

Back

draft



On its own, the **Silver 5L** acquires itself well as a nearfield monitor. Add the **BH Bass Augmentor** and you've got a system that *really* shifts air. *Paul Mac* holds onto his hat...

An amazing range of small monitors nowadays purport to be studio-quality reference speakers. Unfortunately, a lot of these two-driver, foam-lined chipboard cabinets wouldn't be fit as a back up for my clock-radio.

Thankfully, the 5L/BH system does not come into this category. With their black 'hammered' finish, and projecting mid/bass drivers, the 5L monitors have an unmistakably professional aura about them. The technical data that

accompanies the speakers points out that the 'two plane' front panel is for time-aligning the drivers. This aspect of their design may echo a battery-powered busking combo, but thankfully, this does not extend to the sound

department.

Apart from one having a more pointed centre dome, there appears to be no difference between the mid and bass drive units. So why have two? Well, again we must refer to the technical supplement for this. The idea

The essentials...

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is that a second driver (the 'diffraction booster') makes up for the low frequency losses (below 400Hz) that occur due to a small baffle. Thus, so the theory goes, extending the perceived bass response without the necessity to enlarge the baffle, attenuate the higher frequencies or add a port (the box is probably too small for an effective port anyway).

With the two 5L cabinets come the optional BH Bass Augmentors; separate 16.5" x 13.5" cabinets for taking care of frequencies below 80Hz. The BH and 5L are split for several reasons, mainly to reduce vibration problems but also to allow convenient placement of the necessarily larger units.

It is unusual to find close field monitors with more than one box, and this particular arrangement seems

With the BH's in, the bottom end of the spectrum suddenly filled and gave the sound substance

like a neat way of solving the early bass roll-off found with other small close field monitors. The augmentors are plain, smooth-painted black boxes with only an extension port and two pairs of banana plug sockets showing (all connections in this system are via 4mm banana plugs).

The manual gives helpful guidelines and advice regarding installation, including recommended positioning, speaker cables and connections. In some instances, it even explains why. Also, at the front of the manual are a few pages explaining the thinking behind the Silver 5L/BH monitor system. While this is nice, in some parts it reads a little like a 'congratulations on purchasing' section.

Listening in

The first thing to say about the sound is that this system is, emphatically, a closefield monitoring one. As the 1-2 metre barrier is breached, there's a noticeable drop in sound clarity. Although the

phenomenon is due in part to the increasing dominance of the room, rather than a problem with the speakers, it is nonetheless obvious that these monitors have a very specific job.

The BH bass augmentors are listed as an option for the system, though if you are serious about your monitoring, these should be compulsory. Switching the BHs in and out gave the bass game away. With the BHs in, the bottom end of the spectrum suddenly filled and gave the sound substance. Without the opportunity for comparison, the argument for more bass would have been less great.

The literature suggests that it is at around 80Hz when the BHs become useful, and although I have no reason to doubt this, they are, response-wise, on their way down at this point. The port shifted the most air at around the 30 Hz mark. The slope began at around 50 Hz, which is where the 5Ls began to assert themselves. Even at lower volumes, the port on the bass augmentor seem to shift a lot of air.

As well as an ordinary selection of program, the speaker system was also subjected to sine waves at various frequencies and also wide band sweeps. At a very low 15Hz, the BH ports does very little, while the mid/low drivers in the 5Ls were going like loonies. Moving up to 30Hz, the bass augmentor comes into its own, and also makes a good hair dryer. By the time 100Hz was reached, the 5Ls were doing most of the work.

Judging by the movements

of the mid/bass drivers, the crossover to the tweeter begins at around 2.5KHz. The tweeters stood up well to higher levels, as did the lower drivers, except for one odd resonance at 16KHz in a very small dynamic window. Using a specially-recorded reference CD, with left and right feeds being out of phase with regard to each other, levels were gradually

good response. It is worth noting that, all through this testing, nothing broke. We also had a chat with the technical bods at Silver Productions Ltd, who pointed out that the 5L/BH system was designed with a reverberant rather than an anechoic field in mind, which, apart from saving a bit on research, puts these speakers in the real world.

Verdict

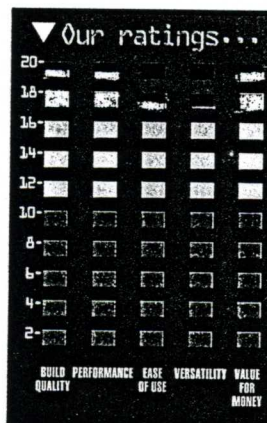
General listening gave favourable returns. The bass of the 5Ls is impressive considering their size, but once you hear what the BHs do for the complete picture, you may wonder why close field monitoring has neglected this two-cabinet arrangement for so long.

Any criticisms would be directed at the upper end of the spectrum, where the highs seem a little more detached than one might expect. As a result, the mids, given the right program, can sound fractionally flat. That said, as long as you stay inside the 'close field', these are monitors with much more to offer than the 'industry standard', small, close field monitors that spring to mind.

Of course, there are pricey systems with a lot to offer in single cabinet format, but the Silver monitors prove that there are still strides to be made in this field, if companies would apply themselves instead of recycling old solutions. In the price department, I don't think anyone can complain about this system. Go and listen to a couple of Silver 5L's - and don't forget the BH Bass Augmentors. ●

▼ Spec check

Sensitivity	87dB @ 2.83V (1W @ 8Ω)
Power handling	150W nominal music pwr
Short-term max pwr	250W (350W with BH and single amp)
Long-term max pwr	80W (100W with BH and single amp)
- both the above	IEC 268-5
Listening window	60 (±30) degrees horizontal
	30 (±15) degrees vertical
Dimensions	5L 260 X 175 X 210mm
	BH 410 X 330 X 330mm
Weight	5L 6Kg
	BH 14Kg



increased, and I listened for signs of erratic speaker function, which would point to irregularities between drivers. There were none to be heard, and the 5Ls took some very high levels before any signs of non-linearity became obvious.

Lastly, a quick check was done, with an impulse click for attack and damping. The latter was the most satisfying; very quick and very clean, with attack coming a close second. Another way to check this is with your favourite kick drum. Under test it gave satisfying pop in the attack, pointing to light or well-loaded mid/bass drivers with