

Monitor Audio Silver 500 8G

Now in its eighth generation, Monitor Audio's Silver series has evolved into a seven-strong range led by the 500 8G, a floorstander boosted by a host of updates

Review: **Mark Craven** Lab: **Paul Miller**

Monitor Audio says that its Silver series, which first appeared in 1999, is its best-selling range. That's easily believed, as the seven models [see boxout, p77] represent a step-up from the company's entry-level Bronze but still appear good value for money. At the top of the series is the Silver 500 8G floorstander tested here, a three-way design in a 1.12m-tall cabinet with a high-quality finish, and priced at £2650.

The speaker replaces the Silver 500 7G, which launched five years previously [*HFN* Oct '21]. Put both in a police lineup and you might struggle initially to tell them apart, but design differences do reveal themselves on closer inspection. Additionally, there's the small matter that it now comes in only three colour finishes rather than five – choose from High Gloss Black, Satin White or a new European Walnut with veneers 'carefully layered from sustainable timber'. Gone are the somewhat dated-looking Ash and Black Oak options.

In any finish, the Silver 500 8G is extremely smart. It doesn't veer away from the standard 'drive units in a square-edged box' look that's typical around this price point, but has a clean, fresh styling that should blend in anywhere. My only criticism? The semi-circular edging to the magnetically attached grilles, which only come in black and cover all four of the speaker's drive units, looks a bit out of place to my eyes.

SPIDER SENSE

Each driver has been upgraded for this eighth generation. Starting at the top, the Silver 500 8G's 25mm tweeter – with Monitor Audio's familiar C-CAM (ceramic-coated aluminium/magnesium) alloy dome – features a new neodymium magnet and compression ring. Attention has been paid to its rear chamber geometry to mitigate distortion and improve airflow, and a shorting ring added to linearise impedance. The tweeter's 'UD Waveguide II' has also been revised to optimise dispersion.

Mounted into the same (new-look) metal surround as the HF driver is a 75mm

C-CAM midrange. Debuted here is the latest evolution of Monitor Audio's Rigid Surface Technology (RST), where the cone's dimpled profile has been designed to increase rigidity and reduce 'colouration'. The RST III driver benefits from a new spider and voice coil, while its surround has been leveraged from the manufacturer's step-up Gold 6G series.

OWL QUIET

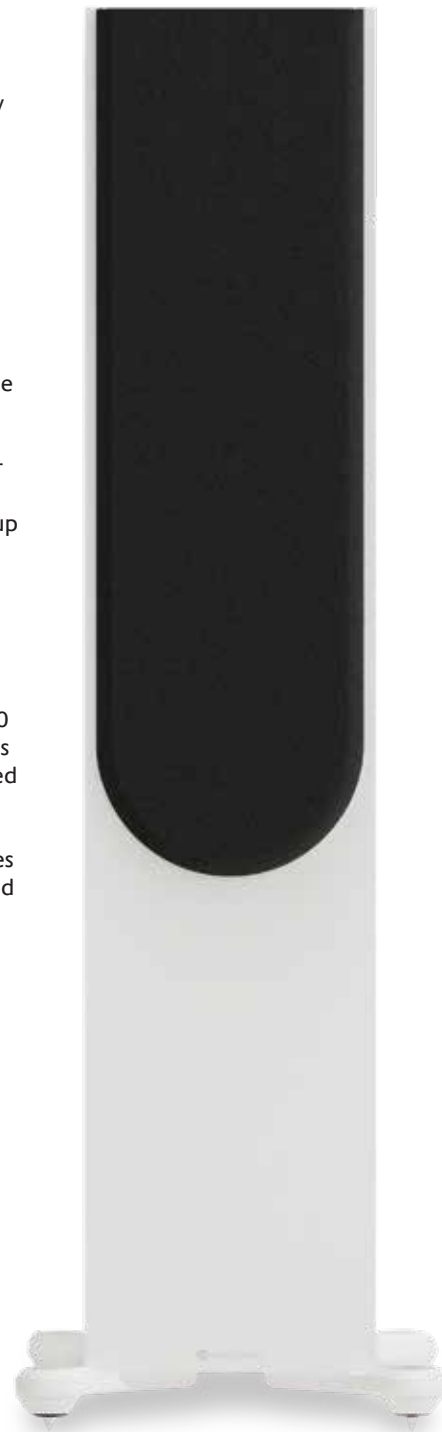
The rendered cut-away [see pic, right] shows the midrange driver's dedicated chamber, and the through-bolt construction used to strengthen the speaker's cabinet and manage resonances. All four drive units are mounted this way, the final two being 200mm C-CAM RST III woofers again featuring all-new motor assemblies and surrounds. The lower unit is mounted roughly midway up the baffle (there's no floor-assisted 'boundary boost' here) and both are tuned [see PM's Lab Report, p79] via two rear-facing 'Silent Flow' reflex ports.

