



ATC's £480 small boxes are sensational

ATC SCM 7
loudspeaker £480



For Naturalness; dynamics; terrific bass power for size; build quality

Against Low sensitivity means careful matching is essential

Verdict A stunning success. The SCM 7s will bring ATC's clarity and dynamics to a far wider audience

Always fancied a pair of ATC speakers, with their enviable reputation for performance and build quality, but wondered how on earth you'd afford the £1000+ asking price? The answer could be ATC's £480 SCM7s, aiming to bring its brand values to a whole new set of customers.

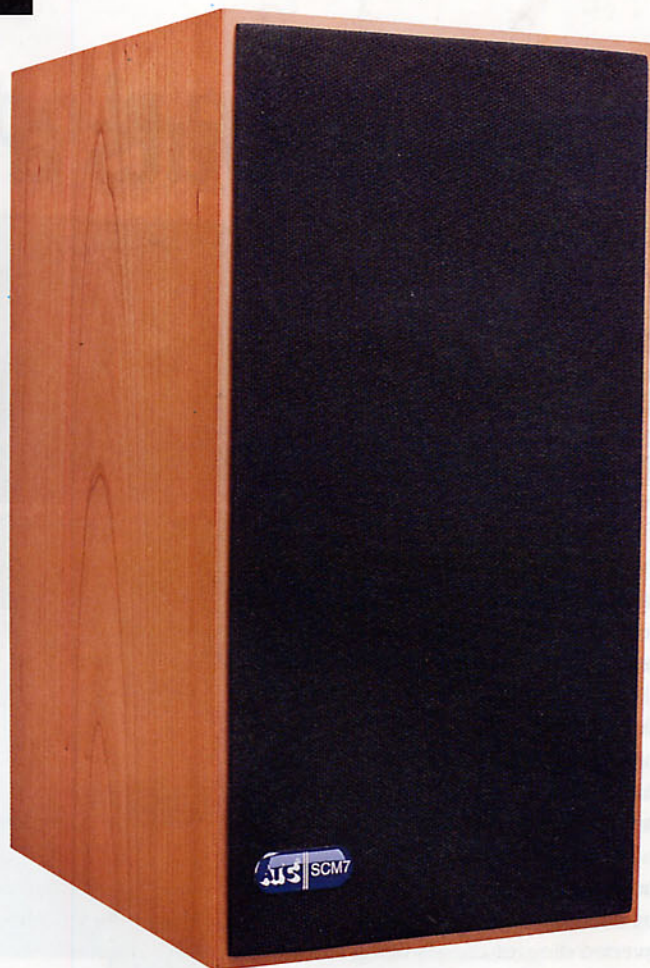
Don't think ATC has lowered its high engineering standards to adapt to a lower price point. The 12cm diameter mid/bass driver is built in-house, just like those of its bigger brothers, and it features the firm's traditional extra-large motor assembly in a bid to reduce all types of distortions normally associated with moving coil drivers. As in other ATC designs, the soft dome is bought in from OEM suppliers, in this case Vifa, and the two drive units are integrated via a high-quality biwireable crossover.

The SCM 7s may stand only 30cm tall, but mount them on a solid pair of stands and they will deliver a performance of stunning scale and authority. Unlike most similarly sized rivals, the SCM 7s don't need a rear wall to sound balanced:

their sealed-box design means that they are more tolerant about positioning than most. Their wide dispersion characteristic also helps matters by spreading the sound well beyond the outer edges of the speaker cabinets, leading to a firmly focused and expansive soundstage.

Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7* comes through with plenty of power and weight. A neutral tonal balance and immaculate handling of low-level detail means that instruments retain convincing timbre and believable three-dimensional sounds.

Meanwhile, music like the Spooks' 'Things I've Seen' is delivered with firm low frequencies and plenty of attack. But the SCM 7s don't forget the subtle stuff, as they unearth the sort of low-level detail that most rivals pass by.



A word of warning: like any small speakers the SCM 7s are limited when playing bass-heavy tracks such as Massive Attack's 'Angel' at high volumes. In these circumstances the little mid/bass units run out of travel and the speakers' impressive composure starts to crumble.

A sensitivity of 83 dB/W/m indicates that a fairly powerful amp will be needed to drive these speakers to reasonable

volume in larger rooms, but a nominal impedance of 8 ohms implies they're not a particularly tricky load. We'd recommend a good 50W amplifier as the minimum necessary to obtain decent volume levels.

The SCM 7s are set to upset the status quo at this price point, with weapons such as top-class resolution, terrific dynamics and impressive stereo imaging. The competition should be worried.

THE SCM 7 CLUB PARTY

ATC eschewed conventional small-speaker design by using a sealed cabinet for the SCM 7s. The company feels that reflex-loading the bass loses the accuracy it wants at low frequencies. Instead, it developed an in-house driver to produce the desired bass depth and quality from a compact 7-litre cabinet. A highly engineered mid/bass driver also allows the SCM 7s to cope with higher input levels than most rivals; indeed, ATC recommends an amplifier range from 50W right up to 300W. The crossover uses air-cored inductors that are wound in-house, and features high-quality polypropylene capacitors. The cabinet is available in rosewood or cherrywood veneers.