



# 2.1

## 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

# M-Audio

## BX5a and BX10s

maudio.co.uk

**W**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 pass-throughs (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 wide-ranging 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.

### FutureMusic VERDICT

#### BUILD



#### VALUE



#### EASE OF USE



#### VERSATILITY



#### RESULTS



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

**G**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!

### BX10s | £299

Ten-inch composite cone  
**Frequency Response:** 20Hz – 200Hz (-3dB points)  
**Crossover:** 50 to 200Hz, 24dB/octave  
**Amplifier:** 240 Watts average power into 8 Ohms  
**Inputs:** XLR, TRS balanced/unbalanced  
**Dimensions:** 381 x 381 x 381mm

### BX5a | £189/pair

Five-inch Kevlar LF driver  
 One-inch natural silk HF driver  
**Frequency response:** 56Hz-22kHz  
**Crossover:** 3kHz  
**Inputs:** XLR and quarter-inch balanced/unbalanced input  
**Dimensions:** 176 x 200 x 250mm





**KRK**

# RP6 and RP10S

krksys.com

**T**hese days, KRK's yellow glass-fibre cones are as recognisable as Yamaha's white ones. The review

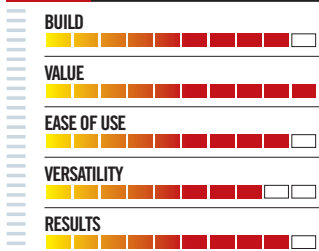
package comes from their more affordable RokIt range. Indeed they're so affordable that they're the only manufacturer that packs a six-inch cone into its sub-£300 price. Even so, the RP6 only turns in a combined power of 68 Watts so the playing field is still level. Specs wise this is a straightforward monitor with full connectivity (RCA, TRS jack and XLR) and a simple shelving HF control at 2kHz (+1dB, 0dB, -1dB, -2dB).

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 up-front HS50 and something more low-end-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 expensive, overall worked well and worth a shot if the extra £80 for the RP6s is an issue.

**FutureMusic** **VERDICT**

The KRKs win on the day but there's just a hair's-breadth between them and the Yamahas.

**RP6 | £299/pair**

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**

**RP10S | £219**

Ten-inch driver

**Frequency Response:** 36Hz to 150Hz

**Crossover:** 50Hz to 130Hz

**Amplifier:** 150 Watts

**Inputs:** XLR, RCA  
and quarter-inch TRS

Dimensions:  
**355 x 398 x 382mm**



**FutureMusic**  
**Platinum**  
Award



**FutureMusic**  
**Value Award**