

# Monitor Audio Silver 50 7G

MA's smallest fistful of Silver features a host of '7th generation' technology to punch above its weight  
Review: **Mark Craven** Lab: **Paul Miller**

Arguably more so than any other UK loudspeaker manufacturer, Monitor Audio seems keen to offer something for everyone. Across its four ranges named after precious metals and an alloy (Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze), it sells 16 different standmount/bookshelf and floorstanding models, stretching in price from £285 (the Bronze 50 6G) to £14,995 (the Platinum PL500 II). There are other lines too, including the budget Monitor series, compact Mass and Radius, and in-wall 'architectural' speakers. The Silver 50 7G auditioned here, a compact two-way priced at £575, hails from Monitor Audio's mid-range, although it's a mid-range that's considerably more crowded than most.

The full Silver series, reborn this year in its seventh generation (hence '7G'), includes a trio of floorstanders topped by the EISA Award-winning 500 7G [*HFN* Oct '21], a home cinema-centric centre channel, Dolby Atmos and on-wall surround speakers, and two bookshelf models. The 50 7G is the baby of the group, out-muscled by the larger 100 7G.

## DESKTOP DIVA?

Measuring a slender 280x165mm (hwxw), the 50 7G is the sort of loudspeaker that naturally has wide appeal. It's easy to imagine a pair sat either side of a streaming amp (perhaps from Roksan, part of the Monitor Audio stable) in a desktop system, or tucked discreetly on shelves. You could also install the speakers on slim stands, but if you're not averse to stealing some of your carpet space for a speaker system, then the larger Silver 7G models should really be your first port of call.

Whichever you plump for, you'll get the same tweeter: a newly revised version of Monitor Audio's long-running C-CAM

'gold' dome. Once again this waveguided driver is 'look but don't touch', as it's protected by a flush-fitting perforated grille, this time with a reworked dispersion pattern. Further changes are going on out of sight, with a new ring magnet design, and improved damping and venting of the rear chamber. The introduction of a new compression ring also claims to flatten its overall frequency response [see PM's boxout, p75].

Sitting below the tweeter is a freshly minted RST (Rigid Surface Technology) II C-CAM bass/mid driver, 135mm in diameter. This silver cone has a hexagonally-dimpled profile to both control its resonant behaviour and improve its physical structure, and it's flanked by a surround, FEA-optimised to limit concentric modes. Both the driver assemblies are mounted into the cabinet via bolt-through fixings, and Allen keys are provided should you feel they've grown loose.

A key part of the Silver series seventh-generation overhaul is its stylistic refresh.

There's not that much of a difference compared to the outgoing 6G speakers, but the changes that have been made are very welcome. Driver surrounds are now better blended/colour-matched with the cabinet, and the supplied grilles,

which affix magnetically, are now rounded only at the bottom-end, which – while obviously a very minor detail – results in a neater look. The speakers are, however, more eye-catching and subjectively transparent with them removed [see PM's Lab Report, p77].

'The sound jumped with a thrilling horn fanfare'



Finish options again fill the 'something for everyone' remit as you can choose from very smart gloss black and gloss white coatings, plus black oak, natural walnut or light ash veneers (the cherry finish of the last generation has been culled). Cabinet edges are smoothed, and the overall feel is of a conventional compact speaker given a deluxe treatment. Obviously, the new moulded ABS outrigger feet of the 7G Series floorstanders don't make an appearance here.

## COMPATIBLE COMPACT

As you probably could have guessed given the 50 7G's price tag, Monitor Audio claims a user-friendly nominal impedance of 8ohm and a not unrealistic 86dB sensitivity, resulting in an on-paper specification that suggests a reasonably easy-to-drive loudspeaker well placed to work with a wide range of affordable amplifiers. But will such amps enable the bi-amping that the speaker's binding posts [see p77] can accommodate? Probably not.

Also on the 50 7G's rear you'll find a HiVe II bass reflex port with Monitor Audio's familiar rifled edging. This port can be



partially shorted via supplied foam bungs, but if left open does put a limit on total flexibility when it comes to placement. That said, this smaller enclosure doesn't require, according to Monitor Audio's manual, as much rear-wall breathing space as its larger Silver siblings. Indeed, the recommendation is for 15cm clearance, but no more than 30cm. Toe-in is also recommended, as is positioning 90cm

well above their weight, particularly when it comes to low-end punch.

There's a meaty bass presence to the sound, which brings a scale and sense of depth to your music that you might not think possible given the size of enclosure and driver. Of course, that 135mm bass/mid has a lot to do, and the n-picker in me feels duty-bound to point out that the 50 7G

**LEFT:** Available in Satin White, Gloss Black, Black Oak, Walnut and Ash finishes, the Silver 50 hosts a 135mm C-CAM bass/mid driver and 25mm C-CAM 'Gold' dome tweeter with 'UD Waveguide II'

away from side walls. I'm not sure all 50 7G buyers will stick to these rules, however, considering the speaker's budget nature and size.

