

Following the revamp of the Monitor Audio Silver and Gold series, Monitor Audio is now tackling the affordable Bronze speakers. Just like with the bigger brothers, these budget loudspeakers get a lot of technology from the more expensive MA products. And you can hear that.

Monitor Audio Bronze 100

With the Bronze 100, Monitor Audio is responding to the emerging trend of larger monitor loudspeakers that prefer to be placed on a stand rather than on a bookshelf. Monitor Audio already did this with models such as the award-winning (but more expensive) Gold 100 and the Studio, but with this model the British loudspeaker manufacturer also offers 'suitable sweets' at a lower price. The Bronze 100 is not the entry-level model in the new Bronze 6G series, or the sixth generation of this popular loudspeaker line. That role is reserved for the smaller Bronze 50, which is really very compact. The family also includes the Bronze 200 and 500 floor standing loudspeakers, the Bronze C150 centre loudspeaker and the W10 subwoofer.

Monitor Audio has always had a heart for surround enthusiasts, but with the new Bronze 6G series it goes a step further. In addition to a 6G edition of the FX wall speaker designed for surround channels, the British are presenting a solution for Dolby Atmos for the first time. The Bronze AMS is a Dolby speaker that reflects sound of the Atmos channels from the ceiling. You'll place the Bronze AMS model on top of a regular Bronze loudspeaker.

In this review, however, we are going to zoom in on the Bronze 100, a speaker that promises to combine the advantages of a monitor with those of a floor stander. A compact loudspeaker that very well performs in the low, we find that interesting of course. With these properties, the Bronze 100 should be a suitable choice for anyone who wants to listen to music at a higher quality level in a smaller room or flat.

Duotone

The previous generation of Bronze had a significantly more functional finish than what we get out of the box here. For the 6G family, Monitor Audio has done a lot of effort to make these affordable loudspeakers much more attractive. The bar is simply much higher than a few years ago, because many rivals have proposed beautiful products that are much more in line with interior trends than before. Think of Dali's Oberon or ELAC Debut Reference HD for example. A characteristic of Monitor Audio is that they immediately offer a wider choice than you would expect at this price point. There are a total of four colours to select from: Urban Grey, Black, White and Walnut.

As before, the build quality of the Bronze 6G is excellent, it is especially the finish that seems a lot more fashionable and valuable with the sixth generation. The contrast between the veneer used for the loudspeaker cabinet and the colour of the baffle is beautiful, which is really nice, especially with the walnut and Urban Grey version. Our test samples were a nice walnut colour with a dark grey front, very handsome. We are curious about the Urban Grey edition. It offers something original in this price segment. We are also surprised to find decent bi-wiring loudspeaker terminals with a loudspeaker at this price point. At the back, the finish is a bit more functional, but that is not a deal breaker.

Thoroughly renewed

Monitor Audio does not just releases loudspeakers, but is known as a company that works in a very thorough and process-oriented way. The Bronze 6G was also worked on by the entire team for about two years, about the same time as with the expensive loudspeaker families. One of the goals was to create a new affordable loudspeaker line that did not come across as a compromise. This already happens too often. Most manufacturers are mainly focused on their more expensive speaker families. The cheaper models are then seen - consciously or not - as something they have to do to serve the budget buyer. The "good enough" attitude is often seen in the industry. Of course, those buyers don't like that, because they spend a budget that is significant to them. They don't want a speaker that feels inferior. Monitor Audio wanted to prevent that with Bronze series and design a loudspeaker that offers as much as possible for the price.

An important improvement in visual design and sound is moving the bass port to the back. The Bronze 100 becomes immediately more beautiful and there is now room for a larger midrange woofer. The connection with the more expensive Silver and Gold series is also reinforced by equipping the C-CAM tweeter with a grille with a chaotic pattern. That tweeter has a gold-coloured dome, which subtly enhances the scintillation of the appearance. Between the grille and the tweeter there is also a waveguide that should make the appearance as smooth and as wide as possible.

Surrounded by fine details

Anyone who thought that a speaker of 455 euros per pair is only suitable for reproducing music in a commercial way will be surprised when they hear "Personal Effects" on the Bronze 100. With this album, Deutsche Grammophon continues his mission to release all the music of the late Icelandic composer Johann Johannsson, in this case a soundtrack that he created twelve years ago. It is more melodic work than he sometimes produced, neoclassical but not too avant-garde. The clean reproduction that Monitor Audio aimed for, turns out to be very successful here, because you really have the feeling that you are listening to an orchestra in a larger room. Also nice: that experience is also there when we sit in a different chair and look at the loudspeaker at an angle. Put "Give the People What They Want Up," and chances are you're supposed to be listening to 1960s Motown Soul. But Sharon Jones and her 8-piece Dap-Kings band recorded this album (ALAC CD quality) a few years ago, which you quickly realize if you really listen to the lyrics. However cheerful and danceable the songs are, they regularly touch the concerns of the common American. Jones has a great voice, with a lot of power, which is what the Bronze 100's convey effectively. Great about these British loudspeakers is that they not only let you focus on the singer, but that the extensive orchestra is also well represented. Rhythm is everything in soul music - or at least a lot - and the MA loudspeakers convey that perfectly. Even those small details that often disappear towards (or into) the background, such as a tambourine, are very present, while the thick texture of the reed wind instruments is also beautifully reflected. These are great achievements.

When listening and experimenting with the placement, we notice that these speakers are best turned in a bit. They radiate broadly, but with a good 'toe-in', you'll get the best soundstage with lots of detail and clear stereo separation. That phenomenon is usually typical of a more high-end loudspeaker, intended for music lovers who would like to gain more insight into their music. For those wondering: "What is a good placement"? Do not aim the tweeters directly at your ears,

because then you will experience a peak around 6 KHz, but somewhere at a point a meter behind your head. The Bronze 100 also relies heavily on that bass port at the back to give music more body and you have to take that into account. Just like that more balanced view. First we found the Bronze 100 a bit absent in terms of bass due to those two things. Partly because you don't expect such an exuberant presentation with a speaker of this price range, but also because we placed movable acoustic panels behind the speakers that muted the sound a little too much.

We removed these panels to muse away from the ambient neoclassical "Atomos" of A Winged Victory for the Sullen (FLAC CD quality through Qobuz), combining slow synth lines and deep tones with romantic cello and violin lines. It is an album that is perfect for a rainy day, also with the Bronze 100's as reproducers. If we compare what we now hear with the Q Acoustics 3020i's and the Bowers & Wilkins 606's from our speaker library, then the Bronze 100 offers a more balanced, three-dimensional reproduction (where the more difficult to control 606's put more energy in the bass, which is impressive, while the 3020i's have a more commercial, flatter reproduction and are more compact).

Conclusion

The clear, detailed presentation that comes from the Bronze 100 is not that of an affordable speaker. Monitor Audio gives this sturdy chunk a balanced reproduction that is more reminiscent of that of a higher audiophile product. It did surprise us a bit, but it certainly didn't disappoint. Combine that with a finish that is more sophisticated than before with this new Bronze generation, and you are talking about a very nice speaker that offers performance from a higher segment at a reasonable price.

Negatives

- Slightly more expensive than before
- Distance from the wall is decisive
- Correct orientation of rear speakers is crucial
- Upper channels at rears could be more powerful

Pros

- Lots of resolution and detail
- Wide sweet spot
- Easy to manage
- Four beautiful, modern finishes



(FWD 'sales-advice')

Homecinema Magazine Assessment: 9.0 (out of 10).