

Monitor Audio Silver 500 7G

Hot off the production line, this flagship of MA's 7th-gen Silver range marks a significant uplift in performance
 Review: **Mark Craven** Lab: **Paul Miller**

By now, there's surely not an audiophile alive who doesn't know that Monitor Audio's Platinum loudspeaker series is its pinnacle, and that as you move down through Gold, Silver and Bronze the prices become friendlier and the technology trickles. Silver – a range that's been rolling for over 20 years – represents the sweet spot in this hierarchy, and, says the UK company, is its most popular series. Judging from the performance, build quality and elegant design of the £1725 Silver 500 7G, I can't imagine this popularity waning.

The '7G' suffix is important, as it denotes this three-way floorstander is from Monitor Audio's fresh-from-the-factory seventh generation lineup that launched in August. The Silver 6G models [*HFN* Mar '18] are discontinued but the naming conventions have been retained, so the Silver 500 7G is a direct replacement for the Silver 500 6G.

It's the largest and costliest speaker in the series, joined by slimmer floorstanders (the Silver 300 and '200) and standmount/bookshelf models (the Silver 100 and '50). All feature upgrades to drivers, crossover, and cabinet/finish, so while this is another case of evolution not revolution, there's still more going on than meets the eye.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING

The woofers and midrange debut the mkII versions of Monitor Audio's Rigid Surface Technology (RST) drivers. These feature C-CAM using a new aluminium alloy to improve tensile strength, and a hexagonal dimpled profile derived from the RDT (Rigid Driver Technology) units in the company's Gold 5G stable [see PM's boxout, p51]. The RST II units also sport updates to the driver surrounds, plus a switch from ferrite to neodymium on the midrange magnet and a wider diameter voice-coil for the woofers.

Interestingly, while the C-CAM bass drivers are again 200mm (including the surrounds), Monitor Audio has downsized

the Silver 500 7G's mid from '4in' to '3in' (actually a 76mm cone with 100mm chassis) in pursuit of improved directivity and better extension/integration with the loudspeaker's gold dome C-CAM tweeter. This high-frequency unit is also a new concoction, benefiting from a ring magnet, rear-vented surround, and patterned grille optimised to work with its second-generation Uniform Dispersion Waveguide.

All of the Silver 500 7G's driver assemblies are mounted to the cabinet via a bolt-through connection, which provides further rigidity to the internally braced, twin rear-ported MDF enclosures.

ON TREND

Inside there's also a new crossover, which the brand says was designed concurrently with the Silver 500 7G's drivers, one project informing the other. Ceramic resistors, polypropylene and polyester capacitors, and air-core and steel-core inductors are used across an optimised three-way (800Hz/2.7kHz) network.

For £1725, these floorstanders are rather imposing. If you want a loudspeaker that will fit neatly in a small/mid-sized room, investigate the Silver 200 or 300 models, as these use 156mm woofers and so don't have this cabinet's 23cm girth. The Silver 500 7G enclosure is deep too (33cm), and once Monitor Audio's new – and smart – moulded ABS outriggers are attached you'll have lost a lot of floorspace.

It's useful, then, that the new styling of this seventh generation is right on trend. Monitor Audio describes it as 'crisp-edged', but that sells it short. There are no curved faces, but corners are smooth and the

RIGHT: Available in High Gloss Black, Satin White (pictured), Natural Walnut, Ash and Black Oak, the MDF cabinet is traditionally braced and further reinforced via MA's 'bolt through technology' which connects the rear of the driver magnets to the back panel [see pic p53]



DRIVING HISTORY

Monitor Audio has pursued the ideal of very light, stiff drivers since the R852MD standmount with its alloy tweeter in 1985, followed by the 'gold dome' in 1986 and the ceramic sandwich mid/bass driver that appeared in the Studio 10 in 1989. The first of what we would recognise as MA's C-CAM (Ceramic-Coated Aluminium/Magnesium) drivers appeared in the Studio 20 in 1991. Marking this 30th anniversary, the latest C-CAM and RST II (Rigid Surface Technology) drivers in Monitor Audio's Silver 7G series are the result of 'trickledown' from the previous 5th-gen Gold series. The dimples that serve to enhance both the physical structure and moderate the resonant behaviour of the RST II bass and bass/mid cones are hexagonal, rather than circular, in shape here. The alloy itself has been changed to offer greater tolerance of the increased forces during moments of high excursion, maintaining performance at even higher levels without increasing the mass or thickness of the cone. The 'C-CAM' component refers to both the alloy and oxide coating used across all its drivers, including the gold-coloured 25mm tweeter. For the latter, this brings exceptional stiffness that, almost inevitably, yields a vigorous breakup mode outside the audioband, here at 31kHz [see Lab Report, p53]. PM

finish of our 'High Gloss Black' and 'Satin White' samples was spectacular. There are three other colourways to choose from: Black Oak, Natural Walnut and Ash variants that dress the cabinet in real wood veneers. The last of those is intended to evoke the 'Scandinavian look', so ABBA fans should hunt it down.

