

Quad's compact powerhouse

Quad 909
Power amplifier
£900

★★★★★

FOR

Neutral tonal balance;
solid build; unobtrusive
presentation

AGAINST

Nothing at all

VERDICT

The 909 is another excellent product from Quad. If you want a detailed, powerful amplifier, put it on the shortlist

THE QUAD 909 has history. Its patented 'current dumping' circuitry can be traced back to the 405 power amp produced back in 1975, and it has won the Queen's Award for Technology – a rare honour indeed.

The idea is that two distinct amplifier circuits work in tandem to produce the sound. A 140 watt, relatively high-distortion amplifier provides the muscle, while a low-power, high-quality sibling adds special distortion-cancellation circuitry to ensure the inherent shortcomings in big brother are minimised. It's a complex arrangement, but the results are great.

This amp's even tonal balance and muscle are enough to work most speakers hard. But there's subtle detail and finesse few similarly priced rivals can match.

It doesn't matter what you listen to – the r'n'b of Angie Martinez, Nelly's hip-hop or the might of Holst's *Planets* – the 909 sounds perfectly at home.

Low frequencies are taut and tuneful, and dynamics given free rein, with little sign of compression during the likes of Holst's *Mars*, even at high volume.

The build quality is equally impressive. The die-cast casework feels immensely rigid, and the finish is to a high standard. Connection is through standard RCAs, though in a Quad system computer-type



Award-winning circuitry gives the Quad 909 power, subtlety and finesse, and even tonal balance

multipin sockets can be used. A single pair of binding posts completes the list.

Don't think this power amplifier should only be used in a Quad set-up. It's far too

good for that, and neither is it fussy about partnering speakers: we tried a whole array from the 909's true Quad star babies, the 11Ls, to ATC's inefficient SCM 12s, and Wilson Benesch's £7000 ACT Ones.

The story is similar with preamplifiers: Quad's 99 is decent enough, but our reference Krell KRC-3 reveals the 909's exceptional depth of talent.

Such a wide spread of abilities makes this compact powerhouse one of those rare fit-and-forget components. It doesn't intrude on the music, and that really is the biggest compliment we can pay.

LEADING RIVALS

Myryad MA240

£1000 ★★★★★ April 2001

A monster power amp with bags of power. Great dynamics and slam

Crimson CS-630D

£850 ★★★★★ August 2001

Odd looks, great sound. Give these rhythm champs a good long listen