

After more than 25,000 606 power amplifiers, Quad's pressure die-casting tool wore out. What hasn't eroded is demand for the £675 140W powerhouse, so the Huntingdon company has taken the opportunity to improve the insides as well as the outside.

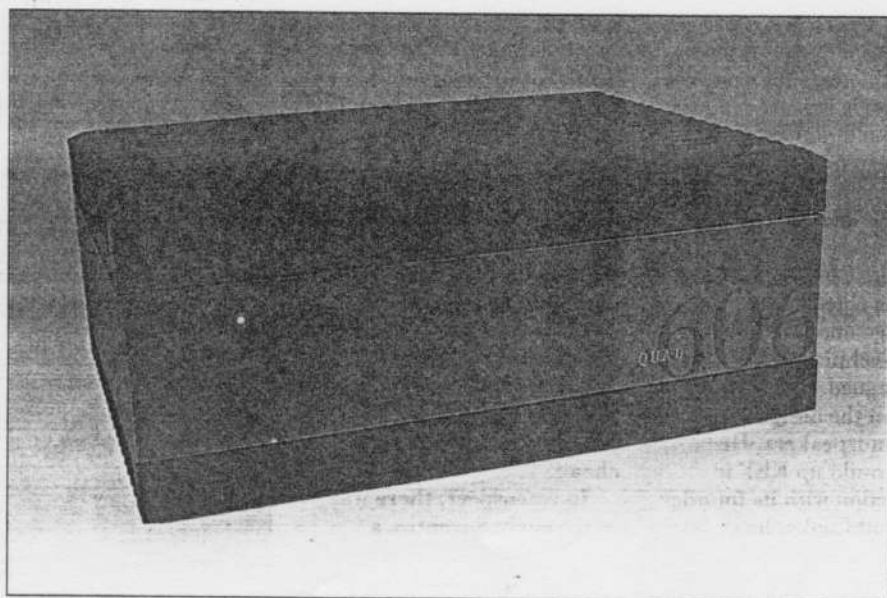
Anyone else would have called it the 'Mark II' or devised a flashy logo plastering 'Special Ultra Edition' or some such, but soap powder advertising antics are not Quad's style. At least not on the discreet bodywork of their amplifiers; their actual advertising is a different matter altogether.

Externally, the only way of recognising that a Huntingdon Aladdin has been rubbing his magic lamp over the 606 is the new heatsink casting which now has the chamfered edge look that matches the remote-control 66 pre-amplifier, 66FM tuner and 67 CD player for which the 606 is the power partner. Otherwise, nothing has changed except the quality of the finish; memory may be playing tricks, but the dark grey Nextel does look smoother and more even than on the latter-day square-ended versions.

The rear panel hasn't altered, alas. Yes, recessing it so that none of the connection sockets project is a good idea. No, those binding-posts are not, because it's still fiddly to poke even my elegant fingers around them to make bare-wire speaker connections. The hell with it, I used two sets of slim Ortofon speaker cable wired to one pair of banana plugs to bi-wire speakers with - so can you.

What has been done internally is fairly simple: the original C-core transformer has been replaced by a 500VA toroidal. The other change has been to the power supply: the four reservoir capacitors have been upgraded. This doesn't seem much; but one effect is that Quad reckoned the new 606 has had its bass extended a little further: the bass quality and its relatively early roll-off were always of doubtful merit in the original. In terms of quality, there has indeed been a slight but noticeable change for the better here, with the bass line on REM's Automatic for the People more coherent, firmer and bigger.

The 'new' 606 certainly appears to be beefier, sharing the more forward projection that's been developed in the 66FM tuner, pre-amp and 67 CD player. The revised power amp has an extra string of guts, a little more muscular



Quad 606 Update

Eric Braithwaite listens to Quad's revised 606 power amplifier

development in the torso. Imaging is tighter, too, and the stage broader; driving ESL-63s I always preferred the 306, finding the 606's fuzzier edges of individual instruments and singers detracting from its superb tonal clarity in the mid-range. It's especially good - then and now - on vocals and acoustic instruments, vide Elvis Costello's Juliet Letters, which through lesser equipment sounds more of a pastiche.

Acoustics in general come over well; listening to Martin Best's Nimbus recording of Riquier, he was truthfully well back in Nimbus's reverberant and hollow-sounding hall, and so were some of his players. There's a great bass drum thwack at the beginning of that CD which should shock you out of your seat, but it wasn't really sharp and quick enough. At a similar price, I've heard an LFD Powerstage do it with more spine-chilling attack. On the other hand, the 606 has a warmer, less analytical, but less clinical style.

Quad's older 606 had more of an affinity with BBC-type loudspeaker

designs, I've often felt. Mark Two really scored with a pair of Harbeth HL-P3s, which are pathetically inefficient and horribly hungry for current. Listening to the Mauceri/EMI recording of Showboat again reminded me what a superb theatrical recording it is, the 606 now imaging precisely, reproducing the life, characterisations and ambience perfectly.

The tighter the input, the tighter the 606 becomes; switching to a very clean Micromega Duo CD.2/Duo Pro combination as source produced a very clear, and reasonably transparent sound, though with some lack of true, fine discrimination between orchestral sections. Only one warning: it's designed with Quad's own pre-amps in mind. Others, like the Argo I used, have a higher output which will blow your socks off before the volume control even approaches 9 o'clock.

New, improved - even ecologically friendly, because Quad use non-toxic paint - the 606 now washes that bit whiter, to be better value. At £5 a watt (or fifty a kilo) it's a bargain ●

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

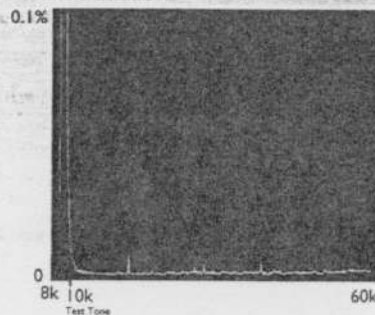
The new Quad 606 measures very much as it did before. There is a little distortion at low levels but certainly not enough to worry about. It still produces masses of power, 128watts, for its size and price, the power nearly doubling into 4Ω, showing excellent power supply regulation. But Quad have continued to use current limiting which limits output into 2Ω loads.

In all other areas the new 606 measures very competently. It should be able to drive any loudspeaker except those dipping below 3Ω.

AMPLIFIER TEST RESULTS

Power	128watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	8Hz-37kHz
Separation	87dB
Noise	-98dB
Distortion 1kHz	0.004%
Sensitivity	480mV
dc offset	0.3mV

Distortion



A small amount of distortion.