

EDITOR'S CHOICE  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine  
★

# Room sound

*This new model in Monitor Audio's high-end Platinum range is a good all-round performer*

**PRODUCT** Monitor Audio Platinum 200  
**TYPE** 3-way floorstanding loudspeaker  
**PRICE** £4,750

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 25.5x100x28.5cms  
 • Weight: 33kg • Drivers: C-CAM high-frequency ribbon tweeter, 100mm midrange, 2x 165mm bass  
 • Magnetically attached grille • Alloy/Nomex RDT sandwich cones • Mineral-loaded resin matrix baffle  
 • Complex curved back and sides

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**P**roudly displayed on the substantial packaging that protects Monitor's PL200 loudspeaker, is the reference to 1972, the year in which the company was founded. It's an instant reminder that Monitor Audio now qualifies as one of Britain's longest established speaker brands, especially among those still in UK ownership.

Back in the 1990s, its very successful Studio range led the line, featuring deep-anodised 'C-CAM' metal diaphragms, but 1997 saw a change of ownership. A new design team headed by Dean Hartley came in and steadily upgraded the product portfolio by working its way up the price ladder.

The Studios evolved into Gold References (2000), then the Gold GSs (2006), but 2007 saw a further step upwards and towards the high end with the introduction of the first two Platinum models: the Platinum 100 two-way standmount with 165mm bass/mid driver; and the 300 three-way floorstander with two 200mm bass drivers.

These two clearly left room for the recent arrival of this £4,750 Platinum 200, which could be said to split the difference. In truth, it's much closer to the 300 than the 100, as it shares the same midrange and treble drive units, but the use of twin 165mm bass drivers allows it to be significantly smaller and lighter than the 300, without necessarily incurring too great a performance penalty. Furthermore, it seems likely that this middle model of three may well prove the best match for the typically modest dimensions of UK rooms, in terms of relative bass level.

As its substantial pricetag suggests, there's a whole lot of serious engineering going on here and no-one could possibly complain about the exceptional quality of the finish either. Indeed, so good is it that, one might be inclined to

wonder whether it was given priority over the engineering content. Happily though, that doesn't seem to be the case.

The outside is beautifully finished in high-gloss lacquer (no fewer than 11 layers, in fact) over high-quality real wood veneer –

**“...it seems likely that this model may well prove the best match for the typically modest dimensions of UK rooms...”**

our samples came in a lovely and subtly patterned ebony, while Santos Rosewood and piano-black lacquer are also on the menu. The back and sides are formed as a continuous curve, with slightly convex sides, a slightly concave back and quite gently curved edges. (This unusual shape is created by laminating together relatively thin, ie bendable, layers of MDF with the help of a jig/press.)

The front panel presumably accounts for much of the speaker's considerable 33kg total weight, as it's made from MA's ARC (anti-resonance composite) of mineral-loaded resin, though this is tastefully concealed beneath a top-quality charcoal grey leather trim.

Four bolts clamp the back panel firmly in place and an appropriate Allen key is supplied to keep the tensions well maintained. A generous flared reflex port exits around a conical protuberance, which possibly aids the airflow, but is actually the back end of the encouragingly large and sensibly shaped ARC midrange driver enclosure.

The whole thing sits on a handsome and reasonably substantial moulded plinth, again in ARC, which ensures a fine stability footprint and secure accommodation for the hefty and rather elaborate floor-coupling kit. The latter provides rubber-tipped discs for wooden floors with screw-in (though not particularly sharp) 'bullet' spikes for carpets. Twin platinum-plated terminals allow separate feeds to the twin bass drivers and the mid-plus-treble pair, for bi-wiring or bi-amping.

The three-way driver line-up is similar to those that are already used in the established Platinum 300, though the latter's twin 200mm bass drivers are replaced here by twin 165mm units, each of which has 120mm diameter cones, and is reflex loaded by the aforementioned rear port. The midrange has a

similar looking 100mm driver with a 90mm cone, while the tweeter is a ribbon device with a mesh-protected 7x 55mm diaphragm. When we first took a look at them, the cone diaphragms look suspiciously similar to the alloy-based units that are used by MA's earlier

Studio models, but in fact they use a sandwich construction that Monitor Audio calls RDT. These are ultra-thin deep-anodised magnesium/aluminium alloy skins bonded to a Nomex honeycomb centre, which create a



▣ diaphragm that is not only considerably lighter, but also much stiffer than anodised metal alloy alone.

