

# Monitor Audio Silver RX1 **£425**

Pricey, polished looking and immaculately presented, but will this speaker's sonics stand up?



## DETAILS

**ORIGIN:**  
UK

**TYPE:**  
two-way

**WEIGHT:**  
6.8kg

**FEATURES:**

- 25mm dome tweeter
- 125mm mid/bass driver
- 312x185x240mm

**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
Monitor Audio

**TELEPHONE:**  
01268 740580

**WEBSITE:**  
monitoraudio.co.uk

**T**his company has gone from strength to strength of late, with some very attractively voiced models at a range of prices. The Silver RX1 is the smallest of the middle range of Monitor Audio speakers, and is the second most expensive in this group.

It sports a 25mm gold tweeter with damped rear chamber, paired to a 150mm mid/bass driver employing an aluminium cone in a cast polymer chassis; crossover point is 3kHz. 'HiVe II port technology' is the name given to that little hole in the box!

Being pricey (in relative terms), it's no surprise that the substantial 19mm MDF cabinet has a high quality real wood veneer in a choice of walnut or natural oak; high-gloss piano finishes are also available. Inside, the box has a 'single bolt through driver' system, for increased overall bracing and rigidity, with extensive cross-bracing. The Silver RX1 feels like a very high quality product indeed – as nice as the Quad – which is really saying something.

## Sound quality

Take the smoothness of the Dynaudio and alloy this to the KEF's energy, and you'd get something not

far from the RX1. Tonal balance is a little darker than the KEF, yet it has much of the spark. Indeed, Sade's *Diamond Life* was an interesting pointer to this speaker's inner self. It set up a warm, spacious groove, almost as if the music had slowed down and you could hear into the mix more (always a good sign, as it's not blurring the notes). I suddenly found myself able to lock on to individual strands better, and enjoy following the maracas and tom-tom work. Suddenly I wasn't just hearing notes either; they had differing amounts of dynamic articulation; things weren't all shouting at me. Sade Adu's silken tones calmed compared to the KEF, which made her sound closer to Kim Carnes!

Despite such refinement, The Specials track was positively riotous; massive power and punch allied to oodles of emotion made for a song that you just wanted to get up and dance to, even if you were half your age the last time you did... I loved the way it was such good fun, yet so couch and in control all the same. Bass was stronger perhaps than all the others here, yet tuneful and less prone to signposting the cabinet's boxiness. Treble was spacious, delicate and crisp, carrying all the harmonics from a trumpet, for example, where the Dynaudio sort-of polished them out of the mix and the KEF had remodelled them into a slightly distracting sibilance.

This was just what the doctor ordered for the Felt track, whose guitars chimed like bells at a wedding. On lesser loudspeakers they could overpower, but the RX1 managed to capture their essential power, yet never had you running for your nearest packet of paracetamol. Instead, these speakers served up a spacious recorded

acoustic and got to work conveying everything inside it with painstaking

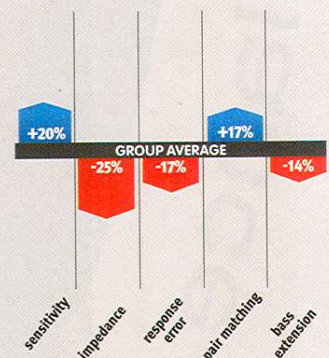
precision. Whereas *Elegance* had sounded like a morass of sound with the KEF, the RX1s sliced and diced every track up then knitted it back altogether again with consummate skill and musicality.

The Monitor Audio showed grace under pressure with LFO; that monster bassline didn't detract from a beautiful wash of synth sound further up the frequency range. It sparkled away, scything through the morass of thick bass. Overall then, a deeply impressive performer, on every possible level.

## ON TEST

Monitor Audio's claimed 89dB sensitivity is distinctly optimistic according to our measurements which recorded 86.3dB on pink noise, although that's still a little above the group average. The specified 6 ohms nominal impedance is also not justified by our measured minimum impedance modulus of 3.5 ohms, which suggests that a 4 ohms nominal figure is more appropriate. Minimum EPDR was only just below the group average at 2.1 ohms, though, so the RX1 is not a particularly difficult speaker to drive. On-axis frequency response shows a very large peak at about 25kHz due to the tweeter dome resonance, but the in-band response error is tightly controlled at 5.0dB ( $\pm 2.5$ dB), as is the pair matching error at an excellent 1.2dB ( $\pm 0.6$ dB). Bass extension is less exceptional at 57Hz for -6dB ref 200Hz but the CSD waterfall shows fast initial energy decay. KH

## RESULTS AT A GLANCE



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Polished and classy sound yet extremely musical too; super build and finish

**VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Nothing at all at the price...

**BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WESAY:** Could easily cost twice the money and still impress; an excellent standmounter!

