

By Russ Long

ATC SCM20ASL Active Monitor

Although ATC (Acoustic Transducer Company) is not a household name, their monitors are becoming more and more common in high-end studios around the world. They are the monitor that Sony chose to highlight their SACD demos, that Pink Floyd used to evaluate 5.1 mixes of the *Dark Side of the Moon* album, and that Telarc uses for their mastering.

ATC was established in London in 1974 by Australian emigré Bill Woodman, who still heads the company today. ATC was built on the premise that hi-fi loudspeakers tend to be detailed and accurate but of limited dynamic range, while professional monitor speakers tend to be the exact opposite. From the beginning, ATC products were designed with the goal of offering the best of both of these worlds. Mr. Woodman realized that this goal was not easily met primarily because hi-fi levels of accuracy and detail call for lightweight moving parts and delicate engineering where professional monitor levels of performance demand far more robust components engineered to survive the rigors of high level use for extended periods.

FEATURES

The new SCM20ASL combines 20 years of ATC design with the latest advances in materials technology, and a radical speaker cabinet design that looks like it is straight from the future. Each speaker is 28.2 inches high by 13.8 inches wide by 18.8 inches deep and weighs 60 pounds (shipping weight is 66 pounds/speaker). The speaker employs a Super Linear magnet in a new version of ATC's renowned 6.5-inch custom built SL driver along with 1-inch waveguide-



loaded dome tweeter. This active two-way design incorporates two separate amplifiers in each cabinet. A 250W amplifier powers the bass and mid frequencies and a 50W amplifier powers the high frequencies. The speakers are capable of delivering a continuous SPL of 108 dB at one meter. A selector on the rear panel of the speaker provides five different LF boost settings and a flat reference setting. This allows the speakers low end response to be tailored to a specific environment.

The stylish lines of the die cast aluminum cabinet are functional as well as aesthetic, incorporating a carry handle and large cooling fins, and providing superb structural integrity. Universal Omnimount fixings are built into the cabinet, for flying or wall mounting. The speaker's power supply can be switched to 230, 110, or 100A AV, which assures that the monitor system provides true plug-and-play operation anywhere in the world. The speakers

have a retail price of \$7,250/pair (street price is in the \$5k-6k range)

IN USE

Before working with the ATC speakers I wanted to familiarize myself with the subtleties of their sound so I spent considerable time listening to several extremely familiar recordings. My initial attraction was to their amazing imaging across the stereo spectrum. As I spent more time listening I was surprised when I discovered small details such as subtle delays and reverb trails that I never knew existed. I found that the more time I spent listening to the monitors, the more these nuances revealed themselves.

I have always believed that a good pair of studio monitors shouldn't sound good, they should sound accurate and honest. A great recording should sound great but at the same time, a good pair of monitors should reveal a poor recording rather than make it appear to sound great. My biggest complaint with so

Fast Facts

- Applications:**
Studio, broadcast, post production
- Key Features:**
Two-way; 6.5-inch SuperLinear woofer; 1-inch dome tweeter; 250W LF amp; 50W HF amp; LF controls
- Price:**
\$7,250 per pair
- Contact:**
ATC/TransAudio Group at 702-365-5155, www.transaudiogroup.com.

many of today's monitors, especially the lower priced lines, is that they hype the sound and give the false impression that the program material sounds better than it actually does. When I listen to music at home, I want it all to sound good but when I work in the studio, I have to know the difference. I found the ATC monitors to be exceptionally accurate making them a pleasure to work with. I was also impressed with their imaging which is among the best I've encountered on any speaker at any price.

I also think it is important that a good pair of studio monitors is nonfatiguing. I frequently monitor for 15 or 16 hour days and I can't afford to burn-out at the 10th hour. Distortion (both speaker and amplifier) is the primary cause of listening fatigue. In most instances, the higher the distortion, the higher the fatigue. The ATCs are clearly a winner in this area. Their matched amp and driver system maintains ultra-low distortion.

When it came to actually doing some work on the SCM20ASLs, I was once again more than satisfied. My first opportunity to mix on the SCM20ASLs was mixing an album for French rockers Nannup. As I mixed, I initially found myself working a little slower than usual and often second guessing myself but I found that the more time I spent with the ATCs the more I like them. By day three I was sold. The SCM20ASL's accuracy is amazing, especially in the bottom end and their clarity and detail is truly stunning.

I went on to spend several days tracking and overdubbing with the ATCs and I ended up with equally positive results. In tracking situations the band often wants to listen back at mind-blowing levels; I found that the SCM20ASLs weren't able to get as loud as I would have liked, but this is my only real complaint with the speakers.

SUMMARY

After four weeks of recording and mixing on the ATC SCM20ASLs, I'm sold. They are an expensive speaker but I have no doubt that they are worth their robust price tag. If money isn't an option, the SCM20ASLs should be a top consideration on every studio and engineer's speaker list as they are truly remarkable.

Russ Long, a Nashville-based producer/engineer, owns The Carport recording studio. He is a regular contributor to Pro Audio Review.

when you need bass that plays equally well on subwoofers and earbuds...

MaxxBCL delivers.

MaxxBass lets you retain deep bass even on small speakers by using Waves patented psychoacoustic algorithm to add low end without low frequencies. Just one of the three brilliant processors in the MaxxBCL.



The New
Waves MaxxBCL

Visit your dealer or
www.waves.com

MaxxBass Enhancer
Renaissance Compressor



L2 Ultramaximizer Peak Limiter

The Professional Standard