This is another Silver 500 area showcasing revision, as the ports sport a revised inner profile 'inspired by the interlocking feathers of owls' [see pic, p79]. A strange choice? Well, owls are noted for a low-turbulence wing design that enables them to fly silently. Useful for predators... and loudspeaker performance too, apparently.

Naturally, the new driver implementation means the speaker's crossover has been comprehensively overhauled. Featuring split bass and mid/treble arms, the 640Hz/2.8kHz network claims 'a cleaner, more transparent signal path' from the use of higher-quality capacitors, inductors and resistors. Dual binding posts, supporting bi-wire operation, are linked by metal jumper bars for conventional single-wire/amp use.

Supporting the Silver 500 8G's 24.3kg cabinets are new outrigger feet that have

RIGHT: Offered in High Gloss Black, Satin White (pictured) and European Walnut, the braced MDF cabinet is further reinforced via MA's 'through-bolt technology' connecting the rear of the driver magnets to the back panel [p75 & p79]



'Through-bolt construction is used to strengthen the MDF cabinet and manage resonances'

LOUDSPEAKER

BELOW: A 25mm C-CAM 'Gold' dome tweeter (with dimpled 'UD Waveguide II') crosses over at 2.8kHz from a 75mm C-CAM RST III midrange that, in turn, takes over from a pair of 200mm C-CAM RST III bass drivers at 640Hz

ALL SYSTEMS GO

Apart from the flagship Hyphn [HFN Jun '23] and Studio 89 [HFN Nov '24], Monitor Audio's speakers come in multi-model series aimed at both hi-fi and home cinema systems. The Silver 8G range comprises seven options, the 500 8G and 300 8G floorstanders, and 100 and 50 standmounts, joined by a centre channel model, a slim on-wall design and an 'up-firing' module. The last of these, the Silver AMS 8G [pictured], is for use in Dolby Atmos-enabled systems. Installed on top of front/rear speakers in a multichannel set-up, the angled dispersion and crossover tuning of its two-way driver arrangement yields a ceiling-reflected output at the listening position that mimics that of a physical overhead speaker (the cabinets also have key-hole fixings for on-wall placement, with drivers angled downwards). Note that the Silver 7G's bipole/dipole on-wall 'FX' speaker has not been carried over for this latest generation.



trickled down from Monitor Audio's high-end Platinum 3G series and feel very sturdy once fitted. A magnetic metal disc on the top of each foot can be removed to reveal an Allen bolt for height adjustment, and the outriggers' slightly compliant rubber bases mean you shouldn't damage your floors at any point during installation. Spikes are supplied for carpeted rooms.

SILVER SERVICE

We setup the speakers in the HFN Listening Room [HFN Yearbook '25], on-axis with the listening position as per the Quick Start Guide instructions. For price-commensurate amplification they were connected to both Cambridge Audio Evo 300 [see p86] and Hegel H200 streaming integrators [reviewed next issue], although a session with Gryphon's muscular Apex power amp and the Constellation Revelation 2 preamp [HFN Jan '25] proved they aren't embarrassed by high-end components. Monitor Audio has a track record in manufacturing affordable, crowd-pleasing loudspeakers and the Silver 500 8Gs are no exception.

The performance progresses smoothly from warm-yet-powerful bass to an incisive top-end. There's no aspect of the sound that causes a cocked ear, the Silver 500 8Gs having an easy listenability to match the relatively easy demands they place on partnering electronics. A hint of darkness in the upper-bass/lower-mid region, and a lack of that open, ethereal treble that characterises more expensive speakers, doesn't detract from their all-round appeal.

Give the Silver 500 8Gs dynamic, full-bore orchestral music and they respond with an exciting, largescale delivery. The rollercoaster ride

that is Danny Elfman's opening theme to the 1989 *Batman* film [*Batman – Original Motion Picture Score*; Warner Bros., 9259772] offered bold transients, deep bass notes and huge swells that sounded ready to burst. At the same time, the composer's lighter touches – including pizzicato strings and celeste – weren't lost in the melee. These speakers have the resolution and tonal subtlety to pick a path through complex mixes.

