

monitor group test

Ever feel a little short-changed by your compact desktop monitors? What you need is a sub, or better still a proper 2.1 set up. Jon Musgrave checks out our fantastic-four monitoring set-ups in the *Future Music* group test

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M-Audio BX5a and BX10s

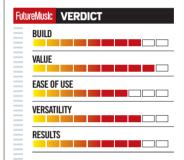
ith a few years of

monitor design under their belt, M-Audio's BX5a is the latest

incarnation of their compact desktop monitor. Offering a simple rear-ported design, five-inch Kevlar bass driver, silk-dome tweeter and 70 Watts combined power, it looks impressive on paper. And the matching BX10s sub is enormous, packing a whopping 240 Watts. But girth aside, the sub also has plenty of other features.

The standard inputs and passthroughs (on XLR and TRS jack) are accompanied by a standby mode, phase reverse and gain boost options. But the nicest features are the footswitch bypass and the wideranging crossover point (50 to 200Hz). The latter may seem insignificant, but when you get away from the restrictions imposed for Dolby surround mixing, setting this frequency becomes a matter of personal taste. With a five-inch satellite monitor, a slightly higher cutoff may help. First impressions are that the BX5a is quite bright and with no rear EQ settings, you get what you're given. It's up to the BX10s to even things up. As expected this is pretty loud, and getting a good balance between the sub and satellites takes a bit of fiddling.

With a working balance, it's time to investigate the cutoff point. Shifting this up to around 160Hz (unusually high for a sub) produces both a cohesive sound and tames the brightness of the BX5. Overall there's not much room for manoeuvre and I'd quite like to tame the BX10s a little.



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M-Audio's system is certainly loud, but may be a little too coloured for some users.

one are the days of struggling with a set of woefully inadequate monitors - well they should be, as today a few hundred quid (we've set ourselves a rough £500 target here) can get you two powered monitors and a sub capable of a big studio sound.

So why would you want that over and above a simple pair? Put simply - bass. So if you fancy making your tracks rock on club PAs and car stereos countrywide (and fancy reminding your neighbours who's boss) read on.

Satellite plus sub systems are often associated with cinemas and their 'FX-centric' 5.1 surround

sound (that's five satellite channels and one sub channel). But actually, it's not unusual to see music studios sporting a 'nearfield plus sub' set-up. And if you're mixing on nearfields, but just want extra low-end info, this makes sense. The downside is setting them up and this can involve a bit of trial and error, plus of course your room will have loads of extra bass to contend with.

Thankfully our four test systems come from established names (Yamaha, KRK, Event and M-Audio) and are designed to work together straight out of the box. It all sounds unbelievably simple, so let's get to work!



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Event ALP 5 and S100

vent's ASP8E mid-field monitor was a pleasant surprise in issue 181's monitor showdown.

Unfortunately the smaller ALP 5 nearfield which we also tested was up against Samson's R5A. And in that company we had clear winner.

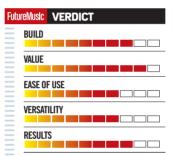
Now, coupled with the S100 sub, we've a set up for just under £500, but with a different cost allocation it'll be interesting to see how it fares against M-Audio's package.

Although the ALP5 has plenty of connectors (XLR, TRS jack and RCA), apart from input sensitivity there are no further adjustments possible. Like M-Audio's BX5a. But where their BX10s sub has lots going on around the back, the Event S100 feels a little under spec'd. At 100 Watts, this downward-facing sub has a fixed cutoff at 120Hz, and although it has a footswitch bypass, the inputs and pass-throughs are on RCA only.

Overall this feels less flexible than it should be, and with no phase reverse option and no input calibration, set up took some time.

On the sound front, the ALP5 feels dull next to the BX5a, but on an objective listen it's probably quite flat in delivery. The 'active linear phase' design may sound like marketing speak, but overall the tonal balance and stereo imaging proves to be good.

Combined with the S100 the sound is okay, but nowhere near the pushy sound from the M-Audio setup. It does take a bit of getting used to and shouldn't be fatiguing, but as a combo I feel it would benefit from a better sub.



The S100 is the weak spot. The ALP5 is good on its own, but the combo feels lacking





yamaha-europe.com

amaha's famous white cones have recently made a comeback in the form of the all-new HS series.

Surprisingly, this is limited to the five-inch HS50M (on review here) and the HS80M, a much larger eight-inch design. Combined with the HS10W sub, the HS50M bundle lists at $\pounds587$, and is therefore the most expensive set in this review.

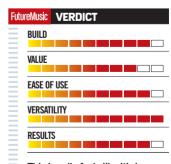
A quick look around the back of the HS50 reveals lots of settings options, including a 2dB cut-andboost at the critical 2kHz frequency. Overall power is 70 Watts per speaker (45 Watts LF and 25 Watts HF), and with a choice of TRS and XLR inputs and a centre-notched input sensitivity, set up should be easy.

The SW10W is both the most expensive sub here, and the most compact. Around the back there are plenty of options, including adjustable low-pass for the sub and corresponding low-cut for the pass-through satellite connections. There's also phase reverse, and an additional sub split for an extra sub.

There's a familiar up-front nature to this set-up, with the illuminated Yamaha logos a constant reminder of their heritage. Like the Event S100, the sub is downward facing, but with a forward reflex port and 140 Watts to play with it delivers more punch. Alas there's no footswitch bypass, and (being an eight-inch) it's not as weighty as the M-Audio sub.

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Even so, the overall combo is our favourite so far, and if the up-front sound becomes too much, you've got tweaking options aplenty.



This bundle feels like it's been designed to work together and it's also very flexible.

RP6 | £299/pair



KRK

RP6 and RP10S

krksys.com

recognisable as Yamaha's white ones. The review package comes from their more affordable Rokit range. Indeed they're so affordable that they're the only manufacturer that packs a six-inch cone into its sub-£300 price. Even so, the RP6 only turns in a combined power of 68 Watts so the playing field is still level. Specs wise this is a straightforward monitor with full connectivity (RCA, TRS jack and XLR) and a simple shelving HF control at 2kHz (+1db, OdB, -1dB, -2dB).

hese days, KRK's yellow

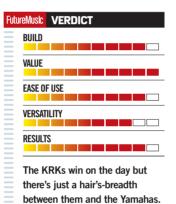
glass-fibre cones are as

Like the BX10s, the RP10S sub is a forward-facing bruiser of a monitor, with a ten-inch driver and 150 Watts under the hood. It's not quite as fancy as Yamaha's HS10W, but has adjustable cut off (50Hz to 130Hz), phase reverse and filtered pass-throughs on XLR and RCA. Shame there's no footswitch bypass.

The most immediately noticeable thing with the RP6 is that it sounds 'larger' than the other monitors here. This is more obvious at higher

volumes, so if you like it loud this may be worth considering. The satellites and sub gel very well, and overall the KRKs also seem the nicest constructed of the bunch.

Their sound falls between the upfront HS50 and something more lowend-heavy. The balance is workable without being too bright, although a little scooped in the mid-range. I fired up a pair of RP5s (£229 a pair) too and though less expansive, overall worked well and worth a shot if the extra £80 for the RP6s is an issue.



Six-inch glass aramid composite LF driver

One-inch Neodymium Soft Dome Ferro Fluid HF driver

Frequency
Response: 49Hz — 20kHz

Crossover: 2.6kHz
Inputs: XLR, RCA and quarter-inch TRS
Dimensions: 225 x 266 x 321mm



