

# WHAT HI★FI?

## SOUND AND VISION

OCTOBER 2009 £4.30 www.whatifil.com

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# Group Test

STEREO SPEAKERS £200-£250

## Take your first step towards hi-fi speaker heaven

Upgrading from the speakers supplied with your system can unlock another, much higher level of performance. These **stereo speakers**, costing from £200-£250, will let you make that giant leap without emptying your wallet

### What's new?

A fair bit, and that's the way we like it. We've got first listen to Mordaunt-Short's new Aviano range, and they're joined by brand-new boxes from Klipsch and MJ Acoustics. And it was only last month that the Wharfedale Diamond 10.1s romped through their *First Test*. The last time we did a *Group Test* of speakers at this price, in December last year, only two products scored five stars, so we've used those Dali Lektor 1s and Monitor Audio Bronze BR2s to provide a benchmark.

### What do I get for my money?

Speakers at this kind of money are hi-fi's gateway drug, a first step away from start-up-speaker standard. They need to sound bigger, more musical and more alive than the speakers attached to many cheap starter systems – this sort of money ought to buy speakers with the sort of sonic sophistication similarly priced electronics will demand. Expect them to be better made, better finished and have a greater lifespan than £100 speakers, too.

**“These are hi-fi's gateway drug: a first step away from micro-system standard”**

### SAVVY SHOPPER

#### 1 Use your own partnering kit

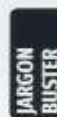
You'll want to hear these speakers before you hand over your money, naturally, and ideally you should hear them with the electronics you'll be using to drive them. It's a pain carting your system down to your local retailer, but it's worth it if you can't sort out a home trial.

#### 2 Make sure they're run-in

Make sure the speakers you hear at a demo have a good number of working hours under their belts. Even the most accommodating of speakers take a good few hours from new fully to reveal their sound, and the less cooperative designs can take a week or more before they'll perform at their very best. Ask to hear them in different positions, too...

#### 3 Positioning can be crucial

... because while speakers as small as some of these seem to invite you to put them on the nearest bookshelf, they'll all have their preferences as to room position. It's worth experimenting with placement when you get your favourites home – even simply moving a speaker backwards or forwards relative to the wall that's behind it can result in significant changes in sound.



**CROSSOVER** The circuit inside a speaker that splits the incoming signal, sending high frequencies to the tweeter, and low ones to the woofer.

### STEREO SPEAKERS RATINGS EXPLAINED

A five-star rating is earned by a pair of multi-talented speakers that sound great with all kinds of music. Four-star speakers aren't quite perfect all-rounders, but they might excel in just the areas that you need them to – so don't discount them. A three-star verdict indicates an average performance, while we believe it's fair to say that two- and one-star speakers should be left in their boxes.



Excellent



Very good



Average



Below par



Don't bother



## ON TEST



Dali Lektor 1  
£250 [Page 50](#)



Klipsch RB-10  
£230 [Page 50](#)



MJ Acoustics Xeno XM1  
£230 [Page 51](#)



Monitor Audio Bronze BR2  
£230 [Page 51](#)



Mordaunt-Short Aviano 1  
£250 [Page 52](#)



Wharfedale Diamond 10.1  
£200 [Page 52](#)



## Monitor Audio Bronze BR2



£230

**FAMILIARITY CAN BREED** contempt, they say. Well, Monitor Audio's Bronze BR2s prove how wrong 'they' can be. We've regularly played 'em, tested 'em and published reviews on 'em for a few years now; we've given them a Best Buy Award in 2007, and we still find them far from contemptible – the fact that they've been reduced to four-star status by the emergence of talented rivals notwithstanding.

By the general standards of their price, the BR2s are big (though there are no compromises in build quality)

**“The BR2s unearth plenty of detail, organise it well and time it confidently”**

– and they deliver a correspondingly large-scale sound. That 165mm mid/low frequency driver offers ample muscle, as well as plenty of drive; the 25mm dome tweeter is musical and integrates with its partner cleanly.

Playing The Flaming Lips' *She Don't Use Jelly* shows off many of the BR2s' strengths: a large, convincing

### ↑ FOR

Deep, wide and tall sound; good build and impressive finish

### ↓ AGAINST

Rivals less coloured in the midrange; don't appreciate poor source material

### → VERDICT

Sounding fractionally long in the tooth these days, but still packed with talent

soundstage, fulminating dynamic potency, sparkling high frequencies and the sort of excitement that only comes from a speaker eager to attack a tune. The Monitor Audios unearth plenty of detail, organise it well and time confidently enough to keep a listener's toes tapping through even the most complex rhythms.

### Feed them quality source material

It's a similar story with Wagon Christ's processed, programmed *Sorry I Make You Lush* but, for the first time in our long relationship with the BR2s, upstart rivals have revealed a few chinks in the armour. They don't have quite the midrange transparency or coherence of the very best and, while they're more than happy to go loud, voices can get edgy.