**EASE OF DRIVE** ★★★★★

### OVERALL





# Listening test verdict

**David Price** puts this month's group testing into context. How do the contenders fare in the great scheme of things?

Unlike last month's group test, which had an astonishingly diverse range of performers, every speaker in this test did well – although some obviously better than others...

To my ears, least impressive was Mordaunt-Short's Aviano 1XR. It's not a bad design by any means, but I still think it struggled here to really get into the groove. It's a pretty warm and inoffensive sounding speaker with a nicely lucid midband, but was just a little muted up top for my tastes, and nor did it really ever make the music magic. This was especially apparent with bass-rich tracks, where it sounded a touch more stressed than it really should...

The KEF Q100 proved pretty close in ultimate ability, but managed to hide its tracks better; no small box is going to be perfect, but the KEF cheekily sidesteps its issues and stands there with a grin on its face for you. Again, frequency extremes are limited; its treble is a little lumpen and bass doesn't charm like others here.

The Quad 11L Classic is really rather good all round, presenting a very competent face to the world. Perhaps that's its problem though, as it's a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. Others will love it for this, but I personally couldn't help myself falling for some of the most characterful designs in the group...

One of which is the Q Acoustics 2020i. No, scratch that – the *only* one of which is the Q Acoustics. This is a 'Marmite' product, a speaker you'll not be able to live with, or without, depending on your proclivities. In some ways more flawed than the Quad (in its treble, for example), it just makes music so much fun that you can't say no. Well, I couldn't!

Dynaudio's DM 2/6 is the runner up. I found it an amazingly sophisticated speaker for the money, an ideal partner for cheaper ancillaries which it will flatter like a politician chatting up the voters. It's close to the Quad in many respects, but pips it with a wider, brighter and more expansive sound.



**WINNER**  
Monitor Audio's Silver RX1 gets to crack open the jeroam of champs up on the podium! It has all the strengths of the super-svelte Dynaudio with most of the *joie de vivre* of the Q Acoustics. Everything you play through it sounds vital and engaging, subtle and detailed, polished and poised. It simply didn't sound anything like a budget box.

## AT A GLANCE

Make/model	Dynaudio DM 2/6	KEF Q100	Monitor Audio Silver RX1	Mordaunt-Short Aviano 1XR	Q Acoustics 2020i	Quad 11L Classic
Price	£495	£380	£425	£200	£160	£350
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Ease of drive	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Conclusion	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Key features	Highly polished all rounder with a sophisticated and musical nature	Crisp, punchy, engaging standmounter with fine stereo imaging; not so finessed though...	Brilliant mixture of power and polish; infectiously musical yet civilised and couth, too	Nice, sweet, lyrical midband makes vocals a joy but bass and treble extremes not so hot	Cheap but very cheerful. Riotously good fun to listen to on rock and dance, but lacks subtlety	Beautifully made with a classy sound that never offends, but neither does it excite
real wood finish	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
bi-wirable	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
wall bracket	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
grilles supplied	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
reflex port	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## TRY WITH THESE

### CD PLAYER: Cyrus CD 8 SE2 **£1,200**

The winner of *Hi-Fi Choice's* recent CD player group test (HFC 358), there's a lot to love about this svelte silver disc spinner. Aside from the fine build and aesthetics, its smooth, musical sound positively sparkles. Any of the above speakers would be a pleasure with the Cyrus as a source.



### INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER: Roksan Caspian M2 **£1,650**

Another recent *Hi-Fi Choice* winner (HFC 356), this integrated amplifier has a wonderfully musically expressive nature, allied to a lovely rich tonality. And it is powerful enough to drive any of the speakers here to high levels in a medium sized listening room – so it's a highly capable party animal, too!



### INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER: Rega Brio R **£480**

While all these boxes benefit from a big, punchy, amplifier such as the Roksan, if your budget doesn't reach, then try this. The baby Rega gives little away in terms of sonics, with its subtle, infectious musicality that always impresses. It's down on power slightly, but you can't have it all!