TO BOLDLY GO

My most recent experience with the Monitor Audio 'house sound' was the sixth-generation Bronze 200 floorstander [*HFN* Jun '21]. Like the fool that I am, I wondered how much similarity I would detect between that loudspeaker and the Silver 500 7G, before realising that there's not just a circa-£1200 price difference, but a huge however-you-measure-it gap in the sound quality.

This speaker makes far more of an impact than does its entry-level brethren – its sound is bigger, bolder and more mature, and it has the ability to disappear from your mind when listening to music. With the right material, it engineers a wide, deep and seamless soundstage. The 50-litre cabinet and dual woofers delivers authentic, room-filling bass that melds with an evocative midband performance. It's a knockout.

LEFT: Removing the grille reveals a 25mm C-CAM 'Gold' dome tweeter (with 'UD Waveguide') crossing over at 2.7kHz to a 76mm C-CAM midrange that, in turns, hands over to a pair of 200mm C-CAM bass drivers at 800Hz. The cabinet is supported on sturdy outrigger feet

'Its ticket price looks like an absolute steal'

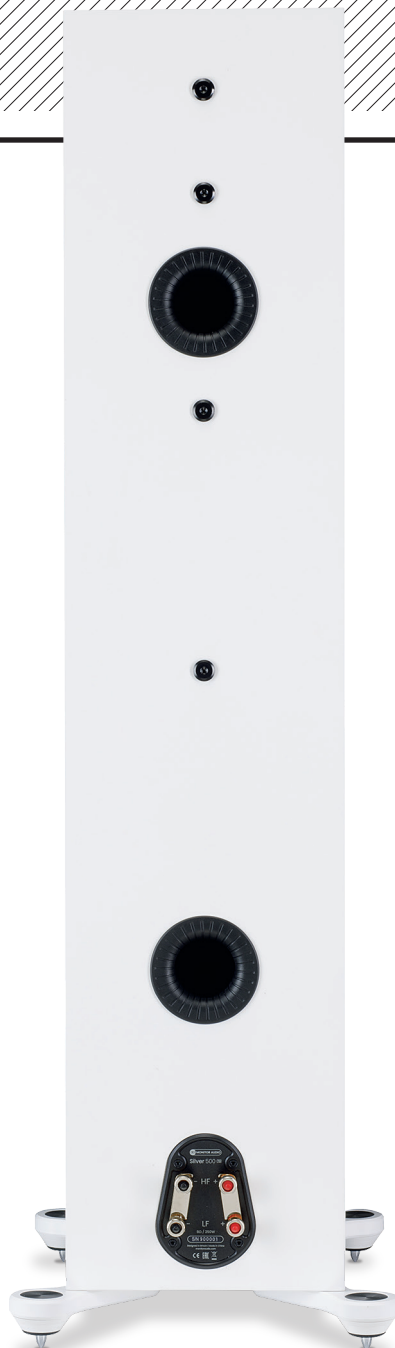
'There Will Come A Time' [*Monsters Exist*; ACP Recordings ACPCD1804, 44.1kHz/24-bit] is one of electronic duo Orbital's oddest yet most involving tracks. Some of it is par for the course – fluid synthetic orchestration, effects panned across the stereo spread – but it's joined by a spoken word narration by science boffin Professor Brian Cox. His is a voice I know well, and the way the Silver 500 7G positioned him dead-centre, a floating presence dispensing words of wisdom while behind him keyboards flanged and drums thumped, was almost hypnotic.

Key here was the Silver 500 7G's scale. Sometimes with smaller floorstanders

I find myself leaning in; with this pair I was leaning back, letting everything wash over me. Even a more down to earth track such as REM's 'Houston' from *Accelerate* [Warner Bros 9362-49874-1] benefited from the speaker's air-

shifting output. And while this isn't a slick recording, due to a purposefully pressurised studio process, it sounded far more considered than I remembered, as the Silver 500 7G revealed both the detail in the percussion and in Michael Stipe's vocal, while giving its cello notes impressive timbral bite.

'Ai Du', from Ali Farka Toure and Ry Cooder's collaborative album *Talking Timbuktu* [World Circuit WCD 040] approached the honesty and intimacy of a live performance, and Monitor Audio's floorstander put on a show that made its ticket price look like an absolute steal. This jazz/blues fusion runs the gamut from buoyant basslines and calabash drums ➔



to a shimmering mandolin and vibrato viola, as its seven players vie for soundstage space. The separation and texture given to all its constituent parts was superb.

Generally speaking, the Silver 500 7G's high frequencies are crisp, clear and airy. There's some lack of sweetness, and I noted an occasional tendency for them to slip into bright, sharp territory depending on the recording. The high-fret bends during the guitar solo in The Marshall Tucker Band's 'Can't You See' [Tidal Hi-Fi download] appeared to find a place that the speaker's C-CAM tweeter didn't really agree with. Elsewhere, however, the loudspeaker's warm, enveloping voicing is sure to please its mid-budget audience.

