



Seven up!

Another five years, another factory-fresh Bronze lineup. **David Vivian** takes the floorstanding flagship for a drive

It's probably about right to think of Monitor Audio's extraordinary £70k Hyphn floorstander as the most potent symbol of the Essex-based company's methodology. Every big-time speaker brand needs a statement product to get the adrenaline pumping – maybe all the better if it looks more like the striding pillars of the heroic TARS robot from the sci-fi film *Interstellar* than a conventional luxury high-end tower. And, as is usually the case, some of that exotic, unconstrained tech, will eventually, tier-by-tier, trickle down to more affordable fare – not just in terms of specific materials, but the company's overarching Transparent Design Philosophy.

Indeed, TDP applies all the way down to MA's practical battle star of the past quarter century, the humble Bronze. Now in its 7th generation, the evolving entry-level lineup has shouldered the

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Monitor Audio
Bronze 300 7G

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
2.5-way
floorstanding
loudspeaker

WEIGHT
15.6kg each

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
269 x 1,005 x 392mm

FEATURES
● 25mm C-CAM
gold dome tweeter
● 2x 152mm C-CAM
mid/bass drivers
● Quoted sensitivity:
88dB/1W/1m (8ohm)

DISTRIBUTOR
Monitor Audio Ltd.

WEBSITE
monitordaudio.co.uk

responsibility of introduction, of establishing brand principles, of offering a value-for-money proposition presumed to apply to all the company's speakers, whatever they cost. Bronze is the point of departure, the one that must over achieve in a crowded and hugely competitive market sector and, perhaps more than ever, present a job sheet that requires the full attention of MA's Technical Director Michael Hedges. "For 7G we've taken all the core DNA of what made Bronze great for 25 years and instilled, refined and enhanced it," he explains. "We've aimed to reduce any compromises and focus on perfecting the art of high-fidelity at this level and price."

"It means focusing on soundstage and imaging not just frequency response and distortion, and ensuring that the speakers are both transparent, in that they convey the music as intended, but also enjoyable and engaging." As ever,

crowd pleasing remains a Monitor Audio signature characteristic.

Part of the update has been to slim down the range. There are now just four models and no dedicated sub, that slot filled by a new series of Vestra subs in varying sizes from 10 to 15in. The new Bronze lineup comprises a standmount, wall-mount, centre and, reviewed here, the flagship Bronze 300 7G, a 2.5-way bass reflex floorstander that can also be had with Atmos toppers for home cinema use. To make the shrinkage work, Hedges admits a lot of effort had to be put into pushing the bass performance and extension of the new Bronze 300 7G with its 152mm main drivers to at least match that of the outgoing Bronze 500 6G with its 203mm equivalents, but believes it has succeeded.

Starting at the top, the revised C-CAM Gold dome tweeter is thinner, lighter and more rigid than its previous 6th-gen incarnation. Its carefully formed dome benefits from what MA is calling a UD (Uniform Dispersion) Waveguide II. This improves time alignment and allows a lower frequency to crossover for wider directivity. Further, newly optimised venting allows the tweeter to increase its sound pressure level within the 2-3kHz region for more precision at higher volumes.

The new 152mm composite cone C-CAM mid/bass driver has a new spider design and optimised surround as well as a larger voice coil and motor system, with the aim of reducing distortion and increasing clarity in the midband for improved control and power handling while also delivering greater dynamics and higher sensitivity. The crossover design has been revised via MA's usual combination of simulation, measurement and listening to extract the best performance.

As before, MA's Through-Bolt tech means the drivers are securely braced to the rear of the enclosure and tightened to a specific torque to ensure both the drivers and enclosure act as a structurally rigid unit, eradicating unwanted chassis resonances. The rear baffle supports good-quality bi-wire binding posts and two high-velocity bass reflex ports (HiVe II) to reduce turbulence and support air flow acceleration, allowing for fast powerful bass and greater transient response.