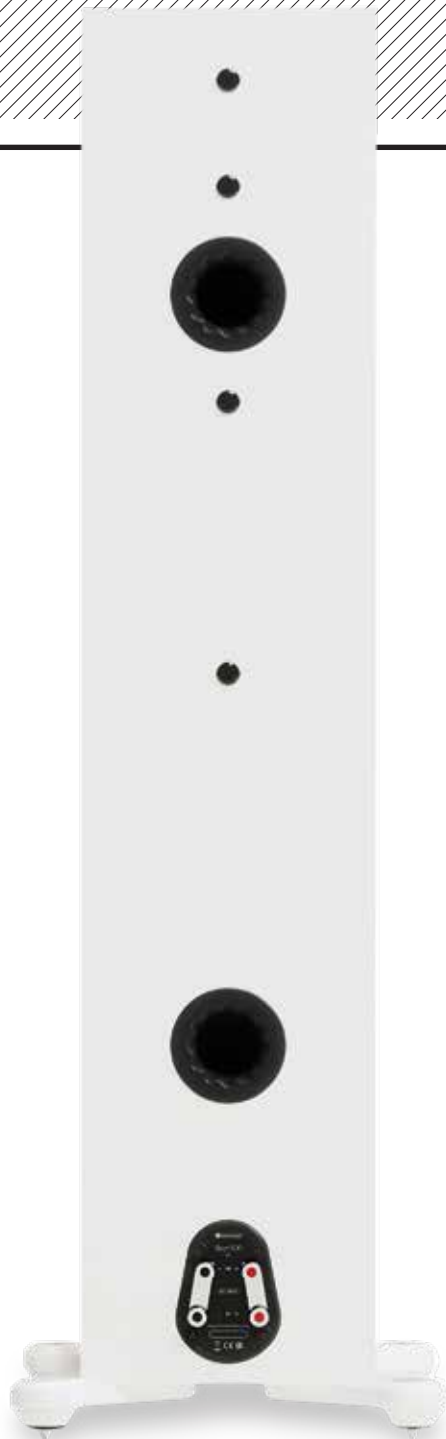
Still action-packed, but altogether different, is Prince's 'Partyman', a funk-filled pop track that's a highlight of the film's *other* soundtrack album [*Batman*, OST; Warner Bros., 9259362]. Here the Silver 500 8Gs showed a tight grip on the low-end as they locked into the percussive groove of the rhythm section. Those twin 200mm bass drivers certainly appear well-controlled, responding to the music in a flash.

'The orchestral rollercoaster ride sounded ready to burst'

GRAMMAR LESSON

PM's measurement of the speakers' bass response isn't far off the quoted 28Hz (–6dB) specification [see Lab Report, p79] and our listening reveals they have plenty to give in the low-bass region. Genuine bass extension without excessive roll-off is a reason one might opt for a floorstander over a standmount, and Monitor Audio's new Silver 500 models oblige. They tracked the long-held and very deep electronic notes during the London Grammar song 'Hey Now' [*If You Wait*; MADART1] and leaned into the voluptuous basslines on The Band's 'Up On Cripple Creek' [*The Band*, Capitol Records; 96kHz/24-bit]. ➔





LEFT: Bi-wire/bi-amp terminals may be combined with a solid link. Note Monitor Audio's 'through-bolt' driver bracing and Silent Flow ports with 'biomimetic flare geometry' to reduce turbulence

strikes me as odd, as this supergroup containing former members of Guns N' Roses and Stone Temple Pilots surely weren't short of a few quid). Through Monitor Audio's speakers the pace and energy was all there, but they couldn't quite separate the layers of guitars, drums and effects-laden vocals. I may have been guilty of asking the Silver 500 8Gs to make a silk purse from a sow's ear...

TRANCE FIXED

Not to worry, as Polish guitarist Marcin's instrumental cover single of Derek And The Dominos' 'Layla' [Masterworks, 44.1kHz/24-bit] exemplified just how good the speaker can be with higher-quality material. After a brief intro of gently strummed nylon strings, this track explodes into an astonishing recreation of Eric Clapton's famous riff. The Silver 500 8Gs kept up with Marcin's lightning-fast (and percussive) technique, and built a soundstage where clean, expressive mid tones sat above resonant lows.

Similarly, the sombre electro-pop of Sevdaliza's 'Joanna' [Shabrang, Twisted Elegance; 44.1kHz/24-bit] hung the singer's vocals in front of a sparse background where piano and synths seemed to appear and disappear from the background.

