

Monitor Audio R90HD Mini Monitors & R360HD Subwoofer Review

Rich Sound in a Small, Elegant Speaker System

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By [Gary Altunian](#), About.com

My first thoughts about the Monitor Audio R90HD Mini Monitors and the R360HD subwoofer are refined, elegant and finely made – even cute. From the finely polished real wood veneer, gold-plated binding post speaker connectors and excellent fit and finish, the Mini Monitor system exudes quality. My second thought is reservation about their audio capabilities because of their ultra-small footprint. But doubt quickly gave way to amazement when I tested a pair of the Monitor Audio R90HD Mini-Monitors and the R360HD subwoofer.

R90HD Mini Monitor Features

The R90HD is truly a mini monitor (perhaps even a micro-monitor), measuring a little more than 7" high, 5" wide and 5 ½" deep. They have a 4" woofer and 1" tweeter featuring driver design and technology found in other Monitor Audio speakers I've tested. The MMP II (Metal Matrix Polymer) woofer is a polypropylene-based driver mixed with metallic particles designed for rigidity. The cone is manufactured with varying thicknesses to reduce cone flexing and achieve a more linear response. The Gold C-CAM (Ceramic-Coated Aluminum Magnesium) tweeter extends high frequency response to 35 kHz. Both drivers are magnetically shielded for placement close to sensitive electronics.



R90HD in Walnut real wood veneer.

The solid, rear-ported enclosures are reinforced with a through-bolt, which provides cross-bracing to strengthen the enclosure and reduce cabinet resonances. The R90HD mini monitors can be shelf or wall mounted (pivoting wall mount bracket included) or placed on optional stands designed specifically for the monitors.

The R90HD is the second in a series of seven speakers and the R360HD is one of two subwoofers in the Monitor Audio HD line.

R360HD Subwoofer Features

The R360HD subwoofer is the perfect complement for the R90HD monitors. Like the monitors, the subwoofer is mini-sized, leaving one to wonder if it can produce enough bass. The R360HD houses an 8" long-throw, down-firing woofer powered by a 100-watt Class A-B amplifier. The enclosure is braced with the same through-bolt feature found in the mini monitors. It features stereo RCA inputs, but no speaker level inputs, so it must be connected to the subwoofer or LFE output on a receiver. In addition to a variable crossover and phase control, the R360HD includes two EQ presets for music and movie programs. There is no crossover bypass mode on the R360HD.



R360HD in high gloss white lacquer.

Putting the System to the Test

How can a speaker produce dynamic, room-filling sound when it's smaller than a half-gallon milk carton? I'm not a speaker designer so I don't know the answer to that question, but I do know that the Monitor Audio R90HD speakers sound like a larger bookshelf speaker and comfortably blend into almost any room décor.

Small drivers, notably the 4" woofer in the R90HD have inherent advantages because of their low-mass. A well-designed low-mass driver generally has good transient response, which helps in the reproduction of percussion instruments, such as guitar, drums, etc. Sting's acoustic guitar in 'Saint Agnes and the Burning Train', a flamenco-flavored track sounded detailed and crisp with ultra-quick response and each pluck of the guitar string was distinct. In the same track, the subwoofer sounded full and deep, suggesting my doubts about its performance were a bit premature, even in my 23' x 16' listening room. <p>Vocals were sweet-sounding and transparent with good center imaging in Mary Black's 'Columbus' and the Mini-Monitors easily reproduced the wide dynamics in this recording.

Conclusion

The Monitor Audio R90HD Mini-Monitors will deceive the eyes, but not the ears. They're small enough to be virtually invisible, but with their fine finish, you'll want them to place them where they can be easily seen and appreciated. The Mini-Monitors also make a handsome, discreet complement to a flat screen television in a 5.1 channel system. The speakers are easy to place on stands, a shelf or wall-mounted. In short, the Mini-Monitors are rich-looking speakers with sound that matches or exceeds many bookshelf speakers and are a great value. I heartily recommend them for a small stereo system in a bedroom or den or as speakers for an executive system.

The R90HD Mini-Monitors and R360HD subwoofer are available in multiple finishes: Silver Lacquer, Walnut Veneer, Rosemah Veneer, Piano Black Lacquer, Piano White Lacquer.



The Radius HD series line up.