

What Hi Fi Sound & Vision 2010 Awards **Monitor Audio Steals the Show!**



BX2 Loudspeakers **PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**

“Rarely has choosing the product of the year been so easy.”

RX6AV12 system **BEST TRADITIONAL PACKAGE £1500+**

“A crowd-pleaser, born to entertain” we said of the Silver RX6AV12 at this time last year, and nothing we’ve heard in the meantime has changed our minds!”

Apex A10AV12 system **BEST STYLE PACKAGE £2000+**

“When it comes to combining alluring looks with entirely credible performance, the Monitor Audio Apex is compelling.”

Thank you for your dedication and support!

AWARDS 2010

STEREO SPEAKERS
& SUBWOOFERS

The right pair of speakers can make a good system great - and this Award-winning bunch proves you needn't spend a mint to get serious results

Contenders



Best up to £150
Mission MX1
£150 Page 90



Best £150-£300
Monitor Audio Bronze BX2
£250 Page 88



Best £300-£600
Dynaudio DM 2/6
£535 Page 90



Best £600-£1000
ATC SCM11
£960 Page 92



Best £1000-£3000
ProAc Response D18
£2100 Page 92



Best £3000+
Spendor A9
£3995 Page 95



Best sub up to £500
B&W ASW610
£450 Page 97



Best sub £500+
B&W PV1
£950 Page 97

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Monitor Audio Bronze BX2 £250

Rarely has choosing the product of the year been so easy. That's not the kind of thing we normally write, but having a product as good as the BX2s makes the whole decision process far easier.

This is an immaculately conceived product that ticks every box. Let's run through its plus points. It's extremely well-built, for starters. No rival looks so classy, feels so solid or is finished to such a high standard, and there are neat touches such as the mid/bass driver being bolted to the rear of the cabinet, which keeps the front uncluttered and improves sound through reduced vibrations.

The drivers use metal diaphragms coated with a ceramic material. This makes great advertising copy -

Monitor Audio uses the C-CAM (Ceramic Coated Aluminium Magnesium) tag in its promotional literature - but also improves the cone/dome performance through improved damping and rigidity.

Supreme versatility

They sound excellent. The BX2s have an even tone, perhaps trading a touch of their predecessors' obliging treatment of poor sources for a more open and dynamic sound. Bass clarity and weight are impressive and detail is terrific. We don't think there's anything at this level that can unravel Holst's *Jupiter* with such skill while making sense of Thelonious Monk's *Played Twice*. Those that come close - Mordaunt-Short's Aviano 1XRrs, for instance - can't deliver BX2s' scale or finesse.

Weaknesses? That's the thing about the BX2s: they don't have any. Judged by the standards of their price, they are as complete a speaker as we've come across. Yes, they're fussier about partnering equipment than previous generation of Bronze standmounters, but they never make a meal of things. If a system is flawed further up the chain, it's hardly their fault, is it?

You'll need a good pair of rigid stands and enough space in your room to let the speakers breathe. A touch of toe-in towards the listening position helps to firm up the stereo imaging too. Take a little time to optimise the sound and we're sure you'll be deeply impressed. We were, enough to give them our top speaker award.

TOP TIP

From new, speakers will sound bright and reined-in - so don't judge the sound out of the box. Use them for at least 24 hours to run them in

BEST STYLE PACKAGE £2000+

Monitor Audio Apex £2425

There's nothing wrong with an unashamedly premium price-tag as long as it can be backed up. At £850 more than the B&W MT-30 (and that's without the weighty, elegantly realised stands - £125 each), the Apex set-up seems to have its work cut out. But when put to the test it demonstrates that it's all money well spent. You certainly can't buy a better made, better finished

or (to our eyes, at least) better looking package at the price. The AW-12 sub lacks some of the B&W PVI's visual drama, but it's impeccably built - and the rest of the system looks a treat.

A huge, detailed soundstage

The A10 satellites are elegantly rounded, gloss-and-brushed-metal cabinets, each housing a 25mm gold dome tweeter, a 14cm mid/bass driver (that's dimpled à la Monitor Audio's RX and GS ranges) and a forward-firing bass port. The A40 centre channel gains an extra mid/bass

driver and an additional bass port, and disguises its 61cm width well. Magnetic grilles are a neat touch, as are the supplied table-top stands and the cable-management in the floor stands.

The sound is every bit as impressive. The speakers and sub integrate seamlessly, and the satellites deliver generously where detail, speed and uncoloured tonality are concerned. The centre lends gravity to basso profundo dialogue while remaining spacious and distinct, and it's all underpinned by authoritative, controlled and substantial presence. The soundstage is big enough to fill the largest cinema rooms, effects are sited securely even as they're flung around



When the going gets atmospheric, the Apex is detailed enough to make your hair stand on end

the system, and dynamic headroom is considerable. And when the going gets atmospheric, the Apex set-up is detailed and subtle enough to make your hair stand on end.

Music is rendered with similar success. Vocal intonation is excellent, detail is profuse and the subwoofer's speed helps even tricky rhythms snap along. The entire presentation is at once calm and alert, willing to waft along but ready at a moment's notice to spring onto a war footing.

When it comes to combining alluring looks with entirely credible performance, the Monitor Audio Apex is compelling.

BEST TRADITIONAL PACKAGE £1500+

Monitor Audio Silver RX6 AV12 £2200

Many of the usual suspects - Acoustic Energy, Cabasse, Dali, M&K, Mordaunt-Short, PMC... you get the idea - have released pricey full-size speaker packages in the past year. They've met with varying degrees of praise - but in one important way they're all the same. Not one of them represents the value for money the Monitor Audio Silver RX6 AV12 does.



It's a straightforward system: RX6 floorstanders up front, RX-C centre channel, RXW-12 sub and, in a gesture towards exoticism, RX-FX surround speakers. These last have drivers in three planes and can be configured as bi-pole (better if they're behind your seat) or di-pole (for if they're beside you) at the flick of a switch.

Massive scale, eloquent presentation

It manages to look both purposeful and discreet in situ (with the exception of the subwoofer, which just looks purposeful) and is sweetly finished in a real-wood veneer. The RX6

floorstanders are an excellent basis for a surround system, inasmuch as they're expressive, detailed, tonally even-handed and barnstormingly dynamic. Adding an eloquent and uncluttered centre channel makes for a tremendously unified front three, while the RX-FX rears offer fine space and atmosphere no matter where you find you have to position them.

At the bottom end of the frequency range, the RXW-12's stark figures - 30cm driver and 500 watts of amplifier power - only begin to hint at the subwoofer's massive presence and solidity. Integration between the six speakers is first-rate, scale is considerable and unity unquestionable.

The RX6s are expressive, detailed, even-handed and barnstormingly dynamic

These characteristics are all carried over to music reproduction intact. Dramatic, dynamic and beautifully balanced, there's a stack of detail on display and the sort of poise and agility that's essential to make sense of the most testing rhythms. Vocalists in particular feel the benefit, rendered as they are with intimacy and immediacy. "A real crowd-pleaser, born to entertain" we said of the Silver RX6 AV12 at this same time last year, and nothing we've heard in the meantime has changed our minds.