## SOUND QUALITY

Those lightweight cones are very effective in delivering a generous sensitivity of around 90dB according to our far-field in-room measurement technique – exactly corresponding to the manufacturer's claim. While the load presented to the amplifier is easy to drive through the midrange and treble, it's more demanding at low frequencies, recording a 3.3ohm minimum in the upper bass.

The in-room frequency response is also exceptionally smooth and well ordered through the midrange and treble (above 500Hz). However, below 500Hz, where room reflections and mode interaction play an increasingly significant role, the low frequency output was rather uneven.

Even with the speakers located well clear of walls, there's no avoiding the substantial and clearly audible excess around 50Hz, for which the output of the 43Hz-tuned port must be held largely responsible. And since said port has a curious annulus shape, neither modifying its tuning nor blocking it is really practical.

Auditioning was carried out over several weeks, using Rega Isis and Naim CDS3/555PS CD players, a (modified) Linn Sondek LP12/Rega RB1000/SoundSmith Strain Gauge turntable/arm/cartridge, and a Magnum Dynalab MD 106T tuner as sources. Amplification included a Rega Osiris and a Naim NAC552/NAP500, plus some prototype valve power amps. Cables were from The Chord Company, Vertex AQ, Phonosophie and

## RIBBON TWEETERS

**Ribbon transducers are by no means a new technology – a German microphone used the principle way back in 1924 – but their use as tweeters does seem to have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. Factors that might possibly be responsible include improved, higher bandwidth sources; more powerful and compact magnetic materials; and the enthusiasm of Chinese manufacturers.**

**The principle is actually very simple – rather more so than the regular and otherwise almost ubiquitous dome devices – because the ribbon itself takes the place of both the voice coil and the diaphragm of the regular tweeter. The ribbon not only carries the signal current from the amplifier, it also forms the surface that actually radiates the sound. Consequently the positioning of the magnets has to be completely reorganised, creating an even magnetic field across the face of the thin conductive (ie metal, or in this case C-CAM) ribbon diaphragm. Wide lateral dispersion is ensured by using a slim (7x 55mm) ribbon.**



Naim, and equipment supports from Mana, Vertex AQ, Naim, and Townshend.

While the Platinum 200's bass performance was less than perfect under our conditions, this is very much 'a speaker of two halves', as the midrange and top end are quite brilliant. The tonal balance is lovely with superb neutrality and vanishingly low coloration, alongside an almost magical freedom from boxiness. Stereo imaging is consequently excellent with no tendency to hug the speakers. It also offers realistic spaciousness and depth perspectives.

Essentially sweet and open in overall character, the beautifully judged voicing has a clean and airy expressiveness. Furthermore, the dynamic range is outstanding, while dynamic expression is also very decent, with at least a modicum of grip. And even though the bass had a slightly lumpy character, along with some lack of tension and an occasional tendency to thump, it's actually basically clean and rather enjoyable.

In practice, the output of any loudspeaker system (mono, stereo or multi-channel), through the bass and lower midband in particular, is invariably and substantially modified by largely unpredictable variations introduced by room interaction effects. The bass unevenness here is therefore only partly the responsibility of a speaker system which could well give smoother results under different room conditions.

However, provided some care is taken to ensure that the bottom end works well in the intended listening room, the Platinum 200 is something of a star. Though undoubtedly costly, this is at least partly due to the almost obsessive application of top quality ingredients and partly justified by the outstanding voicing, sweetness and freedom from boxiness throughout the midrange and the treble.

In other words, this speaker not only looks exceptionally beautiful, it also has a delightfully open character without any attendant harshness. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	<b>PRO</b> This top quality speaker features a cunningly shaped enclosure dressed in top quality veneer. Exceptional mid and treble voicing gives an open and neutral character.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE</b> ★★★★☆	<b>CON</b> Under our conditions, the bass end lacked smoothness, at least in part because the rather generous 42Hz port reinforced a major room mode.
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★☆	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Assuming a good room match can be achieved through the bass region, this costly but beautifully presented speaker has outstanding voicing: sweet and free from boxiness, it has an enjoyably transparent character with no harshness.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★	
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