

★★★★★ ATC SCM12 speaker £999

From its humble Gloucestershire base, ATC's (Acoustic Transducer Company's) monitors regularly travel the globe, collecting air miles and finding new homes in professional studio environments worldwide.

The company's success in the pro world also proves beneficial to domestic users, as tried and tested technologies and engineering practices are passed down to smaller, more lounge-friendly designs. A speaker that appeases the studio engineer's highly critical ear is likely to fare none too badly with the audiophile. The challenge however is to tailor the box to a home environment that is far from

THAT DRIVER

The jewel in this two-way speaker's crown is undoubtedly the hand-built cone/dome bass/mid driver that is shoehorned into its weighty cabinet. This proprietary unit uses a 75mm soft dome midrange transducer, mechanically coupled to a 150mm bass cone coated with a viscous damping material that makes it slightly tacky to the touch. The oversized magnet behind the cone is claimed to achieve absolute linearity and low distortion, plus ATC's own voice coil is employed to provide high dynamics and power handling. Claims of 'flat response 80-degree horizontal dispersion' mean stereo imaging for the majority – not just those in the 'sweet spot'.

the engineered confines of the studio. This is made easier because all ATC's drive units are designed and built in-house, giving the brand complete control over manufacturing, an advantage that offers great consistency and flexibility within its range.

One of the brand's most recent offerings is the SCM12, so-called because of its cabinet's 12-litre capacity. It's designed to meet the challenge of both professional and home environments, being both visually appealing and boasting a strong measured performance – a necessity for any professional work. Touted for the home as well as near-field monitoring in the studio, the Studio Control Monitor 12 (to give it its full moniker) is just one step up from the smallest model, the compact standmount SCM7, yet it flaunts the same soft dome midrange transducer as found in the heavyweight active SCM20 pro monitor, mechanically coupled to the bass cone. Not that the SCM12 is in any way a lightweight speaker – weighing in at 15kg, the speaker's medite enclosure houses a main driver with serious power handling properties. The suggested amplifier range is 50-300 watts – perfect for ATC's own amps or the tinnitus-inflicted rock band mastering its latest album in the control room.

The tweeter of choice is a soft dome with a 25mm magnet that works harmoniously with the latest version of

KEY FEATURES

- 25mm soft dome tweeter
- Hand built 150mm polyester cone/dome bass/mid driver
- Available in cherry or studio black
- Bi-wirable
- Two-way sealed box enclosure
- 85dB sensitivity
- Dimensions (WxHxD): 22x39x25cm

ATC's hand-built 150mm bass/mid driver (see box). This driver is squeezed into a pretty cherry-veneered enclosure, with a usefully small driver/baffle ratio – the visually plain black baffle is recessed slightly into the cabinet, leaving 5mm or so for a snug grille fit. Cosmetically, the SCM12 is not catwalk material, though the drivers do command your attention and respect – cover them for domestic harmony if you have to with the sturdy grilles supplied.

Hooking a pair of SCM12s onto the end of ATC's SIA2-150M integrated amplifier, among others, makes it instantly apparent that this box is exceptionally good. The balance is on

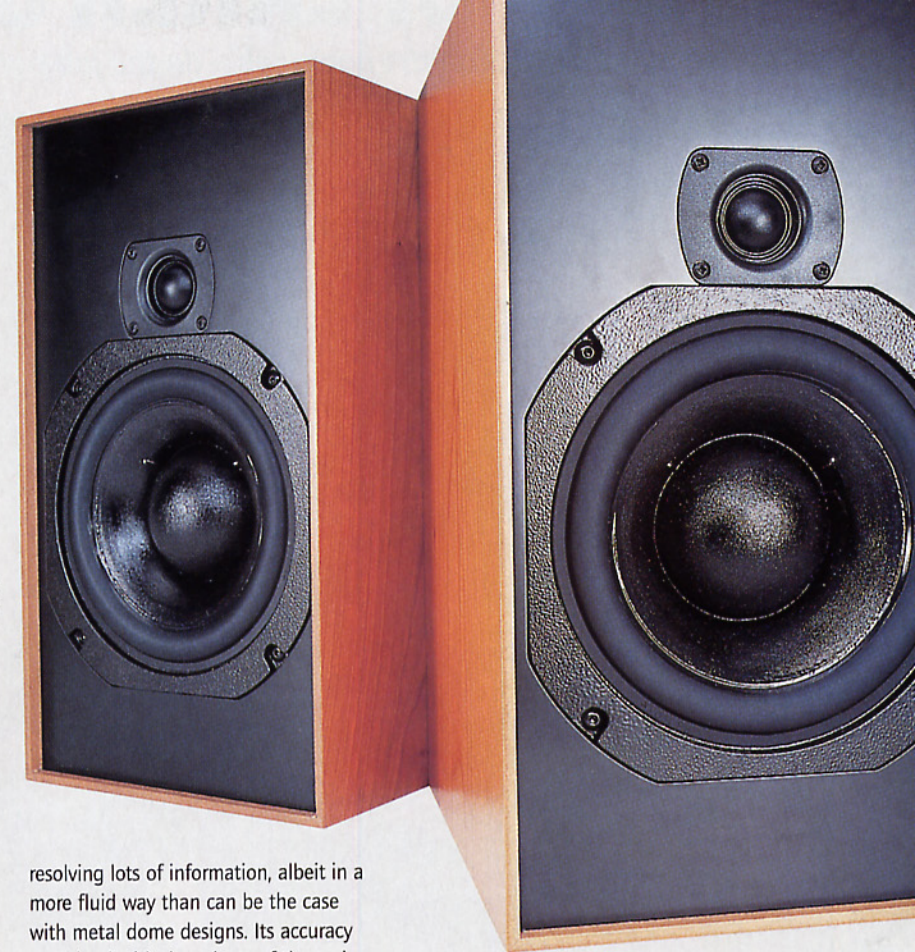


the vigorous side of neutral and skillfully brings music to life in spectacular fashion. Most notable is the speed and accuracy of the midband and low coloration in the bass. This is a sealed box design giving a very clean and fast low end, and while it might not plumb the depths of some ported competitors, it's arguably more accurate and doesn't rely so much on position to achieve an even bass performance.

Low frequencies are well defined, solid and boom-free, a refreshing characteristic for anyone who suffers from room-induced resonance, while its rhythmic finesse makes for an extremely musical and engaging box. On test, Jeff Buckley's dynamic *The Sky Is A Landfill* was delivered with a solid 3D image, and when the band accelerated into frenzy the SCM12 kept its cool while flaunting its abilities. The wide dispersion tweeter means minimal toe-in is required for accurate imaging, but a little inward tweaking is rewarded with tight, focused vocals pinpointed within a wide soundstage.

The sealed box design makes the SCM12 less sensitive to rear wall positioning – give it a bit of space and the music opens up a treat. Standing at 39cm tall, the boxes are more suited to shorter stands, bringing tweeters closer to ear height – ATC offers a matching Atacama-made stand.

The tweeter almost seems to mimic good metal dome units on occasion,



resolving lots of information, albeit in a more fluid way than can be the case with metal dome designs. Its accuracy combined with the talents of the main driver offer deep insight into any recording, unsettling relationships built with favourite albums by exposing the mastering flaws and revealing hidden depths that some speakers gloss over through coloration.

Like most of ATC's loudspeakers, the SCM12 gives it to you straight, so if you

don't like facing up to the truth, best turn away. But if you relish fidelity, even if it exposes shabby recordings, you're in for a treat with this high-value, high-performance loudspeaker.

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