



Quad's new Artera Solus all-in-one system is a stellar performer, says Jon Myles.

Quad Goes Solus

At one time they were shunned by the serious hi-fi community – but now one-box music systems are becoming increasingly popular and delivering ever more impressive sound.

The advantages are less space shelf, fewer interconnects and, well, convenience.

Which means even the likes of Quad - which is celebrating its 83rd year of manufacturing equipment - is getting in on the act.

So welcome to the Artera Solus which combines a CD transport, DAC, preamplifier and power amplifier in a single compact chassis - with extensive digital and analogue connectivity options including Bluetooth wireless streaming with aptX capability.

And while it may look relatively

small - measuring 105mm x 320mm x 320mm (H/W/D) - it comes feature packed. Inside there's a Sabre DAC from American digital specialists ESS (capable of decoding file sizes of up to 32-bit/384kHz and also DSD64/128/256) and a Class A/B power amplifier that delivers 80 Watts into 8 Ohms (see Measured Performance for full details).

There's coaxial and Toslink digital inputs plus USB, as well as analogue RCA inputs – and both balanced and unbalanced preamp outputs should you wish to connect to other equipment, like an external power amplifier.

Build-wise the Solus is up to Quad's usual high standards including a glass top, separate stand plus a fully-featured remote control. The latter may not be the heaviest you'll ever come across but it works well. Alternatively, front panel buttons

allow total access to all features.

Interestingly, Quad are working on a 'special' version that will feature a streaming module designed by digital engineer John Westlake. Buyers of the current Artera Solus will be able to upgrade for a price of £500. In the meantime, the basic Solus costs just £1500.

SOUND QUALITY

Connecting the Quad into a pair of Martin Logan ESL 11A loudspeakers (see review this issue) I couldn't help but be impressed at how smooth and powerful it sounded.

The Martin Logans can be extremely revealing in terms of amplification - but with the Quad Solus they



The remote control feels a little light - but works well and is simple to understand.

came alive in all the right ways.

Led Zeppelin's 'Trampled Underfoot' via the CD drive had enormous bass presence and energy. The Solus sounded taut and accurate - Jimmy Page's fretwork coming over with an incisive yet natural nature with the leading edge of notes perfectly delineated,

Switching over to a pair of Sendor AI standmounts - which price-wise is a more natural fit - the Quad still retained its essential nature.

Bruce Springsteen's 'Born To Run' (24/96) via the digital Toslink input had Clarence Clemons' saxophone exactly right. It was bright but not harsh - soaring into the listening room without over emphasis.

In fact, playing this song time and again revealed just how clean, clear and natural the Quad Solus is. It manages to pull music together without sounding overly clinical or

bright while having a muscular Class A/B punch that works to get your feet tapping.

The rather 80s sounding recording of Spandau Ballet's 'Chant No 1' on CD sounded smoother and less harsh than usual. Here the Quad dug deep into the track and let me hear all the instruments. Bass notes again had a firmness about them which other one-box systems fail to match at this price.

The Solus is also quite delicate when needed with the right material. Putting on Robert Wyatt's 'Shipbuilding' the quality and tunefulness of his voice through a variety of loudspeakers was a joy.

Playing the same track via an Android smartphone with Bluetooth aptX saw a small drop in quality compared to CD or high-resolution replay but that is always to be expected.

It's a nice feature, though, and



Inside is a linear power supply based around a large toroidal transformer, plus Class A/B power amps at left and right, attached to their heatsinks. At bottom (in the pic) is the auto-load (no tray) CD drive.



A full range of analogue and digital inputs/outputs are available on the rear - including an antenna for Bluetooth users.

convenient - but to get the best from the Quad Artera Solus I'd say stick to CD or high-resolution tracks.

With either of these the Quad is an absolute stellar performer - one which will get the best out of your current CD collection and digital files.

CONCLUSION

You would be hard-pressed to find a better one-box system than this Quad. A superb DAC, power a-plenty amplifier plus a rather splendid CD drive. For £1500 it's a true bargain.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Power from the Solus measured 80 Watts into 8 Ohms and 120 Watts into 4 Ohms - enough to go very loud in any system and room.

Frequency response was flat from 2Hz up to 66kHz and distortion was low under all conditions, the critical 1W at 10kHz test - a measurement of crossover distortion - produced just 0.05%. From low power to full power, distortion hovered around just 0.02%, so this amplifier is very linear and will give a clean sound.

The Aux 1 analogue input needed 450mV for full output - not sensitive; volume will have to be wound up with low gain (MM, x100 / 40dB) external phono stages.

The digital inputs (S/PDIF), including the optical input, all accepted 192kHz sample rate PCM, frequency response measuring flat to 47kHz. Distortion from 24/96 hi-res PCM measured a very low 0.02% from the ES9018 DAC via the XLR

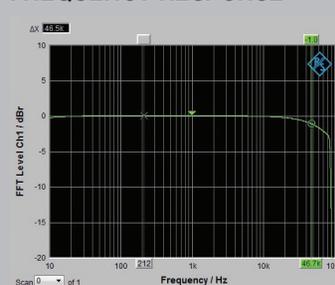
balanced output and 0.04% from the loudspeaker outputs. Unsurprisingly this gave the Solus a massive EIAJ dynamic range value of 119dB - up with the best. Results via USB were the same as S/PDIF, no noise being added.

The Solus measured superbly well though both its analogue and digital sections. NK

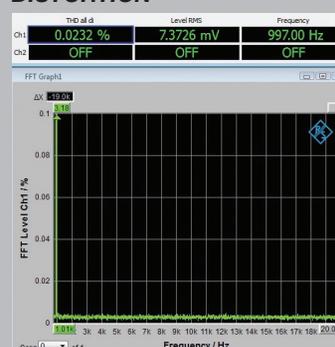
AMPLIFIER	
Power	80W
Frequency response (-1dB)2Hz-66kHz	
Distortion (10kHz, 1W)	0.05%
Separation (1kHz)	96dB
Noise (IEC A)	-105dB
Sensitivity	450mV

DIGITAL	
Frequency response (-1dB)	5Hz-47kHz
Distortion (-60dB, 24bit)	0.02%
Dynamic range	119dB

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



DISTORTION



HI-FI WORLD

QUAD ARTERA SOLUS £1,500



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

An all-in-one system with CD player, amplifier and DAC that not just measures well but sounds superb.

FOR

- price
- power output
- ease of use
- build quality

AGAINST

- nothing

Quad

www.quad-hifi.co.uk