## PUNCHY

The 50 7G is very much a chip off the Monitor Audio block – the UK brand has been selling compact bookshelf speakers with sultry looks for decades now, and clearly knows what it's doing. So I swiftly appreciated these

two-way cabinets punch

## ALL THAT GLITTERS...

Monitor Audio's gold-coloured 25mm C-CAM (Ceramic-Coated Aluminium Magnesium) tweeter is clearly visible through the hexagonal pattern of perforations in its protective cover, even in the Gloss Black-finished Silver 50 model [inset picture]. These holes are modelled to work in conjunction with the flared 'Uniform Dispersion (UD) Waveguide II' immediately behind, softening the impact of any, very slight, differences in path length out of its short throat, and optimising both on- and off-axis response. This '7G' version of the tweeter also features a compression ring mounted just above the dome, designed to boost its output above 10kHz. Why? Because while the ceramic/alloy dome material was chosen for its lightness and stiffness, extending its first break-up mode to a high 31kHz, the resonance is preceded by a sharp dip in output just outside the audioband at 24kHz [see Graph 1, Lab Report, p77]. The 'boost' provided by the compression ring attempts to minimise this notch in the tweeter's response. **PM**



can stumble with aspects of its midrange delivery. But the other part of me wants to rave about how fun but grown-up these bookshelf models sound.

Aware that the *HFN* review team has been criticised for its choices of 'mainstream' rock music [see Sound Off, p114], I began with 'In Shadows & Dust', a furious, less-than-three-minute riff assualt from Canadian band Kataklysm [*Shadows & Dust*; Nuclear Blast NB 1032]. Clearly one of those tracks where the production budget was quickly wasted on beer, it didn't tell me much about the 50 7G's ability to unearth an instrument timbre or evoke a soundstage, but it did raise a smile with the way the double kick drum beats were hammered out with speed and impact. There was a pleasing bite to the razor-edged guitars too, and a generous bottom end that ensured this track sounded suitably menacing, rather than thin.

So these are loudspeakers that can make even the most lo-fi parts of your collection sound listenable, and this comes not just from their more-than-decent low-end reach and quick-fire presentation. They're also ripe for better recorded and mastered material, too, albeit bringing with them a character that aims more for warmth than utter transparency.

## BREAKING FREE

The bounce and snap the 50 7Gs delivered with Queen's 'I Want To Break Free' [*Queen: Greatest Hits II*; Parlophone CDPMTV 2] demanded I turn up the volume to really luxuriate in it. The good vibes started with the synthesiser intro, which grew in size but didn't lose any of its focus, and continued through the bassline-dominated verses (bassist John Deacon penned this one, rather than guitarist Brian May).

The vocal track, one of Freddie Mercury's more snarling, aggressive takes, was hived off from the rhythm section underneath, and by the time the track had got to the end of that Roland Jupiter-8 synth solo, I didn't want to break free – I wanted to press repeat.

It was natural that the sight of an MA bookshelf speaker recalled another model, the Bronze 100 [*HFN* Aug '20]. This has a lower overall specification and asking price, but pairs its C-CAM tweeter with a larger 200mm woofer. I remember finding its bass output unruly at times (particularly when positioned relatively close to the wall), and this led to some listening sessions where it felt the sound was hanging on for dear

## LOUDSPEAKER

### MONITOR AUDIO SILVER 50 7G



**LEFT:** Silver 50's two-way (2.6kHz) crossover is split with two sets of gold-plated terminals for bi-wiring/bi-amping. Note rifled 'HiVe II' port and bracing bolt for treble driver, above

sounded congested. Meanwhile, when female vocalists Adele and Alicia Keys really start going for it, in 'Hello' [25; XL Recordings XLCD740] and 'Empire State of Mind' [*The Element Of Freedom*, J Records], respectively, they sound a little more strained here than on loudspeakers with greater confidence.

Elsewhere, however, the 50 7G is a dab hand at conveying musical details and capturing the physicality of instruments, particularly when given a quality source, such as the

life when the lows came. There was no such problem with the 50 7G – its handling of bass, before the inevitable roll-off its small driver necessitates – seems remarkably even-handed and well-integrated. And while some experimentation with placement is still warranted to make sure you're not overdoing boundary gain, these cabinets prove pretty fussy.

#### NEARFIELD NATURALS

Stereo imaging is helped by a strong sense of centralised elements being free from the enclosures left and right, but horizontal expansion and integration is less impressive; there's only so much these diddy speakers can do to fill a space. My other criticism, alluded to earlier – that sometimes midband details lack presence, giving a somewhat mushed feel to multi-instrumental moments – probably only really warrants mentioning in relation to far pricier loudspeakers.

