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

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

An integrated Empire

Having let the speakers run in over a weekend, we play a Blu-ray of *300: Rise Of An Empire*. Immediately we're drawn to the speakers' integration - thunder and flying arrows crack and sail behind us with exceptional detail while not bearing over the main action or dialogue.

The ATCs have an impressively wide sense of

space. The sound is anything but boxed in, giving us a great sense of scale and distance in tune with what's happening on our projector.

The CIC centre is designed to complement the SCM7s you have spread around you. Even in the heat of battle, with a busy score and even busier list of domineering sound effects, their edges are never sharp nor smoothed. It's a balance that has us forgetting to listen and just becoming lost in the film.



This ATC package proves a match for many more expensive rivals

Perhaps the most important asset for any centre speaker, though, given it will be handling much of any film's dialogue, is dynamics. We could probably have picked a more difficult film for the CIC's exam, given that 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.

That subwoofer is just about light enough for a few of our team to lift alone without putting our backs out, but it 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, and the sub has little difficulty underlining the solid body of the rest of the package with authoritative weight.

We suppose the highest praise we can offer ATC here is that it has provided a match for our considerably more expensive reference system. We can think of no better alternative for the money. A consummate triumph, to be sure.

"Thunder and flying arrows crack and sail behind us with exceptional detail"