspicuous absence of low end waffle made for a gripping experience from The Chieftains.

Nigel Kennedy was handled a treat, but if you are looking for a laidback, romantically hazy rendition of his extraordinary bow work then look elsewhere. The Quartets capture the strength and pace of Kennedy's playing; they deliver every last minute detail, all in perfectly ordered form in the time domain to show just what temporal grip Kennedy exerts on his nuancing. It all comes across with a breath-taking candour that suits Kennedy's

"from a few Watts you get a big sound that's challengingly insightful and super clean; it's nothing less than impressive..."

the delivery. Because the bass units carry lower midrange information there's a high vertical spread of lower frequencies and subjectively this gives a generously large presentation, quite different to the tight focus of KEF's Uni-Q loudspeakers for example. As a result the Quartets don't just look large, they sound large too, and I found this aspect appealing. This is part of what caught my attention at the Manchester Show: they have great sonic presence.

What so many manufacturers love to do nowadays with big loudspeakers is ensure they have steamroller bass, the sort of stuff that makes all listeners exclaim "my, what powerful bass!". There's no doubt it gives weight to the sound but over a period conspicuous bass can become ponderous and headache-inducing. Achieved by using an under-damped acoustic response it also brings a soft and wallowy sound to bass lines and can set off room boom. All-in-all, not nice.

The Quartets, for all their size, don't have especially prominent bass. However, it is in good balance and of great quality, nice and dry and controlled, so when the drummer hits a drum, it's then and *only* then that you hear it. Otherwise, the Quartet doesn't waffle or boom.

## SOUND QUALITY

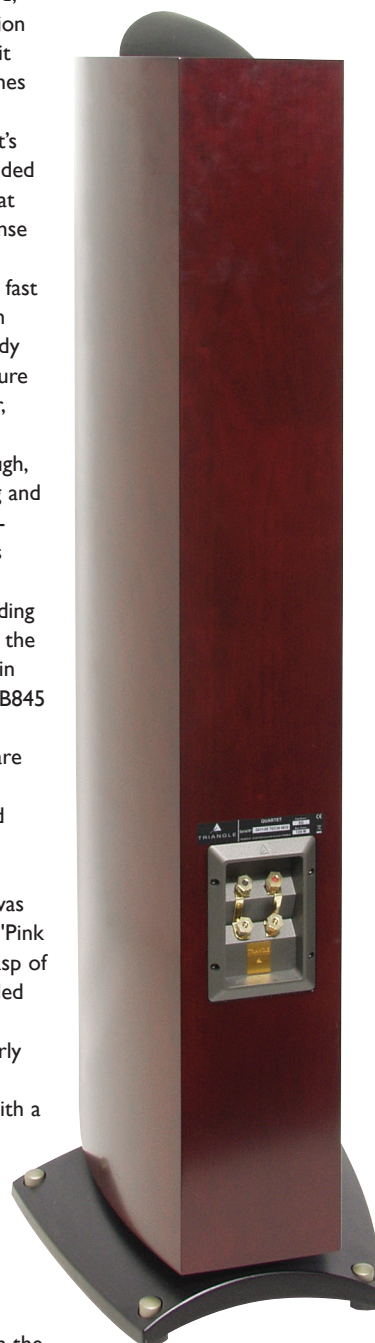
The difficult 'Rockferry' by Duffy was handled ably. This is a coarse and brightly balanced track that always sounds a little muddled, and if what I read the other day is true, that the mastering engineer includes analogue to digital conversion and back again in the signal loop to deliberately achieve the "sound", the reason why is clear. The Quartet does little to hide this, but its tweeter is concise rather than splashy so cymbals are lifted adeptly from the background muddle. In 'Serious' sibilants are

whole performance steady.

Cymbals again stab out hard from Steve Earle's 'Esmeralda's Hollywood', but strings are superbly clear and tambourine intricately described, every little shimmer and vibration thrown out at me. Rim shots hit me hard and Earle's gravelly tones were strongly projected from centre stage. Again, the Quartet's were as dry as gin with lime added for a hint of astringency, but that gives their sound a rigorous sense of cleanliness. 'This Highway's Mine' opens with a sudden and fast drum sequence, then kick drum holds the track down to a steady rhythm that the Quartet's capture with impressive grip and power, underlining their punchy bass. You do need a clean DAC though, because they are very revealing and as this track ends their tremendously projective nature comes across, hand drums kicking our hard from left, kick drum pounding away cleanly centre stage, from the Stello DA100 Signature I used, in conjunction with Icon Audio MB845 amplifiers as usual.

With Steve Earle I was aware that the Quartets get out a lot of low level information around vocals and instruments, placing them into a nicely atmospheric background. The same quality was apparent with Henry Mancini's 'Pink Panther Theme' that had the rasp of saxophone impressively propelled outward from centre stage, the lower notes sounding particularly fruity. The sudden blare of the orchestra's horns came over with a powerful blast.

Bodrans at the start of 'The Foggy Dew' showed me, however, what the Quartets could do when needed. Thundering out at the start with dry, fast impact the Quartets are possessed of both the



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beautifully vigorous but expressive playing. This is Kennedy thrown at you though, playing in your lap!