LEFT: The bi-wire/bi-amp terminals may be combined with a solid link. Note Monitor Audio's 'bolt through' driver bracing and rifled 'HiVe II' bass ports designed to reduce turbulence. Bass extension is improved over the 500 6G

Time spent positioning the Silver 500 7G reaps rewards. My pairing imaged very well – I didn't find them fussy regards toe-in to get them focused, and even when sat off-axis I still felt invited to the party. Yet the dual bass drivers' output requires some management. These speakers have considerable low-end reach and impressive stop-start ability, but site them too near boundary walls and these admirable traits can suffer. Four foam bungs are provided for the bass-reflex system, giving flexibility over tuning, and with the speakers positioned 45cm from my wall, I found using them on the lower HiVe port tightened up the LF.

COME FLY WITH ME

However you arrive at an optimal set-up, once there you're in for a treat. Spin 'La Grange' from ZZ Top's *Tres Hombres* [Warner Records; 96kHz/24-bit] and the Silver 500 7G locks into the crunch of Billy Gibbons' guitar and the boogie swagger of the rhythm section. Quite partial to the Top, I cranked this track up. PM's Lab report [opposite] reveals a high sensitivity and an impedance that is broadly untroublesome, which in the real world appears to translate into a speaker that needs little more than a tickle to play loud. With power behind him, Gibbons' guitar solo flew, and I was in seventh heaven. 🎧

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Monitor Audio's big-boned Silver series floorstander gets off to a strong start thanks to a smart aesthetic and wallet-friendly pricing, and its appeal only grows when the music begins. The 500 7G's sound is large scale, full-range and peppered with detail, and it seems to expend no effort at all when asked to play loud. Audition at your peril, because once you've heard a pair, you'll want to buy them!

Sound Quality: 87%

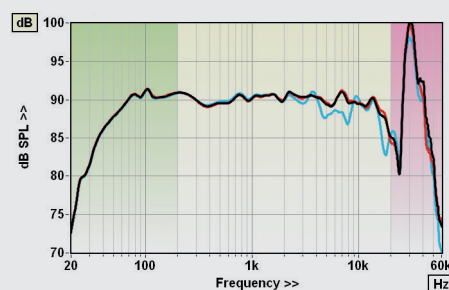
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LAB REPORT

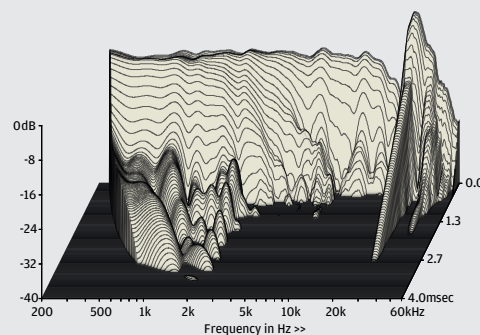
MONITOR AUDIO SILVER 500 7G

Measured at the average listening height (just below the C-CAM tweeter) the '7G' Silver 500's response is remarkably flat and even [see Graph 1, below] with an exceptionally low $\pm 1.0\text{dB}$ error from 200Hz–15kHz, the $-9\text{dB}/24\text{kHz}$ treble dip increasing this to $\pm 3.8\text{dB}$ across the wider 200Hz–20kHz span. The HF response limit of 22.6kHz ($-6\text{dB}/10\text{kHz}$) is set by this 'dip' although this is only the prelude to the $+10.6\text{dB}$ resonance of the hard dome at 30.9kHz [pink shaded area, Graph 1 and also see Graph 2]. Pair matching is also exceptional at 0.4dB (200Hz–10kHz) and 0.6dB (200Hz–20kHz) while the grille adds a circa -2.5dB disruption between 4–9kHz [blue trace, Graph 1]. The two 200mm (160mm effective diameter) bass drivers operate over a 55–425Hz/–6dB bandwidth and the rear-facing ports, both tuned to 35Hz, maintain the low freq. reach to a diffraction-corrected 34Hz (-6dB re. 200Hz). Incidentally the lower woofer and port both have a 'cleaner' output.

As importantly, while MA has engineered a response that's both flat and uniform, it's also achieved its high rated 90.5dB sensitivity at 90.2dB/1kHz (and 90.3dB re. 500Hz–8kHz) combined with low 0.1–0.2% midband distortion (re. 90dB SPL) without imposing an especially punishing load on the partnering amplifier. Strictly speaking the Silver 500 presents a 5ohm nominal load (it's rated at a harsher 4.1ohm) with an impedance minimum of 4.2ohm/164Hz and a further dip to 4.25ohm/2.35kHz, both instances with negligible impedance phase. Similarly, the maximum, modest swings in phase angle of $+31^\circ/-45^\circ$ both occur at $>8\text{ohm}$ impedance. PM



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed drivers/ports [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 very well controlled

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V – 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	90.2dB / 90.3dB / 87.8dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	4.2ohm @ 164Hz 21.4ohm @ 19Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	-45° @ 79Hz $+31^\circ$ @ 48Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz–20kHz)	0.6dB / $\pm 3.8\text{dB}$ / $\pm 3.9\text{dB}$
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	34Hz / 22.7kHz/22.5kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.4% / 0.12% / 0.45%
Dimensions (HWD w/feet) / Weight (each)	1095x319x389mm / 23kg