

SO UN-BRITISH

MONITOR AUDIO'S FLAGSHIP DESIGN IS NOT YOUR TYPICAL LAID-BACK LOUDSPEAKER FROM ACROSS THE POND

BY LISTENING PANEL

ALTHOUGH MONITOR AUDIO has changed hands once over the decades, this British company's approach to producing quality loudspeakers has not changed one iota in its more than 30 years of existence. Monitor Audio is considered a prime-mover in metal-dome tweeter development, and as you shall read, the Gold Signature Series GS60 is the company's reference statement product—to be sure.

Appearance

THE ELEGANT FIT and finish of these speakers will appeal to refined tastes. The cabinetry—assorted real-wood or piano-black options—boasts smooth radiused edges and finish quality second to none. Cast aluminum plinths, with what MA calls a “discreet aerofoil profile,” and integrated, machined metal spikes decouple the speaker cabinets from to the floor.

The Sound

AS IS THE protocol for all loudspeakers evaluated at *The Inner Ear*, the GS60s were connected to various in-house amplifiers. It's our opinion that this approach helps determine a loudspeakers' compatibility with, and reaction to, different amplifiers. For this review, we used three great amplifiers: the new Bryston 28B-SST powerhouse monoblocks (reviewed in this issue) rated at 1000 watts/channel, the Musical Fidelity integrated KW 500 amp (reviewed in Vol. 17, No. 1) rated at 500 watts/channel and the single-ended tubed Wyetech Labs Topaz (reviewed in Vol. 17, No. 2) rated at 18 watts/channel. When a pre-amplifier was necessary in the chain, we used the ModWright SWL 9.0SE, reviewed in this issue. Our source component was the Audio Aero Prestige CD player reviewed in the

last issue.

For our first auditioning session, we hooked up the KW 500 amplifier, sat back and began playing our usual collection of CDs, which include a wide range of musical styles from classical, jazz and blues to some really well produced rock'n roll.

First impressions are often indicative of the final opinion, and our listening panel's first noteworthy comments were that the GS60s have an electrostatic type of sound quality in the midrange and highs. In other words, listeners can expect outstanding inner



The GS60 soars into the 40kHz region, filling our layers of harmonics.

FACTS

MODEL

Gold Signature Series GS60

MANUFACTURER

Monitor Audio

DIMENSIONS

42.3 (h)
12.6 (w)
15.8 (d)

WEIGHT

60 lbs each

FINISH OPTIONS

Cherry, Natural Oak, Piano Black Walnut, Silver Santos Rosewood

RATING



PRICE

\$5,000.00 Cdn
\$4,000.00 US

CONTACT

In North America
Kevro Int'l, Inc.
905.428.9000
kevro.com

detail, crystal clear voices, subtle tonal hues and absolutely no colouration. The top frequencies can sound a little hard, though neither jarring and nor disagreeable; however, beware of poorly recorded material. With the good program material we had on hand the tweeter handled ultra high frequencies in a totally culminated manner and with the utmost resolution. With this system set-up, upper bass couldn't have been better, emphasizing resolution where it counts. Deep bass, on the other hand, was just a bit shy with the lowest possible notes—around 20Hz—though good control and resolution was evident to around 32Hz.

When we switched the system over to the new Bryston monoblocks we noticed the introduction of a few new sonic elements, namely, somewhat richer—though not deeper—bass, and softer sounding midrange and high frequencies, which nevertheless sounded smooth and musically pleasing. Midrange information was on par with that of the Musical Fidelity KW combination. Bass, both upper and lower, was considered the best of all the system arrangements in this review. This system com-

bination also introduced more expansive sound stage dimensions without diminishing individual instrument focus and imaging boundaries.

