

STEREO SPEAKERS

ATC SCM11



£850

FOR THE PAST couple of years, the ATC SCM11s have been untouchable. There hasn't been a speaker at this pricepoint, that has come within a mile of taking their throne.

You might think this is surprising given the fact that the speakers look pretty ordinary. The exterior is unassuming – some might go so far as to call them ugly. Arguably the most exciting thing about the cabinet is the

“The ATCs are extremely communicative and give you a real feel for the music”

stepped, graphite-grey double front baffle, complete with curved edges. ATC claims that this design improves imaging and reduces diffraction. A 25mm soft-dome tweeter takes care of high-frequencies and a custom-made, heavily damped 12.5cm mid-bass driver does the rest. Together with the Spendors, the SCM11s are the only speakers here that are unported (in order to improve bass accuracy).

It's only when you hook them up to your hi-fi system and allow them the

↑ FOR

Honest and natural-sounding; beautifully balanced; great detail

↓ AGAINST

Make sure your amp can drive them (around 100W per channel)

→ VERDICT

You'll never tire of listening to a pair of speakers that sound as natural as the SCM11s. A truly remarkable speaker



Crossover The circuit inside a speaker that splits the incoming signal, sending high frequencies to the tweeter, and low ones to the woofer

freedom of your listening room that you realise how exceptional the ATCs are.

They are extremely communicative and give you a real 'feel' for the music. The London Symphony Orchestra's performance of *The Nutcracker* sounds realistic and believable. There's no aggressive edge to strings and the quality and texture of low frequencies just add to the musical picture that these speakers paint. Switch to the electronic beats of Lady GaGa and the ATCs' natural sound once again comes to the fore.

Weighty, not overwhelming

Her vocals during *Starstruck* are overflowing with emotion and the speakers use the tracks electronica edge to transport you straight back to the 1980s. The ATCs don't overwhelm you with bass, but there's weight aplenty. Move on to the Radio One Live Lounge version of Basement Jaxx's *Romeo* and the studio setting is beautifully recreated. Vocals, the piano, the intermittent trumpet and percussion sound exquisite and they're all layered expertly. The speakers dig up enough detail so that you can pick out all the different elements individually,

or you can simply sit back and immerse yourself in the natural warmth and beauty of the track.

The fact that the SCM11s have put in such a strong showing doesn't come as a great surprise to us but they're not without stiff competition from rivals across these pages. An audition with your album collection will always showcase the strength and weakness of each, of course.





After a massive fight, the **ATC SCM11s** manage to cling on to top spot – but only after some serious scares along the way

OF ALL THE tests we've run over the past year, this contest gave us our toughest decision. There's the width of a cigarette paper separating the ATCs and Roksans. Each one produces a different flavour of sound. You've got the exceptional treble, clarity, openness and detail of the K2s; and the refined, natural, honest and emotive sound served up by the SCM11s.

When it comes to the crunch, it's the neutrality and natural sound of the ATCs that sees them edge in front. But we have no hesitation in recommending the K2s – they're extremely worthy adversaries.

"There's the width of a cigarette paper between the ATCs and Roksans"

Strength in depth, not always in bass

Next on our list are the delectable Spondors. They are bass-light, but it's their size, sweetness and musicality that will keep the listener engaged. The B&W CM5s are stunning to look at, and all the ingredients are there, but they're let down by an insubstantial treble and midrange. The Ruarks are entertaining – with the drawback of that excitable treble. Partnered with suitable electronics, they could certainly do a job. Their mammoth proportions give the Dynaudio DM 2/10s ridiculous scale and authority, but we'd willingly trade this for extra control and resolution.

ATC SCM11

★★★★★★
£850

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
GROUP TEST WINNER



NOW ADD THESE



CD PLAYER
CYRUS CD 6 SE
★★★★★★
£ 800

September 2008

The CD 6 SE is an astonishing CD player on so many levels. In its areas of strength – timing, dynamics and punch – this player is comparable with the very best machines around regardless of price.



INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER
ROKSAN KANDY K2
★★★★★★
£ 750

November 2008

The best all-round amp we've heard under £1000. The level of detail the Roksan uncovers, together with its powers of organization make for a truly fine partner for the Cyrus CD player.



SPEAKER STANDS
PARTINGTON SUPER DREADNOUGHTS
★★★★★★
£ 180

March 2007

If you want to hear the ATCs at their best, these deserve consideration, industrial appearance or not...

TOTAL SYSTEM £2580

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE RANGE	ATC SCM11	B&W CM5	DYNAUDIO DM 2/10	ROKSAN KANDY K2 TR-5	RUARK SABRE III	SPENDOR S3/5R
PRICE	£ 850	£ 780	£ 808	£ 800	£ 899	£ 750
STANDMOUNT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FLOORSTANDER	No	No	No	No	No	No
SENSITIVITY	85 dB/W/m	88 dB/W/m	89 dB/W/m	88 dB/W/m	86 dB/W/m	84 dB/W/m
IMPEDANCE	8 ohms	8 ohms	4 ohms	6 ohms	8 ohms	8 ohms
MAX POWER	200 Watts	120 Watts	150 Watts	100 Watts	120 Watts	100 Watts
BIWIRABLE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
FINISHES	1	3	2	1	3	5
DIMENSIONS (HWD)	38 x 21 x 25cm	34 x 20 x 30cm	45 x 28 x 35cm	37 x 19 x 28cm	34 x 20 x 27cm	31 x 17 x 19cm
HOW THEY RATED						
SOUND	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★
COMPATIBILITY	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VERDICT	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★