

The SCM12s would hold their own against much more expensive speakers



ATC SCM12

★★★★★

£1000

FOR

Even-handed and informative presentation; great dynamics

AGAINST

Need plenty of power to work at their best; stylish they're not

VERDICT

If the plain looks aren't an issue, the ATCs are a stunningly good buy, though they need a good amp

PERFORMANCE: IT'S THE only reason to buy the SCM12s. OK, build and finish are impressive, but these are no style kings. It's good ATC tuned these speakers with grilles in place, because without them the look is positively agricultural.

However, use these standmounters with quality kit and the results are excellent, particularly when paired with a muscular amplifier. Think of the 70-watt-per-channel Roksan Caspian at the least, and preferably the likes of Primare's 100-watt-per-channel A30.1 – the more power the better, as long as the amp doesn't compromise the speakers' inherent resolution and honesty.

Honesty? Yes, the ATCs don't overstate the treble to boost excitement or bass power to improve rhythmic drive, but just reproduce the signal whether it's good or

bad. Once run-in there's no edge or hardness in the presentation, so prolonged listening's a pleasure.

With decent recordings they shine brighter than just about every rival, and even bear comparison with speakers up to three times their price. And their detail resolution is terrific, with even subtle low-level information apparent. As a result, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's recording of Tchaikovsky's *Marche Slave Op.31* sounds like real people with real instruments.

With Beverley Knight's *Prodigal Sista* set, the ATCs revel in the hard-charging rhythms and slinky bass. Considering their size they chuck out an impressive amount of low-end thump, too, and this remains tight and agile even at high volumes.

Last year these ATCs won both a *Supertest* and a Best Buy Award. This year the competition has got even better, but the SCM12s remain class leaders – but are they still the very best at this price level?

RATINGS

★★★★★ The best on the market

★★★★★ Excellent

★★★★★