

**ATC C1 | Speaker package | £3250**

# “Do or don’t madden the neighbours”

**FOR** Spacious and detailed; great integration; expressive

**AGAINST** You’ll need to budget for dedicated stands



**Every now and** then precedent counts for very little, if anything; listen to almost every great band’s third or fourth album. Thankfully for ATC, and our eardrums, its C1 surround speaker package does a distinguished family proud.

The set-up comprises four ATC SCM7s, which are standmounter monitors sporting 25mm soft-dome tweeters and a 12.5cm mid/bass driver, a CIC centre to match (though with a pair of those mid/bass drivers), and the C1 subwoofer boasting an impressive 31cm, down-firing bass driver.

## Trademark look

Unless you’re a complete stranger to ATC products you’ll recognise the aesthetic. Our test kit is in what ATC names cherry, which is essentially light brown, or there’s the option of black ash (black), all in the company’s tidy yet undoubtedly smart trademark style. We’re somewhere between wanting to look at them and thinking we’d happily ignore them and let the music play.

As it’s a package built exclusively of standmounter speakers, you’ll also have to shell out for some decent speaker stands - but they shouldn’t be disproportionately expensive and the C1s’ sealed-box design

means they are less fussy than some about positioning. In terms of physical considerations, it’s an ideal package for any small to medium-sized room.

## Stands to deliver

We BluTack the C1 system to our Atacama speaker stands - the standmounters have flat wooden bases so you’ll need to tack them down lest you lose some of the sonic body - wire up to a Yamaha RX-A3060 AV amplifier and, having let them run in over a weekend, play a Blu-ray of *300: Rise Of An Empire*.

Immediately we’re drawn to the way in which this package integrates its speakers - thunder and flying arrows crack and sail behind us with exceptional detail, while not dominating the main action or dialogue. Given that we have modestly sized standmounters rather than big floorstanders here, you might expect the sound to be lacking in weight. It’s not. You’ll be pleasantly surprised by how rich the surround effects are.

You’ll likely require something bigger if you’re filling a large room, but we can’t deny the ATCs their impressively wide sense of space. Despite perhaps not having the muscle to properly fill an area the size

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of our listening room (8m x 6m), the sound is anything but boxed in, giving a great sense of scale and distance in tune with what’s happening on our projector.

In some ways you might have expected us to begin by praising the centre speaker, given its smorgasbord of *fortes*. ATC says the CIC centre is designed to complement the SCM7s you have in the corners of your room, and it certainly shares their solid, balanced tone. Even in the heat of battle, with a busy score and even busier list of sound effects, their edges are neither sharp nor smoothed: it’s a balance that has us almost forgetting to listen critically and just becoming lost in the film.

## Good expression

Perhaps the most important asset for any centre speaker, though, given it will be handling most of a film’s dialogue, is



**USE IT WITH**  
Yamaha RX-A3060  
£2000

This AV amp has effortless power and a superbly immersive soundfield. See p64

## IN DETAIL...



The C1’s downward-firing subwoofer is a compact unit yet packs 200W of amplification.



The neat, clear control system on the front of the subwoofer makes it a breeze to set up.



ATC’s CIC centre speaker shares its drive units with the SCM7s, leading to a cohesive overall sound.



The SCM7s are the smallest in ATC’s standmounter range, but they live up to their big brothers’ reputation

Sub aside, all the speakers use the same tweeter and mid/bass units, ensuring a consistent character between channels



## KEY FEATURES



200W subwoofer



SCM7s:

300 x 174 x 215mm



CIC centre:

161 x 410 x 280mm

dynamics. We could probably have picked a more difficult film for the CIC's exam, given the over-acting in *300* is rife almost to the point of secondary-school theatre production, but nonetheless the level of expression is a delight.

It's easy to say the most important aspect of a film is its content, but poor dynamics will ultimately leave all your characters sounding achingly bored which, unless you're watching some mid-2000s coming-of-age indie drama, is far from what your director intended. Essentially, it's much more an immersive experience if your speaker package can effectively render vocal expression. The ATC C1 can.

### Get ready to rumble

A word on the sub: it's just about light enough for a few of our team to lift alone without putting their backs out, but packs more than enough of a punch that you won't be suffering from bass envy. Rumbles are indeed rumbles - you can feel ships colliding through the soles of your feet, underlining the solid body of the rest of the package with authoritative weight, and a dial on the front allows you to tweak the

bottom end so you do or don't madden the neighbours, whichever is your preference.

### Entertaining with music too

We've mentioned dynamics, which the C1 package masters both in terms of 'quiet to loud' and those more nuanced levels of expression, but the ATC has also refined its unimpeachable sense of timing. If you've seen this *300* sequel, you'll know much momentum is lost through its ridiculousness, but this package is able to claw some of that back through its presentation of the film's music. It's exceptionally fast, building anticipation as we head into each battle and firing each arrow with uniform precision.

Which all leads us to the point that this is not simply a product for home cinema. If you have a particularly accomplished AV amp, these SCM7s can be enormously entertaining with stereo music.

Using the same Yamaha amp, we spin Lou Reed's *Transformer* on CD and allow ourselves to be serenaded with tales of New York cross-dressing. It's a wonderfully

musical performance, with all you'd expect from so proficient a manufacturer of studio monitors, and one which could only be bettered by adding more stereo-

focused components further up the chain.

### Fine value for money

We suppose the highest praise we can offer ATC here is that it gives our considerably more expensive PMC reference system a run for its money. By that we don't mean the two systems are exactly on a par, but that neither is lacking in any department - their characters are equally appealing. In a room a little smaller than the one we have for testing, at the moment we can think of no better alternative for the money. A consummate triumph, to be sure.

### WHAT HI-FI? says

#### Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

COMPATIBILITY ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

**VERDICT** If you aren't trying to fill an auditorium, this speaker package is one of the best around