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MONITOR AUDIO BR2

This compact standmount features a refined, good-size main driver

With an illustrious history that goes way back to the 1970s, Monitor Audio is probably best known for upmarket speakers in top-quality, real-wood veneers, and as a pioneer in the use of metal diaphragms drivers. However, a change in ownership in the late 1990s brought a change in direction, with the (initial) creation of three distinct ranges, logically labelled Bronze (budget, vinyl), Silver (mid-price, real wood) and Gold (upmarket, luxury veneer).

This BR2 model is one of four stereo pairs in the latest (third) generation of Bronze models, known as Bronze Rs. The larger of two standmounts, it carries a £200 per pair price tag, which is just £20 more than the cost of the original Bronze 2, which received a Best Buy in a review way back in 2000.

The front panel has classic Monitor Audio styling cues, including the familiar gold-anodised tweeter dome. Vinyl finish is inevitable at this price, but the woodprint used here – black, walnut or cherry – does look prettier than that of its predecessors. Although the overall package looks very similar generally, the press release cites all manner of detail improvements, to crossover components, enclosure bracing, main driver motor linearity and tweeter operating bandwidth, to mention just a few.

The shielded main driver has a 165mm frame and a 120mm MMP (metal matrix polymer) cone – basically, polypropylene loaded with shiny metal particles – and is neatly rebated

into the thick front panel. The tweeter has a mesh-protected 25mm anodised alloy dome; its rear-loading chamber has been re-engineered to lower the fundamental resonance and enable the crossover to be simplified. Twin terminals on the rear permit bi-wiring connection, while a port on the front augments the bass.

SOUND QUALITY

Like its predecessors, the BR2 works best when placed quite close to a wall. This helps to fill out the mid-bass octave nicely, though on the other hand, it also creates some unevenness further up in the midband.

As a result, the BR2 doesn't have the smoothest sound around, but it is both coherent and dynamic, and also has the characteristic agility and clean bottom end of a standmount. Indeed, it's when you go to a well aligned standmount after trying a series of floorstanders that you realise what an obvious advantage a quality standmount like this Monitor Audio has when it comes to delivering a crisp, clear, lively and informative bottom end. The BR2 gives little if anything away in terms of weight and scale, yet it punches out the bottom end with a real sense of purpose and drive, especially for the size.

The BR2 is by no means smooth or free from coloration. Irrespective of wall proximity, there's an upper midband peak here that certainly adds a slightly 'cupped hands' character to voices and especially speech, with a tendency to over-project and hype the detail here. But it's easily forgiven because of the seamlessness of the transition from main driver to tweeter.

Perhaps as a consequence of the now simplified crossover arrangements, the integration between the two drivers is quite superb, so that one is scarcely aware that more than one source is producing the sound, and certainly not conscious of the 'separate' tweeter. The net result is a thoroughly engaging and entertaining

low-cost speaker, as well as one that works well when tucked back against the wall. **HFC**

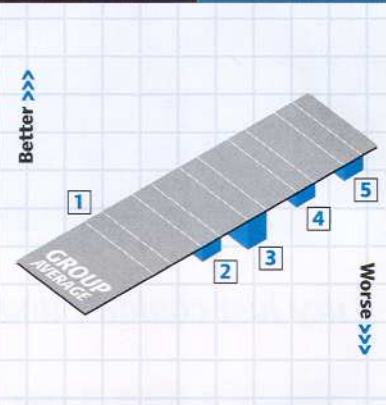


LAB REPORT

Although one or two response peaks reach the specified 90dB sensitivity, a more representative overall figure is 88dB, which is respectable enough in view of the decent bass extension (-6dB at 30 Hz under in-room, wall-mount conditions). That said, the impedance is a fairly demanding 4 ohms across much of the low and mid portions of the band. Pair matching is par for the course, and a minor resonance was detectable at around 230Hz.

Though decidedly unpromising when measured in free space, the BR2s flattened out very nicely when sited close to a wall, aided by 45Hz port tuning. The net result is a relatively flat response across most of the band. This comes with a little extra mid-bass weight below 120Hz, and a rather obvious 3dB peak centred on 850Hz, but with a remarkably smooth and even output either side.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> 0%
- 2] Bass extension >> -10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> -20%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -10%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -10%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	6/- ohms	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	-	30Hz

VERDICT

SOUND >> 82%

PRACTICALITY >> 85%

BUILD >> 83%

VALUE >> 97%

Inexpensive standmount is suited to close-to-wall placement, with a muscular sound with good dynamics and superior overall coherence. Some coloration, but superior mid-to-treble integration is a strength.

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE **90%**



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