

## ATC SCM19A Active Speakers review



When I was asked if I would like to review the new ATC SCM19A speakers I jumped at the chance with a resounding YES. It had been a while since I last heard the well coveted SCM19 speakers, but this time it is in the guise as the SCM19AT with 'AT' standing for the Active Tower versions of this popular speaker.



ATC have a long history in building high quality speakers with many of their components being made in house. This gives them total control over what is produced but it also means that they have the knowledge of not just designing good speakers but building them too. With many of their speaker's studio grade and their active designs are some of the best examples of how to do active. With matching all the components together, meaning drive units and active crossovers you can be sure that the speaker has plenty of power and specifically to each drive unit as is the case with the SCM19AT which has a total of 182 watts per speaker at its disposal.



High End Audio and active speakers is not something new for me, and after reviewing electrostatics like the Martin Logan Montis which have built in amplifiers for their sub-woofer drive units I can appreciate the advantages that Active speakers offer. Specifically, when choosing a set of speakers for your system as the amplification side has been taken care of and all that is needed is a source and preamplifier to feed the signal to each speaker and you have a complete system.

The original ATC SCM19 speakers were no slouch by any means when it came to quality as they had that in droves. But by introducing this new floor stander version they have taken that quality to a new level and given this speaker a breath of new life. With a bigger cabinet and 19 litres of space inside each cabinet and mated with the perfect amount of power this

more of space inside each cabinet and matched with the perfect amount of power, the speaker can now compete with much pricier competitors and hold its own.

## Features and build Quality

Although it is now in its floor standing versions it is still quite a compact size and the build quality is exceptionally good with solid cabinets and with real wood veneers. The cabinets themselves are heavily braced and multi-layered. With a height of just under 1 meter at 980mm tall and 370mm wide, they really do look the part, and will fit in to any space with not much fuss at all. The cabinets are sealed so no ports to worry you with near boundary location, so you can pretty much plonk them down and off you go, although I found that making sure you had just enough toe in to make them sing properly was required and once this is done your set to rock.

The amplification is supplied by a custom ATC MOSFET Class A/B module providing 32watts of continuous power to the HF section and 150watts to the mid-bass drive unit. The tweeter is the company's acclaimed SH25-76 which is a remarkably transparent driver which offers stunning clarity throughout its frequency band. For the mid-bass unit, it uses the same 150mm SL driver as found in its passive version. It is made up of a carefully weighted doped fabric cone which also incorporates a 75mm soft dome. Sporting a massive 9Kg Super Linear magnet system which is unique to ATC. It has amazing mid-band response and very even dispersion of frequencies through-out the mid-band frequencies. Connections at the rear of the cabinet is of the XLR type for signal and one power inlet.



## Features

- New ATC designed and built dual suspension 25mm soft dome HF unit with precision alloy wave guide.
- "SL" spec bass driver with 75mm integral Soft Dome.
- 9kg optimised short-coil/long gap motor assembly.
- On-board grounded source 182 watt Class A/B Bi-amplifier.
- Active crossover filters and overload protection.
- 6-year warranty.

Connecting them up is so easy and I am running XLR cables to my McIntosh Labs MA8000 Integrated amplifier but this time there is no need for the amplification section instead I am just using the preamp section as power is taken care of in each cabinet. I

am using my Aurender N100H Music server with Mytek Brooklyn DAC as my primary source and also vinyl by my Clearaudio Concept turntable with Concept cartridge. Connections from DAC to preamp is taken care of by Transparent XLR cables, unfortunately I do not have Transparent XLR's to run to the speakers instead I am using some PRO audio XLR interconnects.

## Performance and Sound Quality

The SCM19AT speakers inherit similar qualities to its younger sibling the passive version which is great performance but this is enhanced by the synergy of ATC's matching amplifier technology and having the larger floor standing cabinet, negates the need for stands instead offering a much more solid cabinet and build quality. The metal grilles enhance the look I feel and are also great for keeping those important drive units away from any accidental knocks or prying hands.

I start off with some familiar sounds in the form of **Robert Len's** – Fragile album from the 2x HD label sampled at 24bit 192Khz. This is such a finely recorded album and can give a great performance if the quality is there, and the ATC SCM19AT speakers certainly have all the potential for offering up this album with an extra-large serving of quality. The dynamics and transients are really excellent on the first track which is called **Amoureuse**, with shifts in tone and the ability to create a large scale sonic picture in my smallish room even easier than any lesser speaker could make. The top end is so detailed with not a hint of any harshness as the tweeter is one of the finest sounding I have come across, with Robert Len's trumpet sounding sweeter than ever. **Track 3 Fragile** is a finely crafted track and the ATC's convey all the emotion that this beautifully scored piece of music has to offer, with the classical guitar and brass section so coherent with so much air around them but defined and controlled all at the same time. ATC have taken the knowledge and designed a really good Hi-Fi speaker with this example as they sound so well balanced. The dynamics and transient response from the 150mm mid-bass driver is fantastic and while its low end does not go as low as some may like on track 4 **Homage to Q** it really shows its worth with a mighty performance filling my room with some fine bass which is controlled and agile with a taught and tight bass response.

My next album by the Propellerheads titled **Decksanddrumsandrockandroll** is streamed from Tidal via my Aurender N100H Music Server and a firm favorite when testing out any new speaker as it is fast and relentless in its musical approach. Track 10 is taken from the James Bond movie, **On Her Majesty's Secret Service** and given The Propellerheads remix which just sounds incredible with a synthesized bass beat that really gets the mid-bass unit moving some air but has so much texture to the sound as it shifts tones so fast and the ATC keeps all this madness in check while the orchestral parts play in symphony to this great track. The ATC tweeter sounding so refined and retaining all the detail that this track has to offer even at extreme volumes the tweeter sounds composed and handles everything that is thrown at it. If you have never heard this album I seriously recommend checking it out as it is a brilliant showcase for any system and speakers for that matter, this album should come with a warning such is its lunacy and will make you want to turn the volume up to 11. But the real test is can your

speakers handle this and the ATC SCM19AI speakers handled it and went above and beyond expectations. **Shirley Bassey's** mix of **History Repeating** is another track on the album and gets the ATC's working hard again but they prove to be up to the job and performed flawlessly, my room was feeling the music as it massaged the air with their sonic abilities.

Listening to the SCM19AT speakers has proved to be a very rewarding experience as they have taken a good speaker which is the passive SCM19 and turned them into a great speaker with the pairing of perfect amplification which matches perfectly to their drive units and enclosed them in a tidy package which is the ATC SCM19AT speakers.

## Conclusion and final thoughts

ATC is another great British speaker brand which produce products for both the PRO and Consumer markets and they have done this with winning formulas like the SCM19AT models and either the passive version or this model work well in both environment's. What they may lack in the low-end spectrum of the frequency band they certainly make up for in all other areas of performance. This is a speaker which is well proportioned in size and looks great too with a strong build quality and anyone looking for great performance and has around £5000 to spend need to give these speakers serious consideration.

The Speaker Shack awards the ATC SCM19AT speaker with a Highly-Recommended product rating.

Price at time of review £4,995