

ATC SCM12 Pro Monitors and ATC P1 Pro Amplifier

These passive monitors and amp bring ATC quality into any studio environment

PRICES: *SCM12 Pro monitors, \$2000/pair; P1 Pro amplifier, \$3500; purchased as a system with two speakers and one amplifier, \$4350*

REVIEWS BY PAUL VNUK JR.

I have been blessed to try, test, review, and use quite a few different monitor speakers over the years, from entry level up to some of the most state-of-the-art models made. Despite that, the one company whose speakers I have not had the chance to hear outside of trade shows or demos in other studios has been the British firm ATC Loudspeakers. A big reason is that ATC monitors live in an elite studio world where speakers can be the size of small refrigerators and cost upwards of \$17,000 and beyond.

Recently, however, ATC launched the new SCM12 Pro monitor along with its matching P1 Pro Amplifier. I finally got the chance to mix on a pair of ATC monitors in my own space for about a month.

SCM12 Pro

The SCM12 Pro is a 2-way passive design. Its low/mid frequency driver is a 6" CLD speaker. CLD stands for Constrained Layer Damping and is a proprietary ATC design that uses a multi-layered composite cone with a central damping layer sandwiched within. This is made to reduce cone breakup and distortion. The 1" tweeter is ATC's SH25-76 dual suspension soft dome design that, according to ATC, allows "free piston voice coil movement without reliance on ferrofluid."

These are housed in a black sealed MDF cabinet measuring 15.7 x 9.4 x 9.3 inches and weighing 24 lb. On the rear of the cabinet are two sets of binding posts that come linked for stock use, but can be uncoupled if you choose to bi-amplify the cabinet.

They are designed to handle 75 to 300 Watts per cabinet at an 8Ω impedance. They offer a frequency range of 80 Hz–16 kHz (± 2 dB, extended to 56 Hz–22 kHz at -6 dB tolerance), a maximum SPL of 108 dB (per pair @ 1m), and they have an internal crossover frequency of 2.2 kHz.

P1 Pro

The P1 Pro amplifier, which is designed for use with a pair of SCM12 Pro speakers, is a stereo MOSFET Class AB design that puts out 150W per side @ 8Ω. It has a frequency response of 2 Hz–400 kHz (-3 dB) and THD $<0.002\%$ / -95 dB (1 kHz, 1 dB below full power).

It is a high-tech modern looking design in a 3U 19" brushed silver rack enclosure and it weighs 44 lbs. It's a simple design, with no onboard level/power attenuation and a touch-sensitive on/off switch. On the back are standard binding posts along with XLR and RCA inputs for each channel, as well as RCA link outs.

Although you can purchase the speakers and amp separately, they are designed to work together as a system. There is even a very significant price break when the speakers and amplifier are purchased as a package!

In use

I set up the system in my GIK Acoustics-treated control room as a second set of monitors alongside my larger 3-way Focal Trio6 Be monitors. My initial reaction was: Wow, they could not be more different! For obvious size reasons, the Focal 3-ways had more room low end due to their 8" drivers, and their beryllium tweeters are noticeably brighter than most soft dome designs (not just ATC's). Having said that, I was impressed that after a few days' break-in time, the ATCs were instantly comfortable to work and mix with.

Sonically, I would describe them as smooth, full, and solid, and even a tad warm sounding—not in a mushy or pillowy way, it's more that they lack the usual modern, ultra-bright studio monitor high end that we have become accustomed to. The adjective I keep coming back to when describing them is that their sound is pleasant.

Note that when I say "warm", I am describing speakers, not a mic. These monitors are still clear, clean and detailed, with a very natural fullness of sound across the frequency spectrum from the lows to highs. Nothing sounds hyped or

exaggerated; the lows punch rather than push and rumble, the mids are nicely forward and unscooped (yes!), and I have already described the clear but not brittle high end.

They have a very generous sweet spot, but rather than being ultra-wide for the sake of width, I found it nicely even and immersive. Moving your head to either side of the stereo field does not collapse the image or make the mix feel out of phase as some speakers can do. This balanced evenness continues as you move around the room, but you do lose the low punch a tad when you step out of the ideal listening triangle.

When mixing, bass guitar and kick drum are very easy to sculpt into a mix, as it is bass you can hear rather than a low you feel. As for the mids, vocals feel like you can reach out and touch them. These are very genre-neutral speakers; they especially sound good on heavy modern rock, as the highs don't take your head off. Their sound stays consistent at any volume level and they are comfortable at low, mid, and cranked levels—and despite their size, these little guys can crank!

About the only genres that may not work well without a subwoofer are hip-hop and deep bass style electronic music, but only if you need to really feel those deep frequencies. I tried them with a KRK 12sHO, and they paired nicely with it once I adjusted levels so I was just using the sub conservatively for some boom.

As they break in, the bass does open up a touch, and I wonder how they will sound six months on! Even after a month, they are much bigger sounding than they look. The overall sound is nicely enveloping and competes well with many 8" models.

Trust

All new monitors require a learning curve, and these are all about trusting what you hear. If you are moving from studio monitors with bright highs and bass hype to the SCM12 Pro speakers, they may seem a bit mid-heavy at first, or even unexciting and dull.

For me, once I learned to trust that evenness and stop trying to compensate and push them to have the bright highs and booming lows I was typically used to, they

really became a joy for mixing. In recent years, this clear and unhyped sound has often been one of the defining marks of upper-end professional monitors. Even after day-long sessions, I was going home with zero fatigue. Even better, my mixes translated very well to the real world.

Conclusion

The SCM12 Pro monitor is ATC's most affordable to date, but it's still a serious investment, even if you take advantage of the over-\$1000 savings from buying them as a system with the P1 Pro amplifier. Still, you're definitely getting what you pay for.

Bottom line, this is a great-sounding mid-sized speaker. It would be perfect for edit suites, home studios, and as smaller near-fields in larger rooms. The components in this system ooze ATC quality and they are a comfortable joy to mix on... and what more could you ask for in a monitor? 🎧

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