Build and finish are stunning for the money with real-wood and ply front baffles, and modern satin-finished vinyl wraps available in Walnut, Black or White. The stabilising, bolt-on outriggers are more robust and expensive-looking than before, too, with integrated rubber feet for placement on hard floors and spikes

for soft carpeted floors and surfaces. "Tonal balance is an area where we've really been able to improve the performance," says Hedges. "The changes to the tweeter and the use of a newly optimised 152mm driver have enabled us to refine the midrange. This, coupled with the learning we've made on crossover design and voicing since the last range, has led to a significant improvement in detail and communication without making the speaker brighter. This all leads into our Transparent Design Philosophy."

Sound quality

The speakers clearly have ample resolving power, precision and a beautifully open, expressive and fluent midband. But the first thing that hits you is their sheer intelligibility. The Bronze 300 is easy to listen to not in any homogenised 'easy listening' sense, but because the musical message is so easy to 'read', so easy to understand, so transparent. Your attention won't be tempted to listen for a ruler-flat frequency response or stone-cold tonal neutrality but, far more impactful, a performance that sounds nape-tinglingly real – palpable and tactile with ample drive and attack for rock, yet replete with the texture and colour to illuminate gentler fare.

Michael McDonald's *Honest Emotion* is blue-eyed soul at its most tender, his unique baritone at its most poised and,



If you crave more box and drivers for your money, look no further than Triangle's strapping, three-way Borea BR08 (HFC 478). Though not quite as room-friendly and elegantly svelte as the Bronze 300, the Triangle delivers fine fluency and speed across a wide selection of music. The Monitor Audio is somewhat more couth and forgiving, but has to give way to the French tower for sheer verve and energy. It's a tough call. Both speakers have seductive charms galore.



indeed, dripping in emotion. As well as nailing the earthy timbre of the great man's vocal, the excellence of the production is allowed to shine through, lush strings and gently 'clucking' banjos perfectly placed in a spacious mix.

Treble is clean, extended and rich with texture and fine inner detail and

The musical message is so easy to 'read', so easy to understand, so transparent

transient precision, completely free from grain. Compelling too is the sense of air and openness with images tightly focused and spread well beyond the boundaries of the cabinets in all planes. The presentation lacks the hyped presence of some rivals, but sounds truer and more natural than the 6G Bronze, detail meshing seamlessly into the larger sonic picture rather than being pushed into the spotlight. Ambience is especially well conveyed and never better appreciated than with a Qobuz stream of the almost mesmerically atmospheric *Pink Floyd At Pompeii*. Taking on the massive low-frequency synth pads, bass hits cleanly and goes satisfyingly low, but it's also supple and tuneful and it never, ever sounds flabby, leaden or overhung. In the same vein, the Bronze 300 7G doesn't blur edges or smudge textures, it presents the solid and spacious as a coherent whole with tonal colours, instrumental timbres and ambient cues intact. Timing's right on the money, too, capable of conveying the subtlest shifts in tempo.

Best of all, these aren't speakers that pull music apart for analysis, despite their undoubted powers of resolution. Performers don't just sound more tangibly believable, their talents (or otherwise) are easier to track and appreciate. Partly it's because of their ability to reproduce the subtlest of micro-dynamic swings stemming from their impressive command of timing and rhythm. Complicated tunes are delivered without muddle, simple ones with clarity, pace and conviction. Top stuff.

Conclusion

The effort and expertise Monitor Audio pours into its ground-floor speaker has been handsomely repaid. Paring down the range has sharpened its focus and if the Bronze 300 is anything to go by, the routine makeover has liberated a more mature and sophisticated sonic style without losing any of the traditional Bronze energy and enthusiasm. Another terrific £1k floorstander, perhaps the best yet ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

EASE OF DRIVE
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: A smoother, warmer yet no less insightful sound than before; size; build quality; finish

DISLIKE: Nothing of note at the price

WE SAY: Monitor Audio's entry-level floorstander goes from strength to strength