With 'Mars Bringer of War' the Quartets placed horns and trumpet clearly on the sound stage. Kettle drum was well identified and played cleanly in what is a dry recording in which less sensitive loudspeakers seem curiously unable to resolve the lower frequency end of the Scottish Royal National Orchestra in our Naxos recording, which isn't the best even though mastered in 24bit. Some loudspeakers can make sense of it though, the Quartets being better than most, only Tannoys and Zus managing better.

I found LP was handled in much the same way as CD. Mark Knopfler was as dryly but clearly outlined centre stage as Sinéad O'Connor, singing 'Punish The Monkey' from his LP 'Kill To Get Crimson'. Laconic guitar work cut out cleanly, the resonance of the metal strings echoing around the room. Plucked bass grumbled away slowly in 'Kill to Get Crimson', each note perfectly formed with not the slightest sign of overhang or pluminess. The Quartets remained extremely insightful and tightly controlled throughout, with little sign of any extra warmth from vinyl in contrast to CD. This suggested I could play 'Sympathy For The Devil', remastered into DSD code no less (quite right too!), on newly cut 200gm virgin vinyl. And as the label says this is how The Rolling Stones were meant to be heard. Okay, perhaps the original LPs are more authentic, but through the Quartets I heard every "whooh, whooh" in

the left channel whilst Jagger sings "hope you get my name" with ringing clarity in 'Sympathy For the Devil'. It was a great performance beautifully restored for posterity and beautifully captured by the Quartets, which remained clean, concise yet vibrant. Listening right into every small detail of Keith Richards' pedal slide guitar on the following track again had me entranced. At times Jagger's inflections were over accentuated by the Quartets, but this did not especially upset me.

The way these loudspeakers can lift gentle but important information was brought home as a softly sung female counterpoint to Jackie Leven in 'Young Male Suicide Blessed by Invisible Woman' (yes, really!) floated with an ethereal clarity between the cabinets, intelligible and pure.

## CONCLUSION

The Triangle Quartets sounded as good as they did at the Manchester Show; they are true attention grabbers. Dry but very revealing, they're an audiophile delight in that they also tease out dynamic contrasts to make music lively and exciting. With superbly tight bass that's tuneful, plus an ability to not over-drive rooms, the Quartets are a sparkingly good choice of loudspeaker at £1,900. Needing little power they'll work with any amplifier, but it needs to be a good one, and low power valve amps would be my first choice because they'll not flatter transistor amplifiers that screech. From a few Watts you get a big sound that's challengingly insightful and super clean; it's nothing less than impressive.

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Quartet has some midrange prominence when measured close (0.8m) but this lessens at 1.5m, the change being due to integration of multiple spaced drivers. An upper midrange dip from 2kHz-4kHz is consistent near or far and will result in some softening in the midband detailing and delivery. The tweeter is a smooth operator but there is some treble peaking at 12kHz. The Quartet will sound just on the polite side of balanced, but with good treble detailing attributable to the small amount of peaking around 12kHz.

The lower midband isn't especially smooth even with the microphone closer to the loudspeaker, so the Quartet may well have a little more character than usual and some plateau lift will emphasise vocals somewhat, helping make the sound projective in this region.

The bass end is interesting. Ignoring the dip at 150Hz, a room effect, it is fairly even down to 60Hz a third-octave, pink noise analysis (not shown) reveals. The windowing of our gated sine wave analysis smooths lows a bit in the published graph, but is accurate. The port (red) takes over below 80Hz and has unusually broad, flat output, so it is acoustically well damped, more so than most. This suggests the Quartet's bass will sound nicely controlled and non-resonant as reflexes go. It extends output down to a low 25Hz. At 80Hz the port was +3dB up on forward output so again bass looks to be in good balance.

The impedance curve reflects acoustic conditions, showing that the broad port response reflects back to result in an almost flat impedance curve at low frequencies, free from the usual high twin peaks. This again underlines the Quartet is a good low frequency load, broad acoustic damping folding back to broad

electrical damping. However, as a load the Quartet had a measured impedance (with pink noise) of just 4.5 Ohms, the low level of its impedance curve showing this, so it draws amplifier current and may stress some a little, although technically they can all supply sufficient current. Sensitivity was high at 90dB, and the Quartet is an obvious choice for valve amplifiers with a 4 Ohms output. Triangle acknowledge it suits low power Single-Ended designs.

The 200mS decay spectrum is clean and even, with consistent decay across the frequency band. Bass distortion levels were also low, both bass drivers and the port measuring 3% at 40Hz, decreasing to less than 1% above 50Hz.

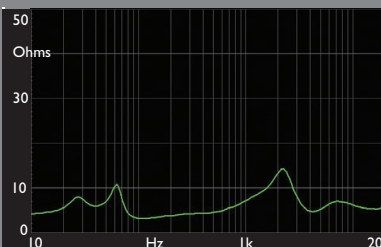
The Quartet is an unusual design in many respects and has especially interesting low frequency properties under measurement. It is a sensitive floorstander with fine bass. NK

### FREQUENCY RESPONSE



Green - driver output  
Red - port output

### IMPEDANCE



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**VERDICT** ●●●●●

Dry, clean and highly revealing, the powerful sounding Quartets are fast and fun at a great price.

**TRIANGLE QUARTET £2,550**

UKD Distribution

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www.ukd.co.uk

**FOR**

- highly detailed
- no waffle or overhang
- need little power

**AGAINST**

- spiky treble
- little low bass
- no warmth

