

Best standmounter £800-£1500

ATC SCM11 £1200

Yes, it's the ATC SCM11s again. The regularity with which these standmounters scoop Awards is almost boring - until you have a listen and realise they are quite simply brilliant for the money. We recently ran a group test taking in all the strongest contenders at around £1000, and the SCM11s won through with surprising ease. If you're after the most informative and honest speakers at this price level we simply haven't heard better.

This second-generation model adds a well-built curved cabinet and brand-new in-house tweeter over their multiple Award-winning predecessors, and these changes have lifted their performance considerably.

Telling it as it is

The SCM11's sound is remarkably natural. Combine that with class-leading resolution and you get superb insight into records such as Van Morrison's *Moodance*. Vocals are given air and communicate plenty of emotion. The song's distinctive walking bassline is rendered with tautness and enthusiasm (helped, no doubt, by the sealed-box design) while dynamic shifts are delivered in a pleasingly expressive way.

Nothing we try wrong-foots these speakers, which remain composed no matter how hard we

push. 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 focused stereo image as we switch to *Jupiter* from Holst's *The Planets* suite. With this material these ATCs make it easy to place the various parts of the orchestra on the wide-open soundstage.

The levels of composure and precision are impressive enough, but the trait we like most about the SCM11s is their class-leading transparency. Whatever we feed these speakers, the sound comes out uncoloured and uncorrupted.



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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. That's a balance we like.

The SCM11s continue to set the standards at this price. Given a suitably talented system they bring music to life in a way no rival we've heard can match. They're worthy winners yet again.

Best standmounter £1500+

ATC SCM19 £2000



What's better than the SCM11s? To get a significant improvement we suggest the next stop should be their big brothers, the SCM19s.

These are essentially scaled-up versions of the 11s. The nicely made sealed-box cabinet of the 11s is increased in volume to 19 litres - ATC's model numbers refer to the internal volume of its speakers - and the mid/bass driver changes to the company's highly developed 15cm unit.

The big news isn't the mid/bass though. That honour belongs to the new tweeter. This 25mm soft dome is a higher-spec version of the unit used on the SCM11.

Given a day to settle, these standmounters turn in a great performance. We start off with 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, the SCM19s picking up the subtle acoustic clues that allow us to perceive the size. Piano notes are delivered with solidity and finesse. We're struck by the resolution on

offer and the natural way these standmounters render the varying intensity of the keystrokes. These speakers really sound right at home here, delivering a presentation that's as convincing tonally as it is spellbinding dynamically.

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

Rave to the rhythm

Moving onto Prince's *Love* (from 2006's *3121* set) shows that these boxes can 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 also lack nothing in terms of body or natural warmth.

These ATCs are highly analytical but they never sound clinical or passionless. They're just transparent to the original recording and system electronics. If these things are your priorities there are few better-sounding alternatives anywhere near this price. Buy with confidence.

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