

ATC SCM-20SL

compact loudspeaker. I've written about this speaker on and off over the year and I ultimately awarded it a Golden Ear Award. The two-way, sealed-enclosure compact continues to impress me with a combination of midrange dynamics, natural musical timbres, and surprisingly realistic mid-bass structure. It has an unapologetically forward and clinical presentation that might be off-putting

to audiophiles of the laid-back persuasion. But I don't find "laid back" very persuasive nor do I believe music is typically recorded that way. Still, these speakers are exceedingly greedy for amplifier power and tend to kick sand in the face of amps in the under-100 watts-per-channel category. With the substitute amps, the ATCs sounded smooth and – as is their character – possessed of a strong midrange bias. But strapped to the ATC, the substitute amps sounded as if they'd just returned from a visit to Jenny Craig. Gone was some of the mid-bass weight and extension; some of the lower midrange timbral information shifted to the leaner side of the spectrum. In the Plinius' absence I finally decided that what ATCs really needed was no substitute at all, but a good jolt of that old Kiwi 150 wpc kick. With its combination of treble extension and harmonic richness and bass authority, the Plinius 8150 continues to lead the field.

