

ATC SCM19 | Stereo speakers | £2000

A bigger box of party tricks

The '19' in these ATCs' name refers to the internal volume of the cabinet

Regular readers will know we're big fans of ATC's £1200 standmounters, the SCM11s. They're multiple Award-winners, and continue to set the standard at their price. When it comes to insight and honesty we haven't heard any better.

ATC has expanded on the formula and come up with the SCM19s. The cabinet has grown to 19 litres (ATC's model numbers refer to the internal volume) and the mid/bass driver changes to the company's highly developed 15cm unit. This driver has served in the brand's premium standmounters for years.

New tweeter

This mid/bass really is something unusual. It uses a cone made of doped polyester weave onto which a 75mm dome is grafted in a bid to improve the unit's performance at the integration point. Take one of these drivers out of the 19s and you'll find a heavily engineered unit with a huge magnet assembly. It weighs in at a hefty 9kg, almost half the weight of the speaker.

But the big news is the new tweeter. This 25mm soft dome is made in-house - some achievement for a small company. The two drivers cross over at a conventional 2.5kHz.

Acoustic clues

While the SCM19s aren't hard speakers to drive, they excel with quality amplifiers with a bit of poke. Sensitivity is below average at 85dB/W/m, which tends to reinforce this impression. We get great results with Burmester's O32 and Rega's Elicit-R as well as our reference Bryston BP26/4B SST2 pre/power combination.

Given a day to settle, the SCM19s turn in a great performance. We start off listening to a CD rip of *Clair de Lune* from our reference Naim NDS/555PS streamer and are impressed by what we hear.

There's a clear sense of how large the recording venue is, with the SCM19s picking up the subtle acoustic clues. Piano notes are delivered with solidity and finesse. The leadings and trailing edges of notes are crisply defined without sounding artificially hyped. These speakers deliver a presentation that's as convincing tonally as it is spellbinding dynamically.



Those dynamic skills come into even sharper focus when we play Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. These ATCs have no trouble delivering the piece's crescendos with power, even at high volume levels. There's an impressive degree of composure here, the monitors refusing to compress or harden up even when pushed hard.

We also like the SCM19s' ability to render a large-scale soundstage and populate it with well-focused instruments. Things stay stable even as the piece's complexity increases.

Moving onto Prince's *Love* shows that these boxes like to party too. They deliver the song's relentless rhythmic momentum with enthusiasm. The bass kicks hard, while the drum machines attack with determination. Prince's vocals are handled in a crisp and articulate manner, but they also lack nothing in terms of body or natural warmth.



The SCM19 speakers feature ATC's 15cm mid/bass unit and a new tweeter

These ATCs are highly analytical, but never clinical or passionless, and are transparent to the original recording and system electronics. If these are good there are few better sounding alternatives for around this price. Buy with confidence.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Honest and insightful sound; impressive dynamic ability; composure at higher volume levels; crisp rhythmic drive; rock-solid build

AGAINST Metal grilles don't look classy

VERDICT If you value insight and honesty above all else these speakers are a terrific buy

Also consider

PMC Twenty 22 £1970 ★★★★★

Our current favourite premium standmounters are balanced performers.



System builder total build £7200

CD player

Roksan Caspian M2 CD £1900 ★★★★★

This CD player combines refinement, bite and rhythmic ability better than anything else at this price level



Stereo amplifier

Roksan Caspian M2 £1900 ★★★★★

An exceptional amplifier for the money, and a big-hearted performer capable of drama and subtlety



DAC

Chord Hugo £1400

★★★★★

Superb sound quality in an unbelievably small and versatile package

