



## HANDS-ON REVIEW

# Monitor Audio Silver 50 Speakers

## *Are They Silver or Platinum?*

BY DAVID SUSILO

**MONITOR AUDIO** is one of my favourite speaker manufacturers – so much so that I use Monitor Audio speakers in almost all of my commercial installations worldwide. So when the company advised me that they were rebooting the Silver line up with updated sonic features, I was intrigued.

The new Silver series features technology used to develop Monitor Audio's high-end Platinum Series, with reported advanced designs in a sleeker package, and price points that push the company's "best in class performance" further.

As one of the pioneers of metal cone speaker technology, Monitor Audio has used its four-decades of expertise in the field to create new versions of its highly-regarded C-CAM (Ceramic coated Aluminum Magnesium) cones. Not that there was anything wrong with the previous versions, but I always welcome any kind of improvement in sound quality.

For those who are not familiar with C-CAM cones, they are made from a single piece of the unique ceramic-coated aluminum/magnesium alloy and formed into a continuous dish profile. The rigidity brings audible sonic benefits compared to conventional softer cone materials (usually made of paper, plastic or Kevlar with a centre hole to house a voice coil) that flex, producing audible distortion. Without that centre hole, the speaker cones are able to handle more power, which in turn, delivers pure, undistorted sound across the audio range.

Design changes and extensive engineering has led to a completely revised Silver Series. Technical enhancements to the speakers 'engine' include beefed up driver magnets, higher efficiency (8 ohms) and improved voice coils that include the patented DCF (Dynamic Coupling Filter) used in the Platinum Series, resulting in

purer sound and better power handling. Thus, making the new Silver series entry-level audiophile-grade speakers.

### **Can this Audiophile Speaker 'Rock Out?'**

Now, a lot of audiophile speakers can't rock out. They are "voiced" to sound best with acoustic jazz or classical music. There's nothing wrong with that. I first tested these speakers playing back *Diana Krall's Greatest Hits* on vinyl and the *Christ Botti Live Concert* Blu-ray disc. But when you want to party or use them for home theatre applications, too many of them just can't cut it. It's usually due to a lack of bass response and the inability to reproduce complex sound while being loud at the same time. The Monitor Audio Silver Series is very much an audiophile-oriented design. So sure, it sounded clear and clean playing any track from the oh-so-popular *Audiophile Voices* series albums.

But what really made me sit up and take notice was the way these bookshelf speakers performed remixed recordings by *Terminalhead*, the DJ duo of Lee Groves & Pete Marett who have released a dozen or more albums and remixed countless songs, along with bombastically mixed *Ghost in the Shell* and *Kong: Skull Island* UHD Blu-ray soundtracks. The selection of songs and movies are supposed to sound like a controlled cacophony when played using the appropriate speakers, and much to my surprise, the Monitor Audio speakers reproduced the sound faithfully. I listened at a relatively loud volume to feel the sonic energy, and these speakers did not hold anything back. The bookshelf speakers are only MSRP \$1,100 per pair (through Monitor Audio's Canadian distributor, Pickering, ON-based Kevro International). They are relatively small and compact, but sound like much larger bookshelf speakers that are double their size.

### **Improved Design**

The Silver Series speakers use 25mm C-CAM Gold Dome tweeters that employ a completely new, ground-up design. Monitor Audio's engineers again focused on lowering distortion to deliver crystal-clear highs, but smooth and free from harshness – very unlike the regular hard-dome tweeters in general. Bear in mind that Monitor Audio launched its first gold metal dome tweeter over 30 years ago, so they have experience in voicing tweeters as close to perfection as possible at this price range.

The soft-edged cabinet design is made of rigid 20mm MDF construction using scientifically



optimized bracing that reduces internal standing waves. The magnetically mounted black cloth grille covers the front of the speaker with a sense of elegance and grandeur. The bass port uses HiVe II port technology for improved transient response and tighter bass, due to smoother airflow. In most cases, I don't like ported speakers as I can often hear the port-noise (also called chuffing). But in this case, I didn't mind it at since I couldn't hear any chuffing coming out of the ports.

Internally, the drivers are wired using Pureflow silver-plated OFC copper for greater conductivity and less colouration. Most important, the crossovers use premium grade, bespoke polypropylene film capacitors, air-core and low-loss laminated steel-core inductors to ensure maximum signal transfer and virtually zero distortion.

The rear panel hosts a pair of sturdy, all-metal, superbly high-quality binding posts that accept any speaker cables terminated with banana plugs, pins, spades, or bare wires. Build quality is first rate with its supreme-grade veneer finish.

### Evaluation

I compared the Silver 50 with my PSB Century 300i bookshelf speakers, which would be equivalent to about the same price today, taking 20 years of inflation into account. I used yet another track remixed by *Terminalhead*, and it was immediately clear that these speakers were superior. The Silver 50s sounded more detailed, with more bass, treble as smooth as the silk-dome tweeter, but with a more open soundstage. The improvements in stereo imaging surprised me: these speakers can project a huge, nearly three-dimensional soundstage.

The PSB Century 300i is absolutely no slouch, as I have been using them for multiple systems, from professional studio monitoring to background music, to home theatre, since they were developed back in 1996. But I was taken aback by how much better the Monitor Audio speakers are. They combine audiophile refinement and enjoyable sound with a high degree of accuracy, two things that usually tend not to go hand-in-hand. I've found that too many speaker manufacturers only concentrate on how nice sounding they can make a speaker while forgoing accuracy. *Terminalhead's* fast beats sounded remarkably precise over the Monitor Audio speakers, and the bass extended to the low 50Hz range in my dedicated home theatre. That's very deep bass for such a small speaker.

Further, the overall sonic signature coming from these speakers is multi-layered while still being cohesive, yet without being overly separated and artificial. It's comparable to many

### PROS

- + Huge improvements in sound over the previous version
- + More rigid speaker enclosure
- + Far better enclosure finish over the previous version

### CONS

- The oval speaker grille design is not for everybody
- Magnetic grille should have been structurally stronger

high-end speakers even at triple the price, and even sounds quite close to Monitor Audio's own Platinum Series. It's impressive that such glorious sound can be reproduced by something so tiny and so affordable.

Note that I used the Silver 50 speakers with a Pioneer stereo system that included a Pioneer Elite SC-LX801 receiver used as a pre-amp and powered using a Pioneer Elite M-10X MOSFET power amplifier with a Pioneer BDP-09 Blu-ray disc player (with built-in Wolfson DAC in dual-differential mode). This system then interconnected using Kimber Kable Hero with WBT connectors and Kimber Kable 12TC speaker wires.

### Bottom Line

I would rather use a pair of tower speakers for better bass response, such as my current System Audio SAXO 30 or, better yet, Monitor Audio Silver 200 towers. But for buyers looking for a smaller option, or even something to be used as an alternative to PC speakers, the Silver 50s offer solid, bona-fide audiophile sound from an incredibly sexy and compact speaker. [wh](#)