This is a trait that becomes more apparent if you feed the BR2s compressed MP3-or-similar music. None of these speakers enjoy

poor-quality source material, of course, but it spooks the BR2s more than most. These few shortcomings aren't the end of the world, of course, and those who admire the BR2s' invigorating, hefty sound might easily overlook them.

We're still fans ourselves – but, after all this time, our heads have been turned by newer contenders.





# Sofa-shaking sound abounds

SURROUND SOUND  
SPEAKER PACKAGE  
MONITOR AUDIO  
PL300 AV

★★★★★

£ 13,500

Brilliant home cinema performance, a mouth-watering finish and superlative stereo come together in this peerless Monitor Audio Platinum-series system

**FOR**

Massive, incredibly detailed sound, with taut, powerful bass, superlative space and clarity, and brilliant cohesion; stunning build quality and finish

**AGAINST**

Needs a big room to work at its best; it's not exactly cheap

**VERDICT**

One of the finest 5.1 speaker packages on the market; delivers everything you could wish for – and more



**MONITOR AUDIO**

**PL300 AV**

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**PL300 FRONTS**

**IMPEDANCE (ALL)**

4 ohms

**POWER HANDLING**

100W-300W

**DIMENSIONS (HWD)**

111 x 41 x 47cm

**WEIGHT** 44kg

**PLC350 CENTRE**

**POWER HANDLING**

100W-250W

**DIMENSIONS (HWD)**

29 x 80 x 37cm

**WEIGHT** 33.5kg

**PL100 REARS**

**POWER HANDLING**

50W-120W

**SIZE (HWD)**

37 x 22 x 28cm

**WEIGHT** 13kg

**PLW-15 SUB**

**FREQ RESPONSE**

16Hz-160Hz,

variable

**POWER**

1000W Class D

**DIMENSIONS (HWD)**

45 x 48 x 47cm

**WEIGHT** 50kg

**YOU'LL ALREADY KNOW** about the high regard we have for Monitor Audio's Platinum-series – if not, turn to our *Buyer's Guide* on p83 to find reviews of the PL300 floorstanders and PL100 standmounts, which form the front and rear channels in the PL300 AV system tested here.

So, put the two designs together, and you ought to have something special. Just how special, though, has come as something of a surprise to us.

The PL300 AV is a fabulous surround system – one of the best we've ever tried. It plays everything superbly, from live concert Blu-rays to madcap action movies, revealing every last gasp of subtle effects and powering through sofa-shaking dynamics with a deftly judged blend of sublime detail and thrilling drive. And, of course, it's also sensational in stereo. In fact, after several weeks enjoying its company, we're no closer to exposing any major weaknesses.

So, we've PL300s out front and PL100s bringing up the rear – what about the rest? First, in comes a PLC350 centre channel. It's substantial, its drive-unit complement matching that fitted to the huge

PL300s, which ensures the front three speakers integrate superbly. The optional floorstand, shown here, is a worthy investment at £300.

**Bass in your space**

Rounding things off is the formidable PLW-15 active subwoofer, which uses a rigid 15in long-throw metal drive unit in a sealed, superlatively constructed 50kg enclosure finished to the same

lavish standard as the other speakers. Fed by an incredibly fast 1000W Class D power amp, capable of reaching down to an ultra-low 16Hz and blessed with extensive tweakability, it's every bit as articulate and potent as it ought to be.

What else do you need to know? First, remember that a system this capable needs space – but if you can afford the

package, that shouldn't be an issue. You'll also need good partnering kit – amps, a Blu-ray player and the like – because while the Monitors aren't that demanding to drive or fussy about tonal matching, they're just so damn good that to listen to them using anything second-rate would be a crime. ★

**“The Monitor Audio is a truly fabulous surround system – one of the best we've ever tried”**



Many stands will fit, but we like Monitor Audio's own £400-a-pair bolt-on designs for surround use

## MONITOR AUDIO W „WHAT HI-FI?”

„What Hi-Fi?”

Issue 10, October 2009

W najnowszym, październikowym numerze brytyjskiego magazynu „What Hi-Fi?” przedstawiono testy kolumn Monitor Audio z dwóch serii: Bronze (stereo) oraz Platinum (5.1).

Obydwa testy przedstawiają MA jako niezwykle kompetentną firmę, a same konstrukcje jako niezwykle zaawansowane technologicznie produkty.

**Bronze BR2**

„Głęboki, szeroki i wysoki dźwięk; dobra budowa, robi wrażenie wykończeniem.”

Ocena: \*\*\*\*

**Platinum PL300+PL100+PL350+PLW-15 SUB**

„Masywny, nieprawdopodobnie detaliczny dźwięk ze skupionym, pełnym basem, wybitne sceny dźwiękowe i klarowność, a także wybitnie spójność. Genialna budowa i wykończenie”.

Werdykt:

„Jeden z najlepszych dostępnych systemów surround 5.1; da ci wszystko, o czym możesz marzyć.”

Ocena: \*\*\*\*\* (max.)