

ATC SCM 11 (2013)

Tested at £1200



Best standmounter £800-£1500, Awards 2013. ATC has struck gold again. These are the most talented standmounters anywhere near this price

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FOR

- Versatile, balanced sound
- Smooth and subtle with fine power and weight
- Insightful, expressive vocals

AGAINST

- Nothing of note

We've given ATC a lot of Awards for the SCM11s over the years. They're versatile and balanced, and we're very fond of them. In fact, we don't bother putting them away anymore – they're an important part of our stock of reference kit.

So when we heard of a new version, we had mixed feelings. Updated speakers are always exciting, but it's hard not to wince at the thought of someone going all Frankenstein with them on some operating table.

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Construction

The 15cm mid/bass driver has been ripped out and put into a new body, which is curved for more rigidity and less internal resonance. There's also a new tweeter.

It's a 25mm soft-dome unit, designed and built in-house – that's rare for a relatively small manufacturer. ATC has also included a new crossover with

higher-quality components.

The result? Great success. The new SCM11s make their talented predecessors seem ordinary. Nearly everything we've come to love about the originals has received a remarkable boost.

Sound quality

The sound is bigger and more spacious than before, and there's a much higher level of rhythmic precision, helped by increased agility. Dynamics are stronger and further reaching. The sound is remarkably clean, and more transparent than ever.

Combine that with a high level of detail and you get superb insight. Vocals are given air and plenty of emotion.

In keeping with tradition, these SCM11s have a sealed-box design. That means the low frequencies aren't quite delivered in the generous quantities of some ported rivals. What you do get is impressive bass texture, tonality and detail. We reckon a slight hit in outright quantity is worth it for the excellent control on hand.



In fact, the whole frequency range is superbly controlled. Nothing we did could wrong-foot these speakers, which remain composed no matter how hard we pushed. We go from Atoms for Peace to Massive Attack, via a spot of Eminem: at every turn the ATCs demonstrate an extraordinary level of precision.

That precision extends to the focussed stereo image as we switch to *Jupiter* from Holst's *The Planets* suite. These ATCs make it easy to place the various parts of

the orchestra on the wide-open soundstage.

It never gets too analytical, however. As easy as it is to pick out all the separate elements of a track, these speakers manage to knit everything into a cohesive, musical whole.



And the trait we like the most about the original SCM11s – their natural, balanced sound – is here, too. Whatever we feed the speakers, the sound comes out uncoloured and uncorrupted.

That makes them hugely versatile, and an easy listen. It's as easy to analyse everything about a song as it is to just sit back and enjoy it.

The flaws? It's hard to think of anything. If we really had to nitpick, we'd point at the speaker grilles. We're not entirely convinced a grey honeycomb mesh suits a cabinet with cherry wood or black ash veneer.

Then again, the speakers were designed for optimum performance when uncovered. And they do look lovely on their own.

Verdict

The new SCM11s are a drastic improvement over an already talented performance, and they have the good looks to match. ATC has raised the bar it set itself. This isn't just a step up – it's a running leap.