

The clean, classy looks of the Concept 1 mean it'll look at home in most living rooms. Nice touch.



ATC CONCEPT 1 SYSTEM £2,000

★★★★☆ A more affordable 5.1 system from top speaker manufacturer, ATC – but will the Concept 1 still reek of the quality we associate with ATC's studio kit?

ATC is a renowned professional monitor loudspeaker manufacturer. Its first home cinema system cost about as much as a new BMW car, however, the new Concept 1 system, retailing at a 'mere' £2,000 for a full 5.1 system, makes ATC a more affordable option at last.

Concept 1 comprises two pairs of SCM 7 bookshelf loudspeakers, allied to the new C1 centre speaker and the Sub 01 subwoofer. Both the SCM 7 and C1 share common ATC-manufactured drive units; a 25mm soft dome tweeter and a 125mm bass unit, with a built-in 45mm soft dome midrange unit located in its

QUALITY ASSURED

■ ATC's professional monitor heritage shows through with all six speakers. The main five speakers are all designed to be well matched (to within half a decibel), but the heavy, quality build gives a low sensitivity rating of 84dB, meaning the speakers need big power to drive them (from 50Watts to 300Watts according to ATC). But they will play up to 105dB cleanly; more than enough to fill a small/medium room at good listening levels.

The subwoofer is particularly interesting. Sealed box subwoofers are not rare, but the design maintains air suspension and always appears 'tauter' and 'faster' than conventional ported subwoofers. However, its custom Super Linear design is a short-throw design instead of the more common long-throw drivers found in subs. The short-throw driver has been developed to keep eddy current problems at bay, thereby lowering some forms of harmonic distortion by as much as 15dB.

centre, all with massive magnets. The speakers are bi-wirable and have a permanently fixed dark blue grille across the front panel. This gives the ATC speakers an elegant, if slightly old-fashioned look, but also allows the units to have an extremely wide dispersion pattern. The Sub 01 features a 230mm downward-facing bass driver (also made by ATC) and a huge 250Watt built-in power amplifier. All six speakers are sealed box designs.

The ATC sound has a clean absence of character. It's this wide dispersion of audio which means people sitting outside the optimum listening position still hear a precise, crisp sound. The sonics are not boomy or immediately impressive, but the dry balance is so detailed you can hear different types of microphone used in TV programmes, as well as how sophisticated some soundtracks really are. The subtle use of mock-natural sounds in *Lord of the Rings* is so accurate, you start looking out the window to see where the orcs are. There is also an amazing sense of pace across speaker and subwoofer; play some loud stereo music with a good beat (such as *The Eminem Show*) and the sound is about as tight as a snare drum with a face lift.

However, even this gem has its flaw. Those huge magnets inside the speakers are impossible to shield correctly. Projector and plasma users will love the Concept 1, but CRT set owners need to be more careful.

Normally, poor screening is the kiss of death to a speaker, but the Concept 1's performance is so good this fault merely

CONTACT
01285 760561

WEBSITE
www.atc.gb.net

KEY FEATURES
■ Identical front and rear SCM 7 speakers
■ Matching C1 centre speaker

seems a minor set-back. The Concept 1 does need huge amounts of amplifier power, requiring AV electronics costing at least as much as the speakers, but it just makes you feel like you're sitting in the control room or studio. A highly recommended system. **B**

Alan Sircom

HomeEntertainment

VERDICT ATC CONCEPT 1 SPEAKER SYSTEM

WHAT'S GOOD?

- An extremely powerful subwoofer with excellent neutrality
- Superb speed of attack from both speakers and sub
- Wide dispersion speaker designs
- Excellent sound quality
- ATC's most affordable surround kit

WHAT'S BAD?

- Needs a huge, powerful amplifier, which is expensive
- Poor shielding on centre speaker
- No shielding on main LR speakers

FEATURES

Just about everything you could ask for apart from adequate shielding.

PERFORMANCE

Lacks artificial colouring, making this about as detailed and precise as it gets.

BUILD QUALITY

Once again ATC shows it can knock up a system as stylish as it's sturdy.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Fine, if you are prepared to shell out just as much for AV electronics.

OVERALL

A precise and excellent-sounding system, for a big sound from small speakers. A top choice unless you have a regular telly.

ALSO CONSIDER...

Castle CAV2 £2,000
Quadral Ascent £1,650
JM Lab Cobalt £2,300

★★★★☆

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★☆

★★★★★

★★★★★

★★★★★