This was hypnotic stuff, skilfully rendered. These speakers aren't just big and beautiful to behold – they can sound it, too. 🎧

Hearing this 1969 track confirmed the Silver 500 8G's chameleonic nature. Where earlier they had confidently described the angular, focused feel of Prince's 'Partyman', they now sounded looser and more free-flowing. Hammond organ, blues guitar and the twangy vocals of Levon Helm oozed into one another, producing a big, swampy sound. It made me want to dive into a bowl of gumbo, or whatever the Canadian equivalent is.

'Suckertrain Blues', by Velvet Revolver [Contraband, Deluxe Ed., RCA; 96kHz/24-bit], provided a different test, as this heavy-rock song has a very mediocre mix (which

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

The sub-£3k speaker market is heavily populated, but there's always room for a model as stylish and well-made as Monitor Audio's Silver 500 8G – more so when it sounds so appealing. Able to generate plenty of drama from a powerful, extended bass response, the speaker also offers plenty in the way of fine detail and insight. This is value-for-money personified, even with the price hike over the 7G version.

Sound Quality: 88%

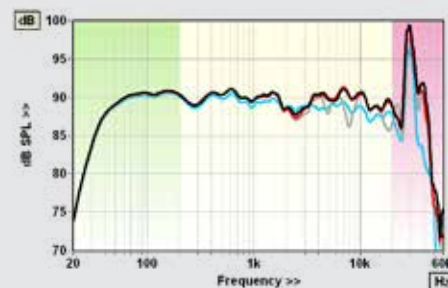


LAB REPORT

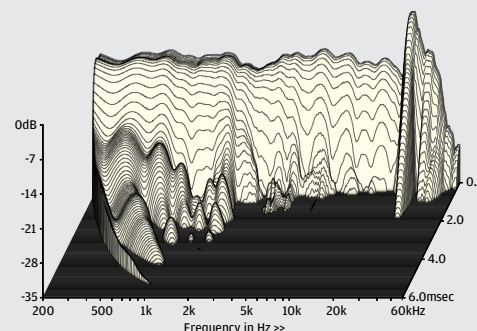
MONITOR AUDIO SILVER 500 8G

There is a clear family resemblance between the Silver 500 8G and its 7G predecessor [HFN Oct '21] although the DNA has been further refined. The impedance trend, for example, is largely unchanged through the bass – including the dip at the 35Hz port tuning – but the swings in mid/treble phase ($-48^{\circ}/+28^{\circ}$) are reduced. As a result, if the 8G's 3.8ohm/151Hz minimum is slightly lower (this is a 4ohm nominal speaker, not 8ohm), the minimum 1.8ohm/97Hz EPDR is no tougher on your amplifier. This moderately easy load might be achieved for some loss in sensitivity, response uniformity or bass extension, but that's not the case here. Sensitivity is a fine 90dB (re. 500Hz-8kHz/2.83V/1m) while the forward response remains impressively flat with errors of just $\pm 1.7\text{dB}/\pm 2.0\text{dB}$, respectively, and with a very tight 0.5dB pair matching [200Hz-20kHz; red/black traces, Graph 1].

Since the 7G, MA has engineered a 2.5dB dip from 2-4kHz 'to balance an off-axis rise due to baffle step interactions' while the sharp dip at 24kHz – prelude to the +9dB C-CAM Gold Dome tweeter resonance at 29kHz [pink shaded area, Graph 1 and also see Graph 2] – is now much reduced, affording a smoother 10-20kHz response. Proof of the pudding is revealed in the exceptionally flat off-axis response [blue trace], suggesting a mild toe-in or out might be beneficial. The snap-on grille should not be left in place, however [grey trace]. The lower woofer and port still both have a 'cleaner' output while the 200mm bass drivers operate over a 52-400Hz/-6dB bandwidth, supplemented by the 35Hz tuning of the ports, to deliver an impressive, diffraction-corrected bass extension of 31Hz (-6dB re. 200Hz). PM



ABOVE: Resp. inc. nearfield summed drivers/ports [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. L, blk; R, red; $\pm 15^{\circ}$, blue; grille, grey



ABOVE: A mild cone mode before the 2-4kHz response dip, but C-CAM tweeter break-up dominates at 29kHz

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V – 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	89.7dB / 89.9dB / 88.0dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	3.84ohm @ 151Hz 18.8ohm @ 19.4Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	-48° @ 73Hz $+28^{\circ}$ @ 47Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz–20kHz)	0.45dB / $\pm 1.7\text{dB}/\pm 2.0\text{dB}$
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	31Hz / 45.5kHz/44.9kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.25% / 0.15% / 0.65%
Dimensions (HWD) / Weight (each)	1120x340x432mm / 24kg