For instance, in ABBA's 'Dancing Queen' [ABBA Gold; Polydor 517 007-2], the smorgasbord of vocal harmonies, piano, drums and bass, plus maybe a synthesiser or two,

John Williams orchestral score for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* [... *Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*; Walt Disney Records]. The 'Main Title', essentially a rehash of his 1977 original, jumped out of these loudspeakers with a thrilling fanfare blast of trombone and horn, which had a throaty edge and generous weight, followed by silkier strings. It was a performance of real dynamism from a pair of speakers with a real-world asking price. ☺

#### HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

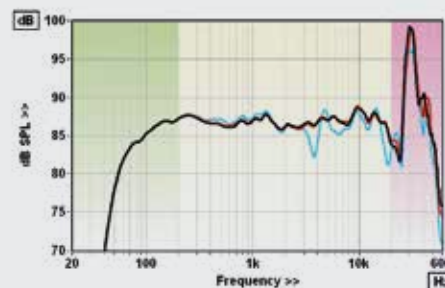
A genuine bookshelf speaker with an install-me-anywhere attitude, the Silver 50 7G is a perfect partner for a bijou amp and easy to drive, too. Low-end lovers might look warily at its 135mm bass/mid driver, but this dimpled dome puts on a fine show, helping craft a sound that's rich, deep and unfatiguing, but also responsive and detailed. Add the fashion parade looks to the equation, and it's hard not to love.

Sound Quality: 86%

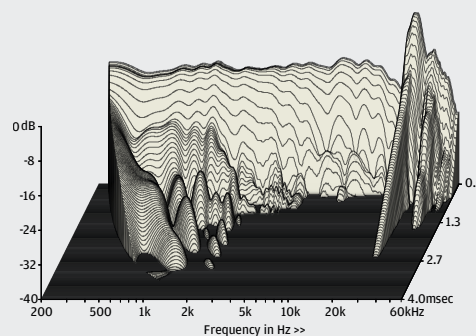


Just like the larger Silver 500 '7G' [HFN Aug '21] the latest Silver 50's response is remarkably flat and even [see Graph 1, below] with a low  $\pm 1.7$ dB error from 200Hz-15kHz, tightening-up to  $\pm 1.0$ dB from 600Hz-9kHz. The  $-6$ dB (re 10kHz) HF response limit of 23.2kHz is defined by the  $-7$ dB/24kHz dip prior to the  $+10.7$ dB resonance of the C-CAM hard dome tweeter at 30.6kHz [pink shaded area on Graph 1, and see also CSD plot, Graph 2, and boxout p75]. Pair matching is 'state-of-the-art exceptional' at 0.4dB (200Hz-20kHz) but the grille brings a  $\pm 3$ dB disruption to the response between 3-6kHz with additional irregularity above 10kHz [blue trace, Graph 1] so is not recommended for critical listening. The 135mm C-CAM RST II bass/mid driver operates over a 91Hz-555Hz ( $-6$ dB) bandwidth and the rear-facing HiVe II port, tuned to 55Hz, maintains the low frequency extension to a diffraction-corrected 54Hz ( $-6$ dB re. 200Hz) – a creditable result given the diminutive stature of this two-way.

Once again, while MA has engineered a response that's both flat and uniform, it has also bested its rated 86dB sensitivity with 87dB/1kHz (and 86.6dB re. 500Hz-8kHz) combined with low 0.2-0.4% bass/midband distortion (re. 90dB SPL) without imposing an especially punishing load on the partnering amplifier. While MA's specified 3.9ohm minimum impedance is bang on the money (at 250Hz/ $-4^\circ$  here) the '8ohm' nominal should, of course, read '4ohm'. Nevertheless this is a modest enough load for any partnering budget amp, only falling below 8ohm from 130Hz-800Hz (and 6.5ohm/20kHz) with equally mild swings in phase angle of  $-48^\circ/125$ Hz/9.6ohm and  $+46^\circ/805$ Hz/8.1ohm. PM



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed driver/port [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. Left, black; right, red; w. grille, blue



ABOVE: C-CAM tweeter break-up dominates at 31kHz but cabinet and other drivers are well controlled

#### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V – 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	87.0dB / 86.6dB / 84.6dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	3.9ohm @ 248Hz 21.4ohm @ 101Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	$-48^\circ$ @ 125Hz $+46^\circ$ @ 805Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz–20kHz)	0.4dB / $\pm 2.3$ dB/ $\pm 2.2$ dB
LF/HF extension ( $-6$ dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	54Hz / 23.2kHz/23.7kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.2% / 0.4% / 0.3%
Dimensions (HWD) / Weight (each)	282x165x272mm / 5.6kg