

Best standmounter £700-£1500

ATC SCM 11 **£900**

Familiarity breeds contempt, so they say. ATC's venerable SCM11s go to prove that 'they' sometimes don't have a clue what 'they' are on about. For the sixth time in a row the SCM11s make off with our £1000-ish standmounter Award.

And they have also, for yet another year, seen off some brilliant competition (we're thinking particularly of Acoustic Energy's AE1 Classics and Neat's Petite SXes) to retain their status as the outstanding grand's-worth of standmounting speaker. This year, in fact, we've widened their category to include rivals costing half as much again, only for the SCM11s to prevail at a canter.

The ATCs just don't make a false move. Where dynamic ability, low-end articulation and sheer transparency are concerned, the SCM11s make the competition sound coarse and ham-fisted. No other speaker near this price can deliver source information in as uncoloured and uncorrupted a manner as these unassuming (though beautifully constructed and finished) little boxes.

Better than anything else at the price

Even when invited out of their comfort zone by James Blake's eponymous debut album, the ATCs remain unflappable. Their compact dimensions and sealed-box configuration mean the plentiful low frequencies don't have the scale of some rivals, but only the SCM11s can offer such prodigious bass texture, tonality and detail - and where low-range agility is concerned, no competitor comes close.

The tonal balance is impeccable, the soundstage expansive and the attention to detail - barely-there transients, almost-subliminal finger-on-fretboard squeaks, the merest inhalation before the vocal begins - is bordering on the fanatical. And yet the SCM11s knit all of this information into a musical whole, and exhibit as much talent for delivering the overall performance as for its individual components. They demand partnering kit of a similar standard, but given what they need the ATCs reward like nothing else at the price.

BEST FOR Accuracy

All our Award-winners sound ace, but if you want to hear a recording as the studio engineer did, the ATCs get you closest.



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