

hi-fi+

The Quantum Resonant Technology QX-4 Mains Purifier

by Chris Thomas



I must confess that this is a first for me as I find myself in the strange position of reviewing a product when I am not totally clear exactly what it is.

Let me explain. Quantum Resonant Technology (QRT) was founded in Santa Monica, California in 1997 and have been manufacturing AC Mains conditioners and purifiers since then. You will find one of their QRT modules inside Nordost's Thor distribution box and now that same technology has been incorporated into two devices which, they claim, will improve the quality of any audio system or TV. What is clear is that we are certainly living in a very different electronic environment compared to just a few years ago and as such, uncontaminated mains have become even more difficult if not impossible to achieve. Just have a count up of all the various things that are plugged into the wall in your home. Mobile and cordless phone chargers, wireless networks, Plasma TVs, games consoles, the list goes on and on – and by pumping rubbish back into the mains, every one of them has its own detrimental effect on its quality. Conventional power conditioners, according to Quantum, compress musical dynamics so their answer to all this general mains grunge is QRT – Quantum Resonant Technology, although it's an answer they're reluctant to explain. Fortunately, the effects of the circuit are readily measured and even more easily perceived.

I did ask RG for a summary and even he, despite conversations with the designers in person, was hovering on the precipice of understanding as to exactly what goes on inside the box and there are also Patent issues that inevitably incur extra manufacturer's discretion. The QX modules that are found inside both the QX-4 and the QX-2 bring coherence, noise reduction and order to any associated electronic circuit. The term that Quantum use to describe the action is Electro Magnetic Field Stabilisation (EMFS) which

► is probably as close as we are going to get at the moment to comprehending it. Inside the Thor you will find a single Quantum unit (QX-1) so it doesn't take a great leap of imagination to deduce that QX-2 and QX-4 are twice and four times as powerful and the claim, totally confirmed by my experience, is that the more Quantum devices you add to your system, the greater the benefits. Whether this has a limit though I have yet to discover, as the maximum I have used is two QX-4s plus the one inside the Thor.

So, at last we move from the world of mystery and supposition to the mains socket in your listening room and this is where things become a lot clearer. The QX units are small but built for mechanical stability, very substantially constructed from aluminium with chunky solid-billet caps at each end of the case. On the back are a pair of mains sockets so you can plug one end into the wall and the other can be used in line with either a distribution box like the Thor, or perhaps your amplifier. When the QX-4 was being installed in my home I was also shown the benefits of mains leads of different lengths and that demonstration was as mind boggling as the introduction of QRT itself. But, at this stage, I don't want to muddy the waters more than absolutely necessary so I'll leave that particular discussion for another day, pausing only to add that its relevance is



inextricably linked with what the QX-2 and QX-4 can bring to your musical experience.

While I may be at a loss if interrogated as to how the QRT works, I can certainly tell you what it does sonically because that is not subtle at all. Having said that though, I should add that the nature of the benefits and energies that flow in a more coherent fashion from its outlets will not necessarily be appreciated by those who estimate system improvement by how much extra bass "slam" is produced or solely whether it does or doesn't have something mysteriously but appropriately called PRAT. It is true that many upgrades or improvements are characterised somewhere along the line by a reduction in the noise floor and this is one of the first things that you notice with the QX-4 in place. Backgrounds are blacker and stiller and they get more so as you add more QRT. The stark contrast of the instruments or voices against this brings an enhanced luminescence to the musical picture for sure.

But the best way to describe its overall influence is probably with the word order – the sense of what is happening and when. It might seem like a somewhat impersonal and mechanical way to refer to an art form like music, but

the Quantum brings a clarity to musical structure and patterns, a finer and more natural sense of flow in the way the music moves, a greater feeling of precision in the playing. Analysed in itself it might seem like a small shift, but often the most important and rewarding system improvements amount to just a tilt in one direction, a qualitative rather than quantitative shift akin to the last millimetre of turn on a fine lens that brings everything, including the depth of field, into sharp focus. Musical phrases are more succinct and also more understandable due to the noticeably enhanced contrast and shading of micro-dynamics. I have also noticed a slight change in balance and perspectives that has been more evident when sitting off-axis. A slight



edging forward of the mid-band perhaps that lends a touch more presence, but then it may just be the subjective result of the reduced noise floor and will almost certainly be system dependent. But there is no sign of any compressive limiting at all. Far from it in fact, as resolving power and freedom when it comes to those small dynamic variations is noticeably improved.

As the QX-4 is so easily portable and installed I have also tried in a few friend's homes with systems of varying levels of quality to get a broader view of its effectiveness, and I have yet to hear a single situation where the system and the music failed to benefit from its inclusion. It is true that many have struggled to describe its effect in ►

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► words but, once removed, everyone I have played it to wants it back in place. It is, perhaps not surprisingly, affected by where it sits. Don't leave it on the floor but allocate it a dedicated shelf and you will enhance its effectiveness even more. I can see no real downside

to it at all and in many ways the benefits it brings to a music system are not unlike those of the Stillpoints products I have reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Both can be viewed as fundamental and critical building blocks when it

comes to getting the best from your equipment – and both work superbly in tandem. What Stillpoints achieve in mechanical terms the QX-4 seems to do to your mains, and that's the point. More Quantum, more music; it really is that simple. ►+

The solace of Quantum... The QX2 mains purifier

by Steve Dickinson

If you fancy a giggle at our forebears' expense, google the word 'Phlogiston'. This was the term coined to describe an unknown, in this case the mechanism by which things burn, to help explain the known, i.e. the fact that things burn. Following the discovery of oxygen, the phlogiston theory was discredited, but one could be forgiven for suspecting the marketing departments of cosmetics companies, for example, of keeping the tradition of such risible scientific nomenclature alive. The term 'flat-earther' is commonly used in hi-fi circles to describe adherents to the '80s Linn-Naim philosophy that all a good system had to deliver was tunefulness and dynamics – even at the expense of everything else. Many still espouse this view, though many more do not. Here at Plus Towers we've been banging on about the fundamental importance of mains cabling, supports, interconnects and so-on for longer than just about anybody else, attracting a fair amount of criticism in the process from what may be, perhaps, the new flat-earthers. Their view, based on some fairly basic physics (albeit provoked by some of the more outlandish claims from some cable manufacturers) is that cables can't have the effect we describe, because these effects can't be explained or described in

terms of simple cable parameters such as resistance, inductance and capacitance. But if all scientists reacted that way, saying "That can't be right" rather than "That's interesting" we might still be talking about phlogiston today.

