

New ATC Standmounts wow Jason Kennedy

BY JASON KENNEDY ON 17/03/2014

Jason Kennedy investigates the new ATC SCM11



ATC being ATC its website doesn't mention the fact that the SCM11 is a new version of its stalwart standmount. They have a pretty stealthy approach to marketing which means that the brand is a well kept secret, albeit one that has a pretty big following in both pro and domestic worlds among those who know what's what.

Last year ATC finished the extensive R&D that went into their new tweeter, the first such driver that the Gloucestershire company has made in house. While quite a few companies make their own cone drivers, tweeter manufacture is generally done by large companies and for the most part driver companies like SEAS and the like. So for a small company like ATC to make a dome tweeter is a big deal, and one which has done remarkable things for the SCM11 at least, I've no doubt that it has benefitted the entire range. ATC's pro inclinations mean that the tweeter, dubbed SH25-76, is designed to handle power without losing its composure. It has massive 1500 Gauss flux density in a very small gap that's ferrofluid free for long term consistency. Apparently ferrofluid can evaporate in 12 months if a speaker is used regularly with contemporary music. It has a considerably larger neodymium magnet than usual and the whole assembly is anchored to an alloy faceplate with a machined waveguide that's designed for optimum dispersion and a flat on-axis response. In other words, have them pointing at you for best results.



The mid/bass driver on the SCM11 is a six inch doped cone in a cast chassis with a massive motor assembly (magnet), some other brands make claims like this but you only have to try and pick up this speaker to realise

that this is the real thing. 10.9kg may not sound that much but this speaker is only 38cm (15 inches) tall. The most obvious change to this and the other ATC standmounts is the cabinet, no longer a square box it now has curved sides which enhance rigidity and reduce internal standing waves. All of which should make this a rather more expensive speaker than its predecessor, but in true ATC style the price still seems to be on the low side for the material quality and on the very low side for the sonic capability.

As well as being a rather attractive box it is also devoid of a reflex port, a rare approach in speaker design in this day and age but one which has some solid precedents, notably in the BBC's LS3/5A bookshelf monitor. ATC's Billy Woodman explained that they build most of their two-ways like this because ports mean a loss of cone loading (control) beneath resonance. In a smaller speaker port resonance is between 60 and 80Hz, so everything lower than that will not be as well controlled in a ported system. The reason why ports are so popular is that they give more bottom end output and slightly increased sensitivity through this end of the spectrum. But ATC has always been about accuracy above short term wow factor.



Blu-tacked onto some Custom Design FS104 Signature stands and driven by an ATC P1 power amp the SCM11s had alarmingly little difficulty providing a similar level of entertainment to my PMC fact.8 floorstanders. They do need power to deliver the goods, I'd say 100 watts minimum, but given that and a clean source they proved to be unfeasibly resolute and dynamic. Now it was clear that Joe Cocker was channelling Otis Redding on Cry Me a River (from Mad Dogs and Englishmen), the energy that the cast of thousands (it seems) delivers with this distinctly compressed live recording is uncanny. Then there's the dirt under the fingernails, the hard work and restraint of Joe Walsh's The Smoker You Drink... magnum opus. In this system's hands it sounds like a big juicy steak cooked to perfection.

If you want restraint of course there's no bettering Wonder, the understatement of Talking Book is all the more obvious as is the depth of soul behind the sound. This speaker is capable of communicating the message in the music to a greater degree than virtually all the competition at the price. OK it had the advantage of a power amp from the same philosophical school; resolution and control. But nonetheless it pins the key elements of the music so effectively that you just have to keep playing the stuff. The new tweeter has made a dramatic change to the presentation, ATCs used to be revealing in a critical way. They sounded incredible with incredible recordings but tore the less impressive ones to shreds, many disliked the treble in particular and thought it

grating. Now it's revealing in a more relaxed fashion, you can still hear a vast amount of detail but lesser recordings are no longer uncomfortable. You could probably play the live version of Problem Child (AC/DC – If You Want Blood) at appropriate level, without discomfort, well not too much anyway. Electric guitar should sometime be searing after all.

Back on more sophisticated soil Larry Carlton's intro to Steely Dan's Don't Take Me Alive (The Royal Scam) proved irresistible, Carlton is a master of the art and with direction from Becker and Fagen totally unbeatable. This is a reflection of how effortlessly revealing the SCM11 is, another is the way it renders the phrasing of the horn on Herbie Hancock's version of Court and Spark (River the Joni Letters), it's totally beguiling, and as a rule I'm not much of a brass fan. Then there's the bass, this is what drew me to ATC in the first place and it remains a key element of their appeal. It comes down to what I term girth, usually you need a big speaker to give the bottom end a sense of real substance, real power. But the SCM11 proves that size is not what matters, control is the key. And that makes a lot of sense, that and the realisation that has recently dawned on me of late that most speakers are screwed up by their bass performance, this is why smaller speakers usually time better for instance. But I'll save that for another day, today I suggest that you listen to a pair of ATCs, if it's this pair all the better because you'll struggle to find more musical thrill power for your money elsewhere.

Specifications

Drivers: HF 25mm Neodymium, Mid/LF 150mm

Matched Response: $\pm 0.5\text{dB}$

Frequency Response (-6dB): 56Hz-22kHz

Dispersion: $\pm 80^\circ$ Coherent Horizontal, $\pm 10^\circ$ Coherent Vertical

Sensitivity: 85dB @ 1W @ 1metre

Max SPL: 108dB

Recommended Power Amplifier: 75 to 300 Watts

Nominal Impedance: 8 Ohm

Crossover Frequency: 2.2kHz

Connectors : Binding Posts/4mm Plugs, bi-wire

Cabinet Dimensions (HxWxD): 381x232x236mm

Weight: 10.9kg