



## Quadraspire SVT

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Since purchasing my first dedicated audio rack in the late '80s I have never underestimated the influence of support systems on the equipment they support. I still recall the impact of taking the system from a wobbly cabinet and placing it on my first rack; it was akin to a significant component upgrade.

Since that time there have been many exciting developments in rack design, some taking the mass damping approach, the objective being to absorb vibrations at their source. Others accept that you will never stop vibration entering your equipment, believing a light and rigid design will help dissipate such energy and significantly reduce what reaches the component. Quadraspire takes the latter approach, ensuring that the materials used have good damping properties rather than trying to engineer out issues caused by using products that do not. Tested here is their midrange SVT model, which swaps the entry-level Q4's MDF shelves for slotted bamboo.

### Quadraspire

The man behind the brand is former lawyer Eddie Spruit. His passion for cabinet making led to him making quadrant jewellery display stands which could slide open to form a spire, you can guess the rest. A hi-fi dealer friend asked him to build an equipment rack and found that it worked better sonically than others at its price point. Eddie designed each rectangular panelled shelf with a circular edge on one of the longer sides and flat on the opposite side. Further research found that this asymmetrical design helped dissipate standing waves, which standard designs effectively allow to continue bouncing within the material. Eddie also discovered that using aluminium rather than steel supports between each shelf helped stop electrical interference from travelling between components.

As the company is conveniently local, I had the pleasure of collecting the review sample direct from Quadraspire's factory just south of the City of Bath. This is an impressive facility, with few frills but good organisation and friendly staff who have a passion for quality and engineering. I only met factory manager Ian Sibley briefly, but I recognised that rare breed of engineering knowledge and dedication you see in the best in the field. Apart from the packaging and raw materials, such as Chinese bamboo and metals, everything else is manufactured in-house. Ian has assembled an impressive array of machinery to make every screw, bolt, shelf, column and spike. They even have an on-site spray booth to paint and lacquer their products.

### Customer design

Customers can customise their new rack virtually using Quadraspire's web builder. Although products are only available for purchase via the dealer network, you can spec and obtain the price for your build via the website, which will then direct you to your nearest dealer to confirm your order. Dealers are encouraged to use the web builder to help guide customers through the selection process. Although the SVT rack I am reviewing here is a review sample, I was invited to use the web-builder to select a rack build that suited my reference system. The process was



straightforward, even updating the height of the rack build virtually as I played around with different options. I am pleased to report that the dimensions proved to be accurate.

You can choose from four colours of bamboo: black, natural, cherry and dark. The uprights are available in either black or matt silver. There is a further option of a bronze upgrade for the top shelf. Bronze was selected as a superior metal following hours of listening to builds using various materials. I chose five SVT shelves in dark cherry, each separated by black columns. Additionally, I was given a set of bronze upgrade supports, which I fitted towards the end of my review to assess their sonic effect.

### Build time

Fear not, dear reader, building up an SVT is unlikely to bring back nightmares of making up flat-pack furniture from a well-known Swedish company. Apart from the slightly frustrating aspect of levelling the bottom shelf with a spirit level, the construction was remarkably stress-free. Eddie told me to tighten the uprights a week later as the wood takes a while to acclimatise to the temperature and humidity of the room. I fitted the bronze upgrade shelf supports three weeks into the review period, this involved screwing an aluminium cap to the top of the supports for the top shelf, then balancing the bronze spike and shelf supports, followed by screwing in the



bronze cap and again levelling off the top shelf. All should be clear in the photograph with system installed.

### Listening time

A hi-fi rack should have no sonic character of its own, it should allow the equipment it supports to perform optimally and isolate that equipment from the energy produced by the speakers as much as possible. My system was previously supported by a Hutter Racktime, four-tier rack, a model that received good press in the late nineties. My listening observations are essentially a comparison between the Hutter and the Quadraspire SVT that followed it.

My main system comprises a Moon 780D DAC, Moon 600i amp, Melco N1A/2 server, plus Melco S100 switch, which is powered by a Nuprime L205 PSU. Speakers were initially my usual Totem Forest Signatures, followed by the very revealing Serhan Swift  $M\mu 2$  Mk II speakers, the review for which will appear in The Ear soon. As mentioned earlier in this review, I began using the rack in standard form without the bronze upgrade fitted to the support pillars, so the first part of my listening notes refers to that set-up.

The first things I noted was that the sound became relaxed, spacious and open, then effortless yet dynamic. I suspect a lowering of the noise floor to be the reason for this. A Qobuz stream (24/96) of Jack White's latest album *Entering Heaven Alive*, sounded absolutely gorgeous. I felt the presentation was a little more mellow than before the rack swap, and the acoustic guitars had a very natural snap and ring to them, which I had not appreciated before.

The soundstage was expansive and three-dimensional already but now seemed more defined, and it was easier to hear into it. I recently purchased Nick Drake's *Pink Moon* in 24/96 and have been playing it regularly. Since installing the SVT rack, Nick's guitar sounds more





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natural and, as with the Jack White album, the sense of the strings being plucked or strummed was more pronounced. A recent dive down a rabbit hole into the music of Dead Can Dance led me to the garden of record label 4AD to discover This Mortal Coil, particularly their exquisite album, *Filagree and Shadow*. I have been listening to a 24/96 download of this a lot recently. Having the Quadraspire SVT in situ, the music gained a more natural sense of grace and flow. Even at low listening levels, violins have more life and vibrancy. Although my system already presented the music with a clear sense of the recorded acoustic, this was now a little more palpable.



I left the rack built up with the standard top-shelf support for a few weeks to get used to it. I was a little apprehensive about fitting the bronze upgrade supports for the top shelf, in case I didn't hear any changes, especially since my solid-state Moon amplifier is on it, rather than a CD player, record player, or even a valve amp. Thankfully, the effects, although not of a night and day magnitude, were easy to hear. Firstly the sense of the music coming from around the speakers, rather than from within them, was a little more pronounced. Jethro Tull's *Songs From The Wood* – Stephen Wilson mix in 24/96 via Qobuz, sounded a little more precise, with extra top-end air and slightly more defined bass. Prince's *Sign O' The Times* (CD rip via the Melco) isn't the best recording, but it sounded livelier and more enjoyable than before. The slight increase in top-end clarity helped dig out the details from some of the muddier-sounding tracks. In my opinion, the bronze upgrade supports for the top shelf were an all-smiles affair and definitely worth including in the build if your budget allows, and especially if you are planning to use it for a turntable, or other source.

### Summing up

The Quadraspire SVT certainly supports its maker's reputation for producing some of the finest performing audio racks in the business. My time with it explains why you see many in exhibitor's rooms at hi-fi shows. Although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, for me, the SVT is something I keep admiring as it exudes quality in design and build. I feel privileged to have been shown around the factory, and the team's passion for engineering is borne out in their products. I have enjoyed an uplift in performance since its arrival, despite already having my system housed on a rack of a reputable quality. There are cheaper options available, but if your system is worth it, I suggest you take a serious look and listen to the Quadraspire SVT.



The ear is all about great music and great sound. It is written by hard bitten audio enthusiasts who strive to find the most engaging, entertaining and great value components and music of the highest calibre. This really is what living is all about.