



Quested
S8 MusicTech
 RECOMMENDED
 ★★★★★★☆☆

Quested is a pedigree British company that has been building monitors for top recording studios since the early 70s. Huw Price checks the specs on the new S8 active monitors.

KEY FEATURES

- Size: 300 x 430 x 370mm
- Weight: 19.2kg
- Bass cone: 1 x 8-inch
- High frequency soft dome: 1 x 1.1-inch
- Frequency response: 50Hz–20kHz ± 2dB
- Input connector: XLR and 1/4-inch jack combo
- Sensitivity: 96dB @ 1m

MEASURING UP

At this price you should demand exceptional sound quality and the S8s don't disappoint. They are the only monitors that have come close to the Earthworks Sigma 6.2s (£2,350 pair) which we reviewed last year, and considering that the Questeds are active and the Sigmas are passive, the S8s look like decent value for money.

S8

Manufacturer **Quested**
 Price **£1,390 pair**
 Contact **Sonic8 08701 657456**
 Web **www.quested.com**

Well, we have to say that these Quested S8s wouldn't win any beauty contests: rectangular boxes, square edges, pointy corners and black ash veneer – very reminiscent of 1980s furniture. The 8-inch bass driver and 1-inch soft dome tweeter are black, too, and apart a small Quested badge in the top left-hand corner (complete with an LED display) there's no detailing to speak of.

So, what have these rather dated-looking, two-way active monitors got going for them? Well, they pump out 370 watts of class AB power per side, the enclosures incorporate finely tuned reflex ports and this is the latest version of a design that Quested has been busily refining for some 20 years.

The S8s are intended for a wide variety of applications – from speech to full-on electronica – and the high power rating means they can be used in small and large rooms in the nearfield or midfield for stereo monitoring or surround sound.

Before a critical listening session, Quested recommends waiting until the two green LEDs on the front have stopped flashing – indicating that the system is fully warmed up. This takes a while, so make sure you turn them on before doing anything else – including brewing up and sweeping away the mess left over from the night before. The same LEDs flash red to indicate overloading; if they remain permanently red the unit is indicating a fault.

The analogue input accepts balanced XLR and TRS jack plugs and the level can be attenuated using a small screwdriver to select –12dB to +6dB in indented increments. There is some dipswitch frequency adjustment too: high frequencies can be flat or +/-2dB at 10kHz; low frequencies can be flat or -2/-4dB at 42Hz.

Epic qualities

The S8s sound particularly huge, with 'big' recordings such as Miles Davies' *Sketches Of Spain* coming across with epic scale and depth. They handle electronic music equally well: the synth stabs and kick drum at the top of Kraftwerk's *Pocket Calculator* carried real energy and punch. They are also incredibly clear without sounding bright, and you never feel the urge to crank them up to hear things 'better'. Well-constructed mixes sound balanced and coherent, but it's always easy to zone in on individual instruments.

The S8s excel with just about everything you throw at them, producing razor-sharp imaging and the deepest possible soundstage. They are particularly superb with acoustic music, but their one weakness is that the bottom end is not super-tight – at least, it wasn't in our test room. They'll be awesome with 90% of program material, but we experienced a slight looseness to extreme low frequency content like Massive Attack bass lines.

The sweet spot

Every track you play through the S8s sounds individual, while differences in recording, mixing and mastering techniques are starkly apparent. Conversely, most speakers add a little of themselves to the equation, diminishing these individual characteristics. Of course, this type of honesty and neutrality is a mixed blessing if you want a rosy sonic picture to ensure listening pleasure. On the other hand, any clued-up musician will prefer a couple of close friends who are brutally honest.

If you need a pair of nearfields to plonk on top of your mixing desk, the S8s aren't really ideal. The enclosures are huge and the tweeters will probably fire straight over your head. These aren't hi-fi speakers designed to produce a cosy, room-filling sound. To get the best out of them you'll need to sit in the sweet spot – and we found this to be at least 1.5m away from the drivers.

The biggest compliment we can pay the S8s is that with well-recorded music they almost disappear. Find that sweet spot, close your eyes and you'll gradually cease to be aware that you are listening to a pair of studio monitors. Instead you'll feel as though you have been transported into the room with all the musicians. A rare treat indeed. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Glorious sound
- Precise imaging
- Awesome power
- Impressive build quality
- Practical frequency compensation
- Accurately indented input settings
- Very loud

WALK ON BY

- Slightly loose low end
- Power switches at rear
- Unsuitable for placement on mixer
- No digital input
- Expensive

VERDICT

These speakers are nothing short of amazing. Beware – they could change your life.

