

ATC SCM35

£1999 ★★★★★

FOR

Natural, involving sound; excellent dynamics

AGAINST

Not exactly for the style-conscious

VERDICT

Following a minor design blip, the SCM35s are back with a vengeance – they offer scintillating performance across the board

IT'S A CASE of second-time around for the ATC SCM35. Following our first reviews of the speaker, ATC discovered some crossover design faults. Fortunately, these were limited to the first batch off the production line, all of which were shipped overseas (any with a serial number of 49 or greater should be fine). Unfortunately though, our original review sample was the first pair taken from this substandard batch. In the interests of fairness, the ATC SCM35s are back for a second grilling from our testers.

Let's cut to the chase – these are thoroughbred hi-fi speakers. Yes, with the grilles off they may win an award for the ugliest speaker ever, but nobody need know – they're designed for optimum tonal balance with the grilles in place. Hidden beneath the cover is a three-way design with dedicated drive units for treble, midrange and bass. Incidentally, the 25mm soft-dome tweeter is also used in the SCM7 and SCM12. More unusual, though, is the soft-dome mid-range driver – it's only usually found on speakers costing a lot more than these.

Peer around the back of the speaker, and you'll notice there are three pairs of terminals, which can be used to tri-amp the SCM35s. And, if your amplifier is capable of driving a load of 8 ohm and 85dB/w/m, be prepared to be amazed at the result.

Straight out of the box, the SCM35s sound restrained. However, after a couple of days of running-in, the improvement in sound quality is staggering. We originally criticised the SCM35s' balance and integration but now we're pleased to report a clean bill of health. They're tonally balanced, with seamless integration throughout the frequency range. Presentation is honest and straight down the middle, while the ATCs also offer dazzling dynamics, picking up every ebb and flow in *Exercise in Darkness*, taken from the soundtrack of *The General's Daughter*. There's an excellent blend of punch, weight and depth to lower frequencies, while the midrange is unbelievably natural and realistic.

We're big fans of the SCM35s. Sure, they might be the most expensive pairing in this test, but you can't place a price on quality – well you can, but in this case it's £1999.



Winner ATC SCM35

£1999 ★★★★★

AND SO, THIS tale of 12 towers comes to an end. A variety of styles, designs and sounds all combine to serve up a very interesting selection of floorstanding speakers. There's no doubt the Schönberg's style and wall-mounting ability are major plus points, but up against the hi-fi elite, their sonic limitations do begin to show.

The Dynaudio Audience 82s offer a more fiery approach to their musical presentation – their bold sound pulls no punches and the sheer amount of bass weight they offer will undoubtedly please hip-hop crews across the country.

Moving up a star we get to the Spendor S8es and PMC FB1s. The PMCs have the power and depth in the lower frequencies to impress and the dynamics in the midrange to excite, while the Spondors have a more refined, natural sound.

Finally, we come to the five-star speakers: the B&W 704s and ATC SCM35s. The B&Ws offer unrivalled clarity and spaciousness, together with an almost unbeatable level of detail – if you're limited to £1400 then look no further than the 704s. However, if you can extend your overdraft that little bit further, you should go for the ATC SCM35s. They excel in every department, offering you superb detail, realism and dynamics.



Partners for the winner

The ideal kit to put with the ATC SCM35s

Meridian 588

CD player £2100 ★★★★★ July 2001
This 2002 Award-winner produces a magical sound, combining a scintillating sense of realism, dynamics and refinement



Quad 99 preamp

£750 ★★★★★

November 2002

Quad 99 power amplifier

£900 ★★★★★

November 2002

A solidly built yet spectacular-sounding pairing offering control, power, dynamics and detail – this set-up has it all



We tested them with (price-comparable system) CD player Meridian 588; Amplifier AVI Laboratory Series (reference system) CD player Krell KAV-2800CD; Amplifier Krell KRC-3/TAS; cables and interconnects QED and Atlas

WHAT'S IT GOT?

Price	£1999	£1400	£1700
Tweeter	25mm soft dome	25mm alloy dome	28mm soft dome
Midrange	7.5cm soft dome	n/a	15cm ESOTEC driver
Mid/bass or bass driver	16.5cm	16.5cm woven Kevlar, 16.5cm paper/Kevlar	2x20cm polypropylene cone
Sensitivity	85dB/w/m	90dB/w/m	87dB/w/m
Impedance	8 ohms	8 ohms	4 ohms
Frequency range	48Hz-20kHz	40Hz-25kHz	26Hz-21kHz
Power-handling	50w-300w	50w-150w	50w-300w
Single/Bi/Triwireable	Triwireable	Biwireable	Single-wire
Dimensions (hxwx)	88x23x20cm	96x22x32cm	106x22x36cm
Weight	28kg	21kg	27kg
Finishes	black, cherry, others to order	Black ash, cherry, maple, rosenut, walnut	Black, cherry, maple, rosewood
Contact	(01285) 760561	(01903) 221500	(020) 7378 1810
Web site	www.atc.gb.net	www.bwspeakers.com	www.dynaudio.com

WHAT WE GAVE IT...

VERDICT ★★★★★ ★★★★★ ★★★★★



PMC
FB1



Spendor
S8e



Vienna
Schönberg

WHAT'S IT GOT?

Price	£1490	£1850	£1500
Tweeter	25mm alloy dome	27mm soft dome	25mm hand-coated silk dome
Midrange	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mid/bass or bass driver	17cm doped cone	21cm polymer cone	two x 15cm XPP cones
Sensitivity	88dB/w/m	89dB/w/m	91dB/w/m
Impedance	8 ohms	8 ohms	4 ohms
Frequency range	22Hz-20kHz	44Hz-20kHz	44Hz-25kHz
Power handling	Up to 150w	15w-300w	30w-200w
Single/Bi/Triwireable	Biwireable	Biwireable	Single-wired
Dimensions (hxwx)	104x28x35cm	95x23x32cm	105x27x9cm
Weight	20kg	25kg	13.5kg
Finish	Black ash, cherry, oak	Black ash, cherry, maple, rosenut	Aluminium
Contact	0870 444 1044	(01323) 843474	(01235) 511166
Web site	www.pmc-speakers.com	www.spendoaudio.com	www.vienna-acoustics.com

WHAT WE GAVE IT...

VERDICT ★★★★★ ★★★★★ ★★★★★