

Monitor Audio Silver 200 AV12 review

What Hi-Fi? Awards 2020 winner. Monitor Audio's Silver range serves up a talented 5.1 package *Tested at £2875*



(Image: © Future)

What Hi-Fi? Verdict

Following our admiration of the Silver 200s as a stereo pair, this 5.1 package proves the rest of the family to be equally talented

Pros

- +
Clear, balanced sound
- +
Expressive and fun
- +
Excellent integration and versatility
- +
Impressive sense of body and scale

Cons

- -
Nothing of note

If you've already cast an eye over our review of the Monitor Audio Silver 200s, our assessment of the Silver 200 AV12s probably won't come as a surprise. Effectively, it's pretty much the same storyline with a few extra characters.

The Silver 200s, the smallest of three pairs of floorstanding speakers in this sixth generation of Monitor Audio's long-running Silver series, are again the headline act in this surround package.

We recently cooed over their speed, expression and sense of fun as a stereo pair, and their designers' efforts to match that character in the rest of the range immediately whets our appetite to hear them performing as a part of a family.

But despite the 200 appearing in the title of this package, the floorstanders' stage is shared with three equally talented protagonists – the Silver C150 center speaker, Silver FX surround speakers and Silver W-12 subwoofer.

Compatibility

The whole range has been designed for what Monitor Audio describes as 'modern living'.

This means not only more diminutive chassis, but also that the company's engineers have worked to tune the speakers to ensure minimal variance in performance, regardless of positioning.

During our testing period with the Silver 200s, we find that rings impressively true. They thrive most when placed around 50cm from our back wall, but with only marginal discrepancies when almost flush to it, or out in the room.

These differences perhaps become a matter of personal taste when it comes to extra bass weight or a faster, more sharply-timed delivery.

The company also sought the help of the National Physical Laboratory's precision laser scanner when creating the cabinets, used to identify resonances and then help position internal bracings more accurately, ensuring rigidity and minimising any colourations.

Build

But the first changes you're likely to recognize when gazing upon these new speakers, the Silver W-12 aside, are reflected aesthetically in the recalculated form of Monitor Audio's iconic gold-dome tweeter and C-CAM (ceramic-coated aluminum/magnesium) drivers.

The 25mm tweeter – one either side of a mid/bass driver on the angled fascia of the Silver FX, and one each on the Silver 200 and Silver C150 – has been fine-tuned for clearer, smoother and distortion-free high frequencies, and set behind a new speckled grille.

The larger drivers too have been redesigned, aided by a DCF coupling mechanism between voice coil and cone, which has trickled down from the company's flagship Platinum II Series and aims to lower distortion and facilitate cleaner-sounding highs.

The Silver 200 and Silver C150 each have two 13cm C-CAM drivers in a 2.5-way configuration, while the Silver FXs have a 15cm driver in a two-way crossover.

While the cabinets of their counterparts are sealed, the Silver 200s also benefit from a pair of rear-firing HiVe II reflex ports, which use a straight-ripled design to accelerate airflow and reduce turbulence – effectively moving air in and out more swiftly for faster, more powerful bass response.

A final word on the design of those Silver FX surround speakers: their semi-hexagonal design and easily switchable dipole/bipole modes is a real touch for those unable to place them over the shoulders of their listening position.

Instead you can wall-mount and still achieve a wrap-around soundfield that would be unattainable using more traditional standmounters.

And then there's the Silver W-12 subwoofer, which faces us with a 30cm version of the dished C-CAM cone, though bereft of the lotus-like dimples adorning those drivers on the rest of the range.

It's driven by a 500W Class-D amplifier and a large black anodized 75mm voice coil that Monitor Audio says provides higher power handling and low distortion.

It also offers three EQ settings – Music, Movie and Impact – and a top-mounted control panel to dial in easily more or less low frequency heft without scrolling through the settings each time via your amp.

The only real caveat here would be for those with their hearts set on the high gloss black veneer – it will set you back an extra ten per cent (£290).

But so pleasing are Monitor Audio's five alternatives – black oak, walnut, rosenut, natural oak and satin white – that we can't see many potential suitors being alarmed.

Sound

We begin our testing with something of a false start. Having become accustomed to the Silver 200s' full bodied, expressive sound, it was clear that even after a couple of nights' running in the rest of the package isn't keeping pace.

There's none of the warmth or dynamic range, and treble frequencies don't ring with that familiar clarity.

It isn't unusual for speakers to take up to 100 hours to really hit their stride, so if you've got the Silver 200 AV12 package home and are initially unimpressed, we'd simply advise a little patience.

The pay-off is huge – give these speakers a little extra time to prepare, and it's as if they've breathed a sigh of relief, composed themselves and lost the first night nerves.

Suddenly, the crashes, bangs and wallops of *The Lego Batman Movie* are thrown at us, as if physically travelling around the room with incredible cohesion as each speaker complements the others' character.

We give the sub a little extra room to rumble than our initial set-up permitted, and it sets the foundation for a performance of concrete solidity.

But even as we add to those low frequencies, it does nothing to detract from the pace we admired when testing the Silver 200s on their own.

As a whole, the package times with military precision, driving the film's plentiful action scenes with relentless momentum and delivering quips with the comparative sharpness of their wit.

But a surround package lives or dies by its center speaker, which carries the burden of the work.

The extra hours of running in make all the difference: there are inflections in deadpan deliveries, urgency in moments of panic and musicality in the soundtrack.

Rarely are we so fully behind a speaker package for its work both in stereo and in surround sound, but with these Monitor Audio Silvers you truly are achieving both for the price of one.

And our admiration fails to dwindle as we shift to a DVD of Radiohead's *King Of Limbs* performance live from the basement.

Even through an AV amp, there is that same musical quality and sense of energy when it comes to handling music that makes it difficult to choose whether to watch a film or put on a record.

Verdict

We said this would be a similar storyline as with our Silver 200 review, and it is. But if we end up treading the same ground with Monitor Audio's next generation of Silver speakers, we won't be disappointed at all.