

Monitor Audio PL300 AV

★★★★★ www.monitoraudio.co.uk

Brilliant home cinema performance and superlative stereo come together in this majestic Monitor Audio Platinum-series system

FOR

Massive, incredibly detailed sound, with taut, powerful bass, superlative space and clarity, and brilliant cohesion; stunning build quality and finish

AGAINST

Needs a big room to work at its best; it's not exactly cheap

VERDICT

One of the finest 5.1 speaker packages on the market; delivers everything you could wish for and more

YOU'LL ALREADY KNOW about the high regard we have for Monitor Audio's Platinum-series – if not, turn back to p56 to find reviews of the PL300 floorstanders and PL100 standmounts, which form the front and rear channels in the PL300 AV system tested here. So, put the two designs together, and you ought to have something special.

Just how special, though, has come as something of a surprise to us. Simply put, the PL300 AV is a truly fabulous surround system, one of the best we've ever tried. It plays everything superbly, from live concert Blu-rays to madcap

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action movies, revealing every last gasp of subtle effects and powering through sofa-shaking dynamics with a deftly judged blend of sublime detail and thrilling drive. And of course, it's also sensational in stereo, as you'd expect. In fact, after several weeks enjoying its company, we've got no closer to exposing any major weaknesses.

So, you've got PL300s up front and PL100s on the rears – what about the rest of the system? First, in comes a PLC350 centre channel to complete the surround soundfield. Naturally,

it's a substantial device, its drive-unit complement matching that fitted to the huge PL300s. That ensures the front three speakers integrate superbly, but it also makes the centre a hefty beast, one that just won't fit most kit racks. Monitor Audio's optional centre-channel floorstand, shown here, is a worthy investment at £300.

Bass in your space

Rounding things off is the formidable PLW-15 active subwoofer, which uses a rigid 15in long-throw metal drive unit in a sealed, superlatively constructed 50kg enclosure finished to the same lavish standard as the other speakers in the system. Fed by an astonishingly fast 1000w Class D power amplifier, capable of reaching down to an ultra-low 16Hz and blessed with extensive adjustability via remote control, it's as every bit as fast, articulate and potent as it ought to be in such vaunted company.

Quality needs quality

What else do you need to know? First, remember that a system this capable needs plenty of space to work. If you can afford the package, that shouldn't be an issue. You'll also need to have good partnering kit – amps, a Blu-ray player and the like (see *Perfect Partners*) – because while the Monitors aren't that demanding to drive or fussy about tonal matching, they're just so darn good that to listen to them using anything second-rate would almost seem a crime.

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION



Stands that deliver

The PL100s will suit a variety of speaker stands, but for surround use we like Monitor Audio's own £400-a-pair designs, which bolt securely to the speaker.

The centre of it all

The PLC350 centre is vast – it just won't fit in most AV racks. Best to place it on the stand shown here, another Monitor Audio special. It tilts, too.

Finish made in heaven

We've said it before, but it's worth saying again just how wonderful these speakers look, and how well-made they are. That black front trim? Leather...

Hang on to your sofa

1000w of Class D power and a stiff 15in driver ensure plenty of bass, but the extensive user adjustments are worth a nod: it's easy to fine-tune this sub.

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL?



Superb cohesion

The three speakers at the front of the system share the same type of bass, midrange and high-frequency drive units: that helps the system to deliver a matchless spread of sound in your room.



Power corrupts

With 1000w of output and a 15in drive unit to shift air, the PLW-15 sub is a formidably potent partner for the rest of this system. It goes super-low, yet retains enough speed to relay music well.



Metal guru

Although they're formed from lavish chunks of wood and leather, it's metal that forms the signature material with MAs. Those metal drivers are wonderfully fast and expressive.



Gentle giants

This isn't a particularly difficult set-up for an amp to drive: a decent £2000 receiver could cope with their load. That said, the 2500w Anthem kit (*Perfect Partners*, right) is a far better bet...

SPECS

PL300 FRONTS DRIVE UNITS
2 x 20cm bass, 10cm midrange, C-CAM ribbon tweeter
FREQ RESPONSE
28Hz-100kHz
IMPEDANCE (all)
4 ohms
POWER HANDLING
100w-300w
SIZE (hwd)
111 x 41 x 47cm
WEIGHT 44kg

PLC350 CENTRE DRIVE UNITS
2 x 20cm bass, 10cm midrange, C-CAM ribbon tweeter
FREQ RESPONSE
32Hz-100kHz
POWER HANDLING
100w-250w
SIZE (hwd)
29 x 80 x 37cm
WEIGHT 33.5kg

PL100 REARS DRIVE UNITS
16.5cm mid/bass, C-CAM ribbon tweeter

FREQ RESPONSE
42Hz-100kHz
POWER HANDLING
50w-120w
SIZE (hwd)
37 x 22 x 28cm
WEIGHT 13kg

PLW-15 SUB DRIVE UNITS
29 x 80 x 37cm
FREQ RESPONSE
16Hz-160Hz, variable
POWER 1000w Class D
SIZE (hwd)
45 x 48 x 47cm
WEIGHT 50kg

PERFECT PARTNERS



PROJECTOR
SIM2 HT3000E ★★★★★
£ 10,000

Extremely high-precision optics and a very nifty six-segment colour wheel means the '3000E is capable of throwing truly stunning images. It's a picture you could luxuriate in for hours – spin the Blu-ray of *Apocalypse* and you'll see what we mean. See p144.



BLU-RAY PLAYER
PIONEER BDP-LX91 ★★★★★
£ 2000

The 'LX91 might take a little longer than normal to load discs, but once they're spinning the picture is sublime. Punchy, vibrant colours contrast well against deep, inky blacks. There's also onboard decoding of high-def audio formats to PCM, with analogue DTS-HD Master Audio coming soon. See p118.



SURROUND AMPLIFIER
ANTHEM STATEMENT D2v AND P5
★★★★★ **£ 16,100**

Fearsomely powerful and formidably detailed, this astonishing combination of processor (D2v) and 2500w five-channel power amp (P5) works wonderfully with the Monitor Audios. It gives the speakers full rein, and it teems with detail. See p126 for a full review.

TRY THESE

YOU WANT TO HEAR WHAT THIS KIT CAN DO? TRY THESE...



THE DARK KNIGHT

Dial up the Batpod sequence and hang on for dear life: the scale, space and sheer drama of the scene will take your breath away.



BAND OF BROTHERS

A gem of a TV series and a brilliant buy on Blu-ray – the forceful combat scenes test both dynamics and speed to the max.



THE PRODIGY

Invaders Must Die Should speakers this classy be asked to play music this nasty? A good question, but let rip with the title track, and who cares...