



REVIEW

BY LORENZ RYCHNER

ATC SCM 11 Monitors

A remarkable passive monitor from a well-respected maker

ATC hails from the UK and has been going since 1976, initially in the PA component business, and for many years now producing active and passive monitors of varying designs. A quick look on the net shows that some of its higher-end models are hotly debated by hi-fi aficionados for whom money is no object.

woofer, with linking bars firmly connecting the two pairs. If bi-amping is not your aim, simply leave the linking bars in place and use either of the two pairs of posts for your speaker cable.

mellifluous Jane Monheit on her DVD-Audio *Dream With Me*, accompanied only by Kenny Barron on piano, and later by a full band with two horns, showed off this speaker's ability to deliver out-front vocals without making the out-frontness turn harsh; if Jane Monheit ever sounds harsh, it's the speaker's fault... To further test this speaker's apparent ability to deliver midrange out in front without harshness, I went to an SACD disc of Alison Krauss, and both Alison and an unaccompanied Jerry Douglas Dobro solo sounded perfect! And when the Union Station band came in, to raucous applause, the rich detail of the instrumentation was even more impressive. I only listened in stereo (it's a 5.1 disc) but *I was there!*

The many colors of a Big Band are always revealing in audio evaluations, and Steve Hufstetter's hi-def Big Band release *Gathered Around* again showed the speaker's tendency towards slightly forward midrange, as did a DVD-A disc of Robert Cray.

There is no smiley-face curve here, but not the opposite, either—this tendency to reveal midrange is nothing like the hyping of midrange we sometimes hear that results in mixes where the vocals would need an extra few dB to stand out. These speakers don't try to sound pretty, there is no disguising going on—if an instrument sounds shrill, you'll hear it presented shrill.

Is this richly detailed midrange taking away from the bass? Not here. There is true bass, smoothly extending way down, without getting an extra lift anywhere in the range. The spec says it's down by 6 dB at 56 Hz, which tallies insofar as there is not a huge low end. Depending on your listening habits you may take a moment to wean yourself off your usual subwoofer, and depending on your room the bass you hear might be on the warm side, but it is never wooly, always distinct. Will you need a subwoofer? Possibly, at least because subs give good client, and if you produce music that lives and dies by huge low end. I heard plenty of bass on a DVD-A of Marley's *African Herbsman* or on Queen Latifah's *The Dana Owens Album*, and neither is known for hyped bass—I heard just tight and very musical bass.

More important than the sheer power of bass presentation is the ability to define just what kind of bass it is, even at the bottom of



The SCM 11, while not cheap, is the most affordable ATC pro-application monitor available in the USA from its American distributor TransAudio Group. Care should be taken not to confuse it with the consumer version available in the UK and shown on ATC's own website; the specs are the same, but the only cabinet finish available in the USA is black.

The box

The SCM 11 is a fairly hefty cabinet, at 8.5 kg (almost 19 lbs.), and maybe a bit taller than your typical nearfield monitor, at (HxWxD) 15 x 8.3 x 9.8 inches. A black clip-on cloth grille covers both the 25 mm tweeter with its waveguide and the 150 mm woofer. There is a slight overhang at the front where the lowest 3 inches or so are recessed, but this is not a bass port—this cabinet is fully sealed.

The rear has twin sets of binding posts, one pair each for the tweeter and for the

A fair bit of design wizardry has gone into the making of this box. If you're a speaker techie, you'll find much tech-talk on the ATC website www.atc.gb.net. But we're here to listen, so let's get to the music, shall we?

Listening

ATC states that the design resulting in extended bass response makes for reduced sensitivity, thus requiring plenty of amplifier power to do these speakers justice so that they wouldn't distort (or worse) at loud levels. Well, loud would have to be really LOUD, because my Denon amp with about 100W per side did just fine. These boxes speak plenty loud in a room of the average home-studio size.

All that high-end talk I read in advance of setting up these speakers raised my expectations, so I went for my stack of high-resolution discs of artists I had heard in person, just to make sure I'd be on safe ground. The

a dense mix. When listening to huge orchestral recordings, for example, with the SCM 11 you always know if the basses are on their own, if the celli are doubling them, or if there's a tuba, or a subtle timpani roll—if you hear low-end mush, it must have been in the mix.

How about the high end? Spectacular! I checked out lots of jazz discs with drummers playing a great many different cymbals that all retained their individual shimmers, and orchestral string sections that revealed the ability of this tweeter to extend way up without any hint of metallic nastiness, or worse yet, brittleness.

Up close

It's one thing to have speakers sound good at an ideal distance in an ideal room, but what about the rest of us? There are times, rooms, setups that don't even allow for the ideal equilateral triangle between your head and the speakers, not to mention the other ideal—that of not having a surface in front of you that interferes with the speaker's output and dispersion. Sound familiar?

I purposely moved the pair of SCM 11 speakers into locations that fall short of those ideals, and guess what—they still did fine! For one thing, their sweet spot is not pinning you down; there is something in the way they spread the sound that allows for generous movement without losing focus and detail. Another thing I found in their favor: You can listen from up close, from less than a foot away, at reduced volume, and still get a reliable presentation. To me this means more than claims of good behavior at extreme volume levels.

All told, if your budget allows for this price range, see if you can get a demo of the SCM 11 before you make your purchasing decision. Your ears will love them! ☺

Price: \$1440/pair

More from: ATC Loudspeaker Technology Ltd., www.atc.gb.net; dist. in USA by TransAudio Group, 7320 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite G, Las Vegas, NV 89128. 702/365-5155, www.transaudiogroup.com.

Technical Specs

Drivers : HF 25 mm Neodymium,
Mid/LF 150 mm
Matched Response : ± 0.5 dB
Frequency Response (-6 dB) : 56 Hz–22 kHz
Dispersion : $\pm 80^\circ$ Coherent Horizontal,
 $\pm 10^\circ$ Coherent Vertical
Sensitivity : 85 dB @ 1W @ 1 meter
Max SPL : 108 dB Recommended Power
Amplifier : 50 to 300 Watts
Nominal Impedance : 8 Ohm
Crossover Frequency : 2.8 kHz
Connectors : Binding Posts/4 mm Plugs,
bi-wire
Cabinet Dimensions (HxWxD) :
380x211x250mm
Weight : 8.5 kg

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