

1957 Quad Electrostatic

YOU HAVE ONLY TO LOOK AT CONTEMPORARY manuals of loudspeaker design or copies of *Wireless World* to appreciate what a sensation the Quad Electrostatic represented when it was introduced in 1957. Here was a speaker, launched when stereo had still to establish a firm foothold, that was destined to remain in production for knocking on 30 years, the passage of which would in turn see the rout of the thermionic valve, the rise of the cassette, the riot of quadraphonics and the revolution of Compact Disc. Through all these storms, the ELS sailed serenely on, substantially unaltered.

Peter Walker's technical triumph in de-

signing and learning how to manufacture the world's first commercial full-range electrostatic loudspeaker was to realise that the simple addition of a high value resistor between polarising supply and diaphragm transforms the push-pull electrostatic element from an inherently nonlinear device into a linear one, adding to its inherent advantages of low diaphragm mass and evenly distributed driving force the benefits of low distortion.

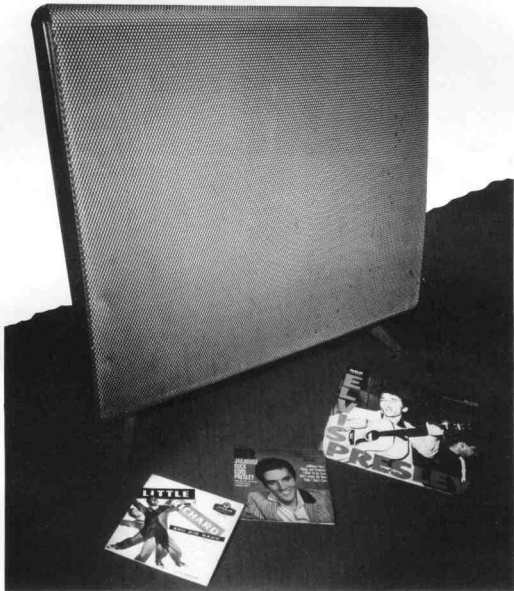
His other piece of clear thinking, derived of numerous attempts at mounting electrostatic drivers in cabinets, was the realisation that an electrostatic speaker is best made as a dipole (or near-dipole as the ELS

strictly was) with nothing to contain the radiation from the rear of the diaphragm.

There were other attempts in the Fifties to throw off the shackles inherent in the then crude art of moving coil speaker design, notably in the form of ribbon speakers and ionophones. But none proved to be such a success as the Quad ELS.

It can be argued that the Quad Electrostatic was too good for the ancillaries of the time; that it was not as flawless as it was often made out to be; that it didn't presage the electrostatic revolution that some pundits predicted. But it remains, surely, the singlemost famous hi-fi product of all time.

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1957. First earth satellite is launched by USSR. First British H-bomb exploded in central Pacific near Christmas Island. Guy Mitchell has never felt more like *Singing The Blues*; the first Rock 'n' Roll TV show *The Six-Five Special*; Buddy Holly reaches number one on both sides of the Atlantic with *That'll Be The Day*.
Top selling single: *Love Letters In The Sand*, Pat Boone