

PRODUCT

Cyrus CD8 CD PLAYER

Cyrus 8 AMPLIFIER

ATC SCM 12 LOUDSPEAKERS

PRICE

£1000

£800

£1000

£2800

Specifications

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| CD player: | |
| Analogue outputs | 2 line level |
| Digital outputs | Coaxial, optical |
| Amplifier: | |
| Power output | 70 w/channel |
| Inputs | 6 line level, 1 tape loop |
| Remote | Yes, Cyrus system controller |
| Pre-amp output | Yes |
| Speakers: | |
| Type | Stand mounter |
| Size (h x w x d) | 39x22x26cm |
| Power handling | 100-300 watts |
| Sensitivity | 84dB/W/m |

FOR

Transparency; detail resolution; taut bass; rhythmic drive; superbly realistic midrange presentation

AGAINST

What you play is what you hear, so compressed pop sounds frighteningly bad; ATCs look as stylish as slippers worn outdoors, if you care about that sort of thing

VERDICT

★★★★★

This system gets to the heart of the recording like almost no other at this price-point. If you value sonic honesty then this is the combination for you

WELCOME TO HI-FI'S version of Beauty and the Beast. The petite Cyrus 8-series pairing takes on the glamorous leading role, while the bulky ATC SCM12s...well, you can guess that bit, really. Let's just say they ain't pretty.

So, why spend £1000 on a pair of speakers that ignore modern speaker-cabinet fashions so completely? Mainly, because they do so in favour of old-fashioned sonic honesty – they don't over-egg the treble to heighten excitement or boost bass to improve drive, but simply reproduce the signal, good or bad.

To achieve this transparency, the ATCs rely on some superb drive units, with a 25mm polyester dome tweeter and a 15cm coated fabric driver in each cabinet. This mid/bass unit is the star of the show, being coated with a specially formulated viscous damping material that helps to produce lower colouration. It integrates beautifully with the tweeter, and ensures a more cohesive, better-balanced sound.

The compact Cyrus pair squeezes in lots of specification into each tiny box. The amplifier offers six inputs, one tape loop and a headphone jack, and there is a set of preamp outputs for those looking to future upgrades. The DAC network in the CD player includes Cyrus's latest 24-bit ICs, while the power supply is made up of 11 separately regulated units and borrows heavily from the company's PSX-R power-supply. Incidentally, this £350 unit is a great upgrade for both the CD player and

the amplifier. Once connected to the latter, it feeds the preamp circuitry, leaving the amp to concentrate on the power section.

But upgrades can wait. Even as it stands, this system is mightily impressive. The ATCs' honesty complements the excellent detail from both the Cyrus amp and CD, with the result that you hear exactly what you play. Spin compressed pop such as Robbie Williams and it exposes the narrow dynamics on offer, but switch to Nitin Sawhney's *Prophecy* and the system effortlessly reveals the sumptuous production standards. The Cyrus CD player deftly unravels *Prophecy's* complex percussion, and timing is always spot on.

You also get midrange to die for. Voices sound just like a voice – play closely miked vocals and the dog will prick up his ears. However, things aren't quite perfect. The ATCs are demanding speakers and need an amp with plenty of bottle. Even though the 8 punches well above its body weight and drives them reasonably well, we know other amps at this price level, particularly Roksan's Caspian M-Series, can do better when volume levels head north.

But overall, this is such an honest-sounding system. If you like your sounds draped in velvety bass or topped with razor-sharp treble, look elsewhere, but if you value transparency,

At a glance....



communication and musicality, this is a great place to start. So like all good fairy tales, this review has a happy ending: the ugly ATCs' have a heart of musical gold, and the Cyrus pairing has what it takes to bring out the beauty in the beasts.

