

HEDD QUANTUM A FIRST LOOK

by Aran Lavi



I've been using Crane song's Quantum DAC on my Solaris and previous version of the HEDD 192 for a few months now and after demoing the new HEDD Quantum for a week now I'm utterly impressed ! Crane Song has really took its legendary HEDD to a whole new level with the brand new DAC, ADC and word clock.

The HEDD Quantum is by far the best sounding mastering converter I've heard and in my opinion it's a must have for every mastering studio that uses an analog loop as a part of the mastering process as well as mixing rooms who mix outside the box.

The new Quantum ADC bring to the table all the qualities known from the Quantum DAC, they are very similar sounding only work in different directions. After extensively comparing the new Quantum ADC against my current mastering ADC's of choice, I came up with the same conclusions I had when comparing my favorite mastering DAC's at that time to the Quantum DAC. it wasn't the case at all with many other converters I used to have in the past where I really liked one side of the conversion but didn't care for the other.

The Quantum AD and DA are very detailed sounding and has the best low level information resolution I've ever experienced, it accurately represents the envelope of the different elements within a program even when pushed very hard. for example the lows of a big bass kick drum aren't softening it's transient detail and punch at all, which allows much more freedom for creative EQ to be applied. When a heavy bass and kick drum are playing together, it doesn't sound like one sound glued together like on many other converters, both elements are perfectly reproduced together, no masking occurs.. the most detailed, focused and fast low end I've ever heard from a converter at any price point.

The transients response and separation is simply stunning ! very well done. For example when a Hi-hat plays on top of a Tambourine on top of a percussive loop on top of an acoustic guitar strum most converters would play it to some degree as a big chunk of treble information while the Quantum will reproduce it in full detail, all elements will stay perfectly identifiable and dynamic. When a punchy and pointy kick drum is playing alone in the beginning of a song and then the bass and snare drum joins in, the punch of the kick will be compromised on most converters, the Quantum will keep its ADSR perfectly intact.

The ADSR envelope relations of the different elements of a program are extremely accurately reproduced, even in some very dense mixes, a big string or harmony vocal sections aren't taking away from the punch of the percussive elements and the lead vocals would stay detailed and dynamic.

ADSR non linearities in converters can be revealed by listening to acoustic drum kits in mixes where the proportions of the decay times will change between different frequencies according to the density of the program, for example the attack of the fundamental frequency of a snare drum could sound softer within a program than it would sound when the drums are playing solo and the sustain of the fundamental frequencies of the toms can get shorten, making them disappear ahead of time, the Quantum AD and DA are the only converters I've used to ever pass this test with phenomenal success, its timing is just brilliant.

The stereo image is very proportional, well balanced and accurate, it's very easy to identify what instrument is playing where around the soundstage and point a finger at it, the stereo image is not being over hyped at all compared to other high end converters I've threw up against it, the Quantum keeps its great LCR proportions all over the spectrum. Although I've heard converters with wider stereo image I prefer the stereo image of the Quantum by far because it's the most accurate I've heard to date, the wider stereo image converters I've tested against the Quantum are creating a kind of a U shape stereo image which changes the program's balance and making the elements which are panned to the extreme L and R a bit louder, and the elements panned between the center and extreme sides are reproduced a bit quieter in volume, occasionally it can flatter some program material but it has an inferior mono compatibility, it's not as true to the source and can be very easily outperformed by using an MS EQ.

The accurate proportions between the frequencies moving around the panorama is another Quantum strength, forexample A bass that is placed in the center of a mix will be heard only from the center, it doesn't leak to the sides at all, to my ears the Quantum sounds like it has the lowest crosstalk I've ever heard in a converter, a mono bass won't sound glued to the extreme L-R guitars like in many other converters but keep its solid place in the center while the extreme L-R guitars won't eat any space in the area between the extreme sides and the center.

I've picked the previous version of the HEDD to be my main studio word clock after checking many studio clocks from different high end companies. The HEDD 192's clock is feeding my multitrack, mix down and mastering rigs for a long time now so I came to know it very well. when connecting the new HEDD word clock to my rig the improvement was big and immediate, the front to back, left to right and bottom to top dimensions got significantly better, producing much more depth, better resolution, better dynamics (especially in the low level information) and better stereo image to my whole rig ! I was really sad to send the HEDD Quantum back and looking forward for it to become permanently available for me

From: playgroundaudiolab@gmail.com [mailto:playgroundaudiolab@gmail.com] On Behalf Of Audiolab

