

AV INFO

PRODUCT:
5.1.2 floorstanding
Dolby Atmos system

POSITION:
Monitor Audio's first
Atmos offering, near
entry-level

PEERS:
Jamo S8 Series;
SVS Prime Series;
KEF Q Series

The fan-fave AV bundle returns with a new look, new drivers and a new Atmos toy. **Mark Craven** reports

Bronze better than third place

1. The AV package mixes Atmos upfiring with dipole surrounds

2. White, grey, walnut and black colour options extend to the W10 subwoofer

Considering its position as both a hi-fi and home cinema speaker brand, and the sizable catalogue of models that it's typically offered, Monitor Audio has been rather slow to step into the Dolby Atmos arena. Now, however, it's selling an upfiring module for 3D audio lovers, and keeping the price low too.

Currently the only Dolby Atmos speaker in Monitor Audio's stable, the Bronze AMS is just one part of the recently relaunched Bronze Series. And you don't need to be a metallurgist to know that Bronze is one of MA's more affordable propositions.

Ranked below the Silver, Gold and Platinum lines, and above the entry-level Monitor Series and compact Mass models, Bronze is positioned as a high-quality option for those still shopping on a budget ('democratically priced' is the Brit brand's description). True, the full package price of the 5.1.2 system reviewed here approaches £2,000, but remember you're getting eight cabinets – including a pair of handsome floorstanders.

Update your profile

We're now into the sixth generation of MA's Bronze Series, and there have been quite substantial revisions since the 5G range. These include the positioning of bass reflex ports on the rear, rather than the front of cabinets (but still the distinctive, rifled HiVe II designs), a new 'modern profile' look, where front baffles are a different tone to the rest of the speaker, and, naturally, upgraded drivers.

For those familiar with the Bronze 5G, it'll be these speakers' tweeters that first catch the eye. Or, rather, the 'hexagonal dispersion pattern' flush-fit grille in front of them. This both aims to improve the tweeter's dispersive characteristics and protect it from damage. Behind it sits the 1in C-CAM (Ceramic-Coated Aluminium Magnesium) 'gold dome' HF unit, now fitted with a UD (Uniform Dispersion) waveguide, which also aims to improve off-axis response and aid time alignment with MA's bass/mid and mid-range drivers.

These drivers are also new, and benefit, we're told, from

an FEA-designed geometry that better integrates cone and surround for a smoother response.

5.5in versions are used on both Bronze 200 floorstander and Bronze C150 centre (which at 16.6cm high and 22.5cm deep isn't too much of an awkward install). Meanwhile, the Dolby Atmos-certified Bronze AMS upfiring (£300p/p if purchased on their own), fit a 4in C-CAM mid-range and 1in tweeter within their angled chassis. The cabinets are a perfect fit for the top of the Bronze 200.

Monitor Audio gives this affordable range its own subwoofer, which means it's one of the brand's less advanced models. There's none of the Silver Series' mic-assisted automatic room EQ on the Bronze W10, but the 10in driver/10in passive radiator design, trio of sound presets, and claimed 220W grunt, make it far from a basic bass-bin.

Rounding out this 'AV' package is a pair of Bronze FX dipole/bipole speakers for surround channel duty. I do wonder if partnering the rest of the system with MA's conventional standmount Bronze 50 models might

be a better move, as not only are these likely to be a more straightforward install than the wall-hugging FXs, they're also designed to accommodate the AMS Atmos speaker on top. This would provide an upgrade path to a 5.1.4 setup. Furthermore, purely from a standards point of view, Dolby is a bit snifty about the use of dipoles in Atmos systems, saying its format works best with precise direct-radiating models.

It would be wrong of me to brush past how gorgeous these speakers look. Between >



REVIEWS

the silver cone drivers, detailed tweeter cover and their smart finishes, they pull off the trick of appearing more expensive than they actually are. In addition to the white livery featured here, all are available in black and – except the FX speakers – urban grey and walnut.

Made for movie night

Factoring in this system's design style and agreeable pricing, it becomes hard to fault. The soundscapes created are the kind to have you keenly anticipating movie night.

A quite striking facet of the overall characteristic is the feeling of unconstrained treble. The front L/R floorstanders in particular have an open, spacious HF sound, which really comes into its own with film scores; the string

'A sonic all-rounder, this pack delivers both in terms of resolution and finesse, and up-and-at-'em attitude'

orchestration of Hans Zimmer's *Widows* soundtrack (4K Blu-ray), for example, sounded fluent and expansive.

