

GROUP TEST

STEREO SPEAKERS

ATC SCM 19



£1500

GOT A BAD back? Avoid these ATCs, or at least get someone else to lift them for you. The SCM 19s might only be medium-size standmounts, but they weigh in at a hefty 16kg. Each.

You can thank the mid/bass driver for most of that. It's a long-running, in-house unit notable for its outlandishly large motor assembly – pretty much

“If the recordings are well made, and the electronics good, results are fabulous”

the same diameter as the driver frame – and the rather large dustcap that ATC likes to call a midrange dome.

The idea is that the mid/bass driver produces a clean, low-distortion sound, right to the top of its intended operating range. Judging by the flawless integration on the SCM 19s, we'd say the company has got it right.

Seamless is the ideal word to describe the ATCs in action. Nothing sticks out: bass, midrange and treble dovetail perfectly, creating a mesmerising sound.

Add a neutral tonal balance to the equation, and it becomes hard to ascribe

FOR

Dynamics, neutrality and loudness capability; rugged build

AGAINST

Ruthless nature won't please all

VERDICT

Want to hear what they heard in the studio? These ATCs are the closest you'll get in this test

Uncompromisingly honest and ruthless: no, not Geoff Boycott on TMS, it's the ATCs

any great character to the SCM 19s. Considering ATC built its enviable reputation making top-class monitor speakers for studios, that comes as no surprise.

Honest to the point of brutal

Also unsurprising is the ruthlessness of the presentation. If the recording is well made and the partnering electronics up to standard, the results will be fabulous. When it comes to dynamics, tonal faithfulness and absolute loudness capability, the SCM 19s have nothing to fear from any rival. Listen to Mahler's *Symphony No.10* in full flow, and you'll marvel at the rock-solid composure.

However, listen to some compressed pop, such as the Arctic Monkeys, and you'll find yourself wondering what the fuss is about. While others in this test try to make the most of whatever you feed them, the ATCs make no such concession. If it's poorly recorded or produced, the SCM 19s won't pull any sonic punches.

Moving away from sound, build is rugged and the drive units are designed to take an awful lot of

abuse. Saying that, there isn't much in the way of luxury touches here. The cabinet is decently made, but nothing special considering you're spending a grand and a half. These are speakers you buy for sound quality, not to impress people.

Some of you might not get along with the ATCs rather blunt nature, but there's no denying that in the right system, and with the right type of recordings, there's little that sounds better for the money.



TEST RESULT

Four products with five-star verdicts:

that demonstrates what superlative speakers the **Wilson Benesch** are

A GROUP TEST where all four products get the full five-star rating is almost unheard of, but all these speakers are great. You'd be mad not to consider all of them before you buy. However, just because they have the same rating, it doesn't mean they sound the same – far from it, in fact.

The ATCs are for those who place recording quality up with musical content. They'll rip apart a poor recording with all the ferocity of a bad-tempered tiger, but get everything right, and they can sound stunning.

The B&W 805s are fabulous speakers, despite being a good deal older than anything else in this test. Couple their entertaining sound with exceptional build and a huge dose of style, and it's easy to understand their appeal.

The Dalis Mentor 2s have a similarly talented musical approach to the 805s, but trade a touch of bass definition for a slightly more insightful treble.

The speakers that manage to creep ahead of the pack are the Square Ones. These small monitors are so entertaining and so thrilling to listen to that they edge overall victory. Never has a £1500 standmounter sounded so good.

“These small monitors are so entertaining that they edge overall victory”



For more than 1400 test verdicts, check out our *Buyer's Guide* on p91

Wilson Benesch Square One



£1500

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION
GROUP TEST WINNER



NOW ADD THESE



CD PLAYER
COPLAND
CDA823



£ 1750

Get past the dim-witted control software and unresponsive buttons, and you'll find the best-sounding CD player on the right side of two thousand smackers. The Wilson Benesch Square Ones will lap up the Copland's monster detail and dynamics.



STEREO AMPLIFIER
BRYSTON
B100 SST



£ 2850

This Bryston integrated might seem a touch expensive to partner with the £1500 Wilson Benesch, but the Square Ones are more than capable of making the most of the B100 SST's considerable sonic abilities.



SPEAKER STANDS
PARTINGTON
SUPER DREADNOUGHT



£ 200

If you can stretch to £400, Partington's outrageously talented Heavis should be your choice. However, if that's a reach too far, the ever trusty Dreadnoughts will do just fine.

TOTAL SYSTEM £6300

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE RANGE	ATC	B&W	DALI	WILSON BENESCH
£1400-£1600	SCM19	805S	MENTOR 2	SQUARE ONE
SPECIFICATION				
PRICE	£ 1500	£ 1600	£ 1400	£ 1500
TYPE	Standmount	Standmount	Standmount	Standmount
SENSITIVITY	85dB/w/m	88dB/w/m	86dB/w/m	87dB/w/m
IMPEDANCE	8 ohms	8 ohms	6 ohms	6 ohms
MAX POWER	300 watts	120 watts	180 watts	200 watts
BIWIRE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DIMENSIONS	42 x 22 x 32cm	42 x 24 x 35cm	44 x 20 x 35cm	33 x 20 x 29cm
FINISHES	Cherry	Black ash, Cherry, Rosenut	Cherry	Blk, Burrwalnut, Maple
HOW THEY RATED				
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
COMPATIBILITY	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VERDICT	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

TYPE Standmount speakers are designed to sit on dedicated speaker stands. Any other kind of support will compromise the sound quality. For speakers at this price point, consider spending at least £200 on stands (check out *Now Add These*, above). Spending twice that wouldn't be wasted, if you have the budget.

SENSITIVITY This indicates the sound-pressure level that the speaker will produce for one watt of power. A higher figure demonstrates that it's an easier pair of speakers to drive, while models with lower figures might well need a more powerful amplifier to drive them to loud volumes. Check partnering electronics carefully.

BIWIRING You need speakers with two sets of inputs and a split crossover, then you can send twin sets of cable from the amp to each speaker. Try with and without biwire to see which suits you.

IMPEDANCE The load the loudspeakers present to an amplifier. Low impedance draws more current from the amp, potentially giving problems for less-powerful hi-fi amplifiers.

POWER-HANDLING The maximum safe power for the loudspeakers – though note that it's easier to damage speakers with an under-powered amp that's distorting because it's working too hard than with too much power.