

STEREO SPEAKERS • 23IN LCD TV

STEREO SPEAKERS

ATC
SCM19

£ 1500

FOR

An honest sound that brims with insight, dynamics and punch; rugged build

AGAINST

Not as forgiving of electronics or recordings as most rivals

VERDICT

The SCM19's uncompromising approach might not suit all tastes, but there are few better speakers below the two-grand mark

Honesty the best sonic policy

ATC IS ONE of the most consistent hi-fi brands we know. Its pricier products offer great dynamics, bass extension and loudness capability, but the essential character is always one of honesty. And the SCM19s don't break with that tradition.

Let's get the criticisms out of the way. These are truthful, rather than musical speakers. They won't gloss over flaws in recordings or your

"Stereo-imaging is rock solid, with good width and a precise focus"

system. Equally, while they can be forthright to the point of rudeness, they don't go out of their way to be spiteful. Whatever you hear is without exaggeration.

You'll need a muscular amplifier. Consider 100-watts per channel a bare minimum for high volume levels. Cosmetics are much improved over previous generations of ATC products, but even so, these speakers look little more than

functional next to classy style statements like B&W's 805s. But it ends there – we have no more to complain about. In every other way, these speakers are gems.

Ruthless musical honesty

Placed out into the room, and mounted on heavy stands – Partington's Heavis (£400) do nicely – these monitors set a sky-high standard for this kind of money.

They're insightful enough to unearth layer upon layer of fine detail from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and have the muscle to deliver seismic dynamic shifts with considerable conviction.

Stereo-imaging isn't as airy as some rivals, but it remains rock solid and precisely focused. Let the volume level slide north,

Not the most stylish speakers available, but sonically sublime

and these speakers hold steady. And unlike smaller models in the range – the SCM11s to be specific – they sound great at lower volumes, too. Add timing that's more than crisp enough to do justice to The Streets, and you have great all-rounders.

If you think hi-fi is about hearing whatever the source delivers, good or bad, these are for you.

ALSO
CONSIDERB&W
805S

£1600

Awards 2006

The babies of B&W's high-end 800 series look great, and deliver a refined and insightful sound

DALI
MENTOR 2

£1400

December 2006

The Mentors might look odd with their tweeter set-up, but they sound great