

# hi-fi news

THE HOME OF REAL HI-FI

& Record Review

172 pages!

135+  
REVIEWS  
SEPARATES,  
VINTAGE  
& MUSIC

# ULTIMATE HI-FI 2015

The year's finest products  
and essential music

PLUS

THE  
HI-FI SHOW

Preview of  
the UK's premier  
high-end event,  
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## Equipment

Over 60  
standout  
separates tested

## Music

The best LPs,  
CDs and hi-res  
downloads

## Vintage

Audio icons  
of yesteryear

## Opinion

Our columnists'  
hi-fi high points

• VINYL DS Audio to VPI • CD/SACD PLAYER/DACS Quad to T+A • NETWORK/USB AUDIO A&K to Naim  
• TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS Audio Research to Rotel • HEADPHONE AMPS Auralic to Simaudio  
• LOUDSPEAKERS & HEADPHONES AKG to Wilson Audio • VINTAGE B&O, Meridian, Technics & more

UK £4.99 US \$14.99 Aus \$12.99





AUDIO  
FILE

CD player/DAC/preamp and power amp. Rated at 2x140W/8ohm  
 Made by: International Audio Group, China  
 Supplied by: IAG Ltd, Cambs  
 Telephone: 01480 447700  
 Web: www.quad-hifi.co.uk; www.internationalaudiogroup.com  
 Prices (Play/Stereo): £1400/£1500




## Quad Artera Play/Stereo

Both the Quad Artera Play CD player/DAC/preamp (£1400) and matching 140W/ch Stereo power amp (£1500) have separate glass panels that fit into the top recesses and heatsinks along their sides, so they're handsome, modern-looking and oozing luxury. You even get a choice of black or silver fascias.

The Play uses the 32-bit ESS Sabre 9018 8-channel DAC chip, its asynchronous USB input supporting

*'The studio sounds on The Beatles' Revolver had a visceral presence'*

high-resolution media up to 384kHz/32-bit as well as DSD at 64/128/256 files. Although hosting a more than ample number of digital inputs, including two coaxial, two optical and USB-A, there's no Bluetooth (but some future Artera models will have it).

Analogue is addressed through two pairs of line inputs. Ensuring

flexibility, outputs include digital via both coax and Toslink optical, and single-ended analogue through RCAs or balanced with XLRs. The Stereo also accepts balanced or unbalanced signals.

The round fascia display is also a touchscreen, a multi-function source selector and volume control – however, we preferred to use the remote. The manual shows you how to operate seemingly hidden functions, like auto-shut-off and the truly useful digital filters.

### SPINE-TINGLING

In our listening sessions, the best digitally-supplied sounds came from the on-board CD player,

followed by an Astell&Kern into optical, with music downloads of varying high-resolution. Filter choice ultimately proved a matter of taste.

With The Beatles' *Revolver* [Capitol], the studio sounds at the beginning of 'Taxman' – including the 'cough' – had a spine-tingling, visceral presence. The layers of sound loops in 'Tomorrow Never

**LEFT:** The Artera's all-new look relates to the minimalism of Quad's classics, especially the Play [top], which – thanks to its round display/touchscreen – recalls the look of every Quad preamp that had a rotary volume control on its left

Knows' were easily separated. The strings on 'Eleanor Rigby', the liquid feeling of 'I'm Only Sleeping'... the Artera combo encouraged deep concentration on the sound. Lush, gorgeous – the Artera pair always respected the music.

Etta James' intensity shone through with the magnificent remastering of 'I'd Rather Go Blind' [Tell Mama – MCA]. The sense of space with the background vocalists and brass section enjoying their own 'layers' was massive, the openness encouraging the focusing on each instrument or voice in turn. And the overall 'picture' was consistent in its positioning, depth, width and height.

With 'She's A Liar', from the box set *The Warner Bros Years 1971-1977* [Rhino], we had to check the filter setting because the sweetness of the upper registers was almost valve-like. And yet at no point was there a softening of the brush sounds or attack of cymbals.

Solo piano at the beginning of 'Today's The Day' was palpably more 'analogue' in its natural chiming, the bass intro to 'Letter' had a roundness and form that delivered in-the-room presence, allied to convincing decay. Then we played the CDs through an outboard (Pro-Ject) transport to see if it also applied to the digital inputs and not just the on-board disc player: it did.

### VERDICT

Nothing about the Artera range should surprise Quadophiles, as both the Elite and Vena foreshadowed it. Here, modern aesthetics, full digital integration and user friendliness address the 2015 *status quo*. A superb effort with a price that's easy to justify. ☺

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1%THD, 8/4ohm)	165W / 265W
Dynamic power (<1%THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	195W / 368W / 265W / 150W
Output imp. (20Hz–20kHz, Play/Stereo)	116ohm / 0.014–0.053ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz–20kHz, Play/Stereo)	+0.0 to –2.71dB/+0.03 to –0.35dB
A-wtd S/N ratio (Play/Stereo)	114.5dB (0dBFS) / 89.0dB (0dBW)
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, Play/Stereo)	0.001–0.0037% / 0.0003–0.025%
Digital jitter (CD / S/PDIF / USB)	565psec / 65psec / 14psec
Power consumption (Play/Stereo)	8W/488W (36W idle)
Dimensions (WHD, Play/Stereo)	320x105x320/320x158x338mm