

# TEMPTATIONS

ATC SCM40A

Each tower houses  
three amplifiers - one  
for each driver - and  
an active crossover.  
All three drivers are  
designed and made  
in-house by ATC



Standards of build  
and finish are  
generally exceptional,  
but we're not sure  
about the supplied  
metal grilles, which  
look less than classy



Red stops (which feature top and bottom) help protect the heat sinks and connectors; one XLR and the power input



# “Low-end authority only really capable big speakers manage”

## ■ **ATC SCM40A** Active stereo speakers

■ **£6280** ★★★★★

**T**wo things strike us when we first unpack ATC's brand-new SCM40A floorstanders. The first is the sheer weight of the things. They pile in at 36kg each, meaning a strong, helpful friend is handy come unpacking time. It'll avoid damage to them, and your back.

Once we've wrestled them out of their boxes it occurs to us these may well be the best-value speakers the company makes. If the idea of a six-grand floorstander being called good value bothers you, consider that there's no cheaper way of getting a full dose of ATC's heavy-duty engineering and studio-proven technology.

What makes ATCs different? It comes down to drive units, mostly. There are few speaker companies outside the industry giants making their own drive units. Most small manufacturers - ATC is tiny by most standards - tend to buy in units from OEM suppliers.

### In-house and independent

With the introduction of a tweeter designed and manufactured in house, ATC now makes all its drivers. The SCM40A features a version of this new 25mm tweeter as well as being home to the company's trademark 75mm soft-dome midrange (introduced way back in 1976) and 16.5cm bass driver.

The SCM40A has three power amps (and an active crossover) in each enclosure. There's a 150W module for the bass driver, 60W driving the midrange and a 25W amplifier for the tweeter. It all comes wrapped in a solidly made, curved cabinet, finished in cherry or black ash. Our only aesthetic concern has to do with the supplied metal grilles - they're not particularly class.

Once up and running these are deeply impressive speakers. Though magnificently detailed, they sound notably less clinical than some ATC actives we've heard in the past, yet no less insightful. That's a great thing.

### An unbiased account

We listen to a range of recordings from Keith Jarrett's *Paris/London: Testament* and Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* all the way to Dead Weather's *60 Feet Tall*, and these speakers take it all in their stride. They show no bias towards any genre.

The way they reproduce dynamics is excellent. They have the reach to convince with the large-scale dynamic swings of *Swan Lake*, punching out crescendos with enthusiasm. There's an impressive dose of muscle here, and the kind of low-end authority only really capable big speakers truly manage. Yet

### TECH SPECS

**Type** Floorstander  
**Amplification** 235W;  
(tweeter 25W,  
midrange 60W,  
bass 150W)  
**Finishes** 2  
**Dimensions (hwd)**  
98 x 37 x 34cm

these ATCs are more than happy to turn their hand to subtlety when required. Jarrett's piano playing simply sparkles, the SCM40s rendering the shape and harmonics of each note beautifully.

### Insightful and cohesive

If you want to analyse a recording, we can think of few alternatives as good. Every subtlety is sharply defined with the speakers keeping organised and controlled, yet fluid, even when the music becomes complex. Most hi-fi - even true high-end kit - has problems making sense of Radiohead's *15 Step*. Not these ATCs. They take all in their stride, revealing a lovely cohesion throughout the frequency range. Resolution, timing and dynamics are all spot-on.

Initially, a price of more than six grand looks steep for a pair of conventional-looking floorstanders. But factor in the built-in amplification, exotically engineered in-house drive units and the resultant exceptional sound quality, and the SCM40As emerge as something of a high-end bargain. Consider us smitten.



ATC has long been in the business of producing its own bass and midrange drivers, but the new tweeter is a first for the company. It's an impressive unit

**Consider if** You place sonic honesty above all else and are happy to go active  
**Highlight** There are many. If pushed, we would have to say their clarity

### Rating ★★★★★

**FOR** Terrific detail resolution; exceptional dynamics and control; composure; integration

**AGAINST** Performance loses a little too much sparkle at low volume

**VERDICT** Terrific. The most affordable way to a full dose of ATC's technology and engineering