

Ed Selley discovers what happens when a pro audio brand makes a lifestyle speaker



AV INFO

PRODUCT:
On-wall 5.1
speaker system

POSITION:
Slim enclosure
siblings to ATC's
SCM range

PEERS:
DALI Opticon LCR;
Monitor Audio
Soundframe

5.1 slim and sonic

A key advantage of satellite speakers is their ability to be wall-mounted. With larger, full-bandwidth models, mounting up and out of the way becomes a much tougher business – a reason why they remain a rarity. Which is a shame, as even if you don't want a full surround set, they can be useful as rear speakers.

ATC is going some way to filling that gap in the market. What you see here is a system made from the smallest members of its brand-new HTS series. Appearances can be a little deceptive, though. The HTS speakers are actually close relatives of the SCM models that have been on sale for a few years. Each HTS takes the driver arrangement of the corresponding SCM offering and places it in a cabinet that's been adapted for use on a wall. The HTS7, therefore, is the thin-profile version of the SCM7 standmount that we previously played with in *HCC* #267.

This means you get a 1in soft dome tweeter and 5in mid/bass driver, both of which are built in-house at ATC's UK HQ. They are placed in a cabinet that is taller and wider than their conventional cousins but correspondingly shallower. As a result, the internal volume remains the same at seven litres.

ATC has a reputation for practicality and speakers that will work in demanding environments come what may, and the HTS models are no exception. The cabinet is supported by not one but two keyhole mounts to more evenly spread its 8kg weight. The rear surface has soft foam contact pads at the corners to ensure

that the cabinet will sit flush on the wall and not rattle once it does.

There are some other nice touches, too. The terminal panel (which is for single wiring only) is up near the top of the cabinet. ATC then runs a channel down from this to the base of the speaker's rear, so that any cabling won't interfere with that flush fit.

A full-size template is supplied for drilling your holes and ATC has foregone the usual steel basket grilles for more unobtrusive room placement. The only slight downside is that the speaker's black drivers did tend to show through the white cloths on my review package. A satin black finish is also available.

There's no direct equivalent of the CIC centre channel (the go-to model for the SCM lineup) in the HTS range. Instead, ATC has rotated the driver complement of the HTS7 through ninety degrees to create its new HTS7C. While this means you are technically a driver down over the standard model, you gain the advantage of having the same drivers arranged in the same way in all speakers, which should improve transition throughout the soundstage.

This on-wall series, for obvious reasons, also has no dedicated subwoofer, so this 5.1 setup has been supplied with a white-finished version of the C1 Sub that I've used previously. This is no bad thing though – the C1 is a strong performer with a useful panel-driven setup.

Like their conventional box relatives, the HTS speakers are sealed and sound their best with plenty of good-quality power behind them. They aren't particularly sensitive (rated at 84dB), but have a nominal 8ohm impedance (which ATC says doesn't dip significantly) that should help the job of your AV receiver.

One interesting side effect of their design is that as they are meant to be placed against a wall, the HTS7 has better in-room extension than their standmount relatives, as they are voiced to use the wall for reinforcement.

As the price suggests, these are beautifully made and solid-feeling devices that should last for years.

The truth is... on your wall

These HTS speakers are very much the Dana Scully of the AV speaker world, seeking to find logic and order in the most chaotic of situations. The street fight on Jedha >

1. Okay, the subwoofer won't mount on-wall but the rest will...

REVIEWS



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in...*Rogue One* (Blu-ray) retains its energy and ferocity, but these speakers place effects with a superior sense of accuracy and space, making the slightly relentless nature of the production more coherent. The images on screen become easier to follow; the experience more rewarding. Detail retrieval is excellent, too. The dense mix of shouts, blaster fire and impacts are unravelled into an immersive soundfield.

The final rain-sodden Grand Prix of *Rush* (Blu-ray) is no less compelling. The ATCs handle the very layered nature of this soundmix extremely well, where the roar of the cars sits on top of the score, which is then itself on top of the snippets of commentary. If that makes it sound like these favour a cool, calm and collected performance to the detriment of excitement, think again. It sounds entirely real, and – at times – joyfully visceral.

The C1 subwoofer, unchanged from before, delivers the same agile but powerful presentation. It melds well with the rest of the speaker array, and its sealed design means finding a place for it is fairly straightforward. It is a little pricey compared to some similar models, but it performs admirably. I would appreciate a bit more slam, though.

Even and consistent

With the rest of the package using five almost identical speakers, the result is a soundfield that is even and consistent when FX and score are being flung about. Notably, as the speakers are placed on the wall with no toe-in, and even when they are installed comparatively wide apart, there doesn't seem to be any negative hit on imaging. The SCM7 review package has long been returned to ATC, so it is hard to make a completely accurate comparison between them and their wall-mounted kin, but the same points keep cropping up in my notes. At pretty much any level you choose to play them, these are refined but involving and exciting.

An assured sense of space and control means that this 5.1 set works well with more considered soundmixes that aren't simply a loosely strung together bunch of explosions. When Jake Gyllenhaal enters the house where the shootings have occurred in *Nightcrawler* (Blu-ray), the tiny sounds of the near-deserted property and the

SPECIFICATIONS

HTS7

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 5in doped mid/bass cone; 1 x 1in fabric dome tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 60Hz-22kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 84dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 300W **DIMENSIONS:** 390(h) x 245(w) x 137(d) mm **WEIGHT:** 8kg

HTS7C

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 5in doped mid/bass cone; 1 x 1in fabric dome tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 60Hz-22kHz **SENSITIVITY (CLAIMED):** 84dB **POWER HANDLING (CLAIMED):** 300W **DIMENSIONS:** 245(h) x 390(w) x 137(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 8kg

C1 subwoofer

DRIVE UNITS: 1 x 12in doped paper woofer **ENCLOSURE:** Sealed **FREQUENCY RESPONSE (CLAIMED):** 18Hz-250Hz **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 200W **REMOTE CONTROL:** Yes **DIMENSIONS:** 410(h) x 360(w) x 360(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 24kg **CONNECTIONS:** Stereo phono input/LFE input; speaker level inputs

PARTNER WITH



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low-level buzz of the city outside ooze into my listening room with clarity and precision. Again, it's a performance that's easy to lose yourself in, although when you drop to a very low, late-night listening level, some of this fine detail becomes harder to discern.

Where the HTS7 scores over a more conventional satellite speaker, and even over the SCM7, is that thanks to that boost from wall-mounting, stereo performance – without the aid of the C1 subwoofer – is fabulous. If you need a speaker that will perform both music and television/movie roles, the HTS7 has to be heard. And that's before you consider that it is taking up very little space.

Multichannel music also convinces. The audition period coincided with the BBC's Glastonbury coverage, and this package proved unfailingly impressive at locking the musicians onto the stage and capturing the sound of the crowd, not simply as a vast single noise but as a body of people.

Compromise? Not me

The HTS7 and HTS7C are an impressive achievement. For what is only a slightly higher price than the SCM7 5.1 package, the UK brand has assembled a quintet of speakers that have the same unburstable sense of capability and excitement – and at the same time enable you to reclaim some precious floorspace. If you'd been considering investing in on-wall speakers as an unwanted compromise, these will definitely cheer you up ■

HCC VERDICT



ATC HTS7 5.1

→ £3,500 → atcloudspeakers.co.uk

WE SAY: An extremely happy marriage of capability and convenience, ATC's HTS speakers might be just what your cinema room is crying out for.

2. The HTS7 offers twin keyhole fixing points and a cable run down its rear cabinet