The Topaz amplifier was used for the final GS60s test drive. Though the speaker's specs note that minimum power requirements are 60 watts R.M.S., its sensitivity rating of 90dB called for an experiment. In fact, the Topaz single-ended low-power amplifier introduced the smoothest highs and the most pleasing midrange of the three combinations although, as is often the case with low-watt amplifiers, the bass frequencies did not perform as well as with the other two amplifiers used for this evaluation. While the bass was potent and melodious, it was not as well defined as with the Bryston amps. Midrange information, on the other hand, was smoother than with the Musical Fidelity KW system but, ultimately, not as revealing. Highs, however, would have been difficult to improve upon as they approached peak refinement with the Topaz.

All system combinations revealed the GS60s imaging proficiency with clearly defined focus on instruments and voices

The GS60s have an electrostatic type of sound quality in the midrange and highs

TECHNOLOGY

THE MONITOR AUDIO GS60, a four-driver three-way design, employs two 6½ inch bass drivers, one 6½ inch midrange speaker and a one-inch gold-anodized dome tweeter—each mounted in plain sight on the front baffle in a holding frame made of die cast zinc-aluminum alloy. Instead of relying on screws—the standard method of mounting drivers—the GS60's drive assembly is clamped in position to provide greater rigidity.

The midrange and bass drivers feature what

Monitor Audio calls "Rigid Surface Technology," (RST®) which dimples the alloy drivers to reduce mass, increase stiffness and eliminate bending. A Finite Element Analysis (an algorithm-based program that determines responsiveness to mass, volume, temperature, stress, strain and velocity, among other criteria), was employed to further assure smooth frequency response and reduce irregularities. MAs gold-anodized dome tweeter employs ceramic-coated

aluminum/magnesium material, originally developed by the aerospace industry. The tweeter operates up to 43kHz in a very linear mode, thereby eliminating the use of a super tweeter to handle upper frequency harmonics. The system employs an interesting, proprietary reflex port that relies on a straight-ripled construction, designed to reduce port turbulence while boosting air-flow speed.

The components and construction techniques used in the design of the GS60s are chosen

carefully to reduce or cancel resonances and include tongue-in-groove construction and vertical and radial internal bracing to assure a solid environment for the drivers. The GS60 is a two-chamber design, with the midrange driver housed in its own sealed cavity. As well, the speaker boasts a dual bass-port reflex-differential tuning system. Frequency response is quoted from 28Hz to 43kHz; sensitivity is 90dB w/m; crossover points are listed as 2.7kHz and 150Hz.

and realistically depicted boundaries.

Synopsis & Commentary

THE VARIOUS SYSTEM combinations rendered sound through the Monitor Audio GS60s that was neither good nor great; rather, outstanding would be a more apt description. What we didn't mention earlier is that throughout this review the listening panel experimented with two different cable set-ups—one from JPS Labs, the other from Nordost. As it turns out, the Bryston amplified system sounded best with the new JPS Labs Aluminata cables, while with the Wyetech Topaz-based system we preferred Nordost Valhalla cabling. Interestingly, the Musical Fidelity KW 500 system split the vote as sonic differences were often not noticeable regardless of the cables used.

For more than two decades Monitor Audio has continued to design its own drivers and, in the process, developed the gold dome tweeter, among other driver innovations. About 18 years ago, *The Inner Ear* reviewed a pair of MA1200 Gold loudspeakers, which then sold for about Cdn \$3,000 and which became one of our

favourite speakers. At that time, MA began using metal dome technology, soon developing an aluminum/magnesium dome tweeter anodized with gold. Prior to that time, our Editor recalls, the first Monitor Audio designs imported to North America relied on Kef drivers. The tweeters used in the GS60s represent a further advancement in design, resulting in a quite obvious improvement in the overall sound.

What the listening panel liked about the GS60s was the designers' attention to detail, such as the decoupling arrangement, the solid binding posts and the immaculate cabinet finish. As our system combinations reveal, it's safe to say that the GS60s, with their exceptionally high level of neutrality, can be connected to virtually any good quality amplifier and will reveal its sonic disposition. Ultimately, it is precisely this quality in the GS60s that will allow the end-user to select back-up components and, thus, a sound customized to his/her liking. We recommend listening to these loudspeakers. The GS60s may just provide the sound you are looking for.

The tweeters used in the GS60s represent a further advancement in design