These two cabinets mesh well together with the Bronze C150 to create an LCR stage with believable dialogue delivery and a feeling of real solidity. Integration with the FX model is not quite as assured; this speaker's diffuse nature certainly leads to a wide and enveloping rear surround field, but pin-point front-to-back effects pans lack a level of absolute cohesion.

With the Atmos mix of *Aquaman* (4K Blu-ray), the AMS models prove their worth. Beforehand, a few demo clips revealed an effective height presentation, particularly with the floorstanders moved a little way into the room – 30cm is a good starting point considering their rear ports. The impact of Atmos tracks would no doubt be improved with another pair of these upfirs, but the simple trick of removing them and switching to 5.1 reveals how much extra they bring to the table.

The soundfield shrinks and flattens.

So, off to Sicily for a rooftop runaround with *Black Manta*. This is a full-on soundmix, and the Bronze package responds in style. There's well-organised, tuneful bass from the W10 sub, and above this a rich-sounding but always clear mid-range that really latches on to the whirry noises the baddies' body armour makes and *Black Manta*'s electronically warped dialogue. It's all smooth-sounding too, with just enough of an attacking edge to bring a snap and crackle to effects without making your ears pop.

The feeling of verticality is well realised. When *Aquaman* crash-lands though the elderly woman's roof (followed by a more measured descent by *Black Manta*), debris falls down with him.

The sealed W10 sub never reaches outrageously deep (the claimed low-end is a healthy 30Hz-40Hz depending on EQ setting) but it's not shy and retiring. It does tight and speedy well, but slams energetically too, considering the

SPECIFICATIONS

Bronze 200

DRIVERS: 2 x 5.5in C-CAM bass/mid drivers; 1 x 1in gold dome C-CAM tweeter
ENCLOSURE: Bass reflex with twin rear HiVe II ports **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 35Hz-30kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 88dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 120W **DIMENSIONS:** 886(h) x 166(w) x 265(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 12.8kg

Bronze C150

DRIVERS: 2 x 5.5in C-CAM mid-range drivers; 1 x 1in gold dome C-CAM tweeter
ENCLOSURE: Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 66Hz-30kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 88dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 120W **DIMENSIONS:** 166(h) x 451(w) x 225(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 7kg

Bronze FX

DRIVERS: 1 x 5.5in C-CAM mid-range driver; 2 x 1in gold dome C-CAM tweeters
ENCLOSURE: Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 74Hz-30kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 86dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 80W **DIMENSIONS:** 287(h) x 284(w) x 124(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 3.9kg

Bronze AMS

DRIVERS: 1 x 4in C-CAM mid-range driver; 1 x 1in gold dome C-CAM tweeter
ENCLOSURE: Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 105Hz-30kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 86dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 60W **DIMENSIONS:** 152(h) x 166(w) x 242(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 2.5kg

Bronze W10 (subwoofer)

DRIVERS: 1 x 10in driver; 1 x 10in passive radiator **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** Down to 29Hz (-3dB) **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 220W Class D **DIMENSIONS:** 366.5(h) x 321(w) x 364(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 13.4kg **FEATURES:** LFE/stereo RCA inputs; 12V trigger; Movie, Music and Impact mode

TESTED WITH



AQUAMAN: Warner Bros.'s immensely fun blockbuster arrived in 2019 on a real head-turner of a 4K Blu-ray. Image clarity may not be demo-worthy (there's too much CG FX for that), but the application of high dynamic range and wide colour is explosive, and the Dolby Atmos audio revels in its lack of subtlety.



price point. Being a fan of an easy life, I took MA's advice and settled on its flat-response Movie preset for film-watching. The theory is you would switch to Music for ...well, music listening, but the buttonry is tiny and located on the back of the woofer, so I doubt many will.

Bronze star

Overall, the Bronze AV 5.1.2 is a good-looking, well-made system that's extremely easy to fall in love with (and, I should add, easy to drive too). A sonic all-rounder, it delivers both in terms of resolution and finesse, and up-and-at-'em attitude, while the AMS enclosures add a believable topping to all the juicy goodness below. A real value-for-money package ■

3. The AMS models are two-ways, with a 4in mid-range driver

HCC VERDICT



Monitor Audio Bronze AV 5.1.2

→ £1,850 → www.monitoraudio.com

WE SAY: A fine update – now with Atmos! – on Monitor Audio's fan-favourite Bronze Series. Smart styling married to highly enjoyable sonics at a great price.