I mention all this because I've been approaching this review with a degree of mild disquiet. My misgivings, such as they are, centre on the lack of a technical frame of reference for the Quantum products. The developers of the technology remain tight-lipped about the scientific goings-on under the hood. They have not furnished me with any kind of technical description, and the back-of-a-fag-packet explanations I have heard didn't make a great deal of sense to me. Which is just as likely to be an indictment of my own level of technical competence – as I'm sure you, dear reader, were just about to point out. Logically, of course, this is not that different to a cable review where the physics is not generally well-understood, and even less well explained. But this is a box, with an on/off switch, a light and stuff, and boxes are supposed to do things we recognise, not lead us off into metaphysics. That's what cables are for...

Apparently, Quantum technology does something with electromagnetic fields – a something which might be hard to explain but is actually easy to both measure and demonstrate.

Be in no doubt, there is something extraordinary going on here.

My QX2 represents the entry-level unit, while CT has been playing with the QX4, rated at twice the effectiveness. Both share the same casework, the only visible difference being the change of designation in the logo. The rear is also simple, a regular IEC mains input, and a mains output (currently US or Schuko only) together with an illuminated on/off switch. This last makes A/B comparisons a doddle as the unit is essentially passive when switched off, the power merely passing through unmolested. The use of a Schuko output does necessitate the use of a Schuko to IEC mains lead for onward connection and I was supplied with a Nordost Brahma, identical to my normal mains leads, for that purpose. I also obtained a pair of Nordost Valhalla power cords for comparison. Nordost reckon that a 4m length is optimal for their power cables, so with each section into and out of the Quantum unit measuring 2m, this effectively created the optimum length. Likewise, nearly all audiophile mains leads are available in both Schuko and US versions, so the output socket is less of an issue than it might appear.

The actual effect of the Quantum units creeps up on you, but once you 'get' it, which doesn't take long, it ►

► is striking. Dynamics are enhanced, though not in any way forced: this is not like turning up the volume, it's more like turning down the rest of the world. A level of, previously unsuspected, oppressiveness is lifted away, not unlike moving from a smallish room with low ceilings to one with expansive, elegant and lofty proportions. The effect on the performance is simply that musicians play with more conviction, a deeper level of commitment. Imagine a concert performed by players who have just endured a tedious, overdue, overcrowded and overheated train journey to the venue. Then imagine the same concert if the performers have parachuted in, James Bond style, tearing off their jumpsuits to reveal immaculate tuxedos as they bound onto the platform to rapturous applause. It is that energising, refreshing effect that the Quantum brings with it. It makes the timing and placement, the texture and shape of notes far more obvious and effective. It's almost as if you've taken the shackles off your system. There is no hint of artifice, no contrived niceness, simply a more direct engagement with the emotional impact of the music. You also miss it like hell when it is switched off.

The Valhalla leads also allowed me to compare the impact of the QX2 to that of a better power cord. Moving from a Brahma'd-up Quantum to un-Quantumed Valhallas and finally to Valhalla'd Quantum was most illuminating and, suffice to say, anybody who tries to get the Valhallas and the Quantum off me might get hurt in the attempt. But the middle stage was perhaps the most intriguing. Using the Valhallas without

the Quantum brought clear benefits, but you also lost a lot of what the Quantum had added to the Brahmas. For example, a quick listen to Dave Brubeck's *Unsquare Dance* via Quantum and Brahmas showed how well defined the clapping is at the start of the piece; with the Quantum



out of the circuit, the claps are more amorphous, less spatially and temporally articulated. The Valhallas, sans Quantum, restored much of the texture and the timing, but it is not until the Quantum is re-introduced that the full ambient information, and sense of interplay between the various clappers, their enthusiasm, is restored. Similarly, pieces with plucked acoustic bass lack ambience and tension without the Quantum, regardless of the quality of mains cable employed. In some cases, it might almost be an electric bass in play, however the Quantum unit shows quite clearly the body, space and volume of the instrument so there is no room for doubt.

This, I think, is why I am happy to enthusiastically espouse the Quantum units. Valhalla mains cables represent fairly close to state of the art performance, but there are things the Quantum brings to the party that the Valhallas only hint at. The effect of the Quantum boxes is also cumulative.

There's no reason why multiple units can't be daisy-chained, and this seems to work. When my unit was delivered, another QX2 plus CT's QX4 were also to hand and, just for fun, we connected all three units up, making in effect a QX8. Having played around a bit, we switched them off. The only word that adequately describes my feelings at that point is 'bereft' – and I'm not overstating or exaggerating the effect. Quantum technology allows your system to work better, allows it to deliver much more music – and does so in a way that seems unique. In this respect the QX2 is good, but the QX4 is better. One demonstration should convince and I suspect that anybody who hears these units will have no trouble justifying the extra

expense of the QX4; indeed they might just start saving for another. ►+

Price:

Quantum QX-2: \$950.00

Quantum QX-4: \$1375.

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