Here are times when the full benefit of a particular product cannot be totally realised until other changes and developments in seemingly unrelated areas have come to pass. In the case of active loudspeakers, the technical advantages have been known for some time in professional studio applications, but in terms of what that actually means for home audio fans constructing a system, any benefits have to be measured against the practicalities and upgrade path of a more traditional setup. In truth, you have to be completely on board with the active loudspeaker concept to go to the effort of constructing an audio system around it.

The blurring of where source ends and amplifier begins has recently started to make the active speaker look like a much more enticing concept. With a large swathe of source equipment now sporting a volume control, the ability to construct a compact but capable system using active loudspeakers has become a much more practical proposition. If you happen to be a bit of an expert in the field, this is very good news and, make no mistake, ATC is a specialist in active speaker design, and its SCM40A is the flagship of its Entry Series.

This updated multi-functional player combines a high specification analogue preamp with a DAC, offering analogue and digital inputs and a CD mechanism.

**ATC SCM40A £6,800**

This updated multi-functional player combines a high specification analogue preamp with a DAC, offering analogue and digital inputs and a CD mechanism.

**ATC CD12 Mk2 £2,950**

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One of the very best implementations of active speakers that I have spent time with construct a compact but capable system using active loudspeakers has become a much more practical proposition. If you happen to be a bit of an expert in the field, this is very good news and, make no mistake, ATC is a specialist in active speaker design, and its SCM40A is the flagship of its Entry Series.

In the CD12 Mk2 CD player/USB DAC/preamplifier (HFC 436), it has a product that’s able to harness its active loudspeakers in a thoroughly modern way. At its heart, it is a Class A preamp, sporting a pair of line inputs that pass through a conventional analogue potentiometer to a choice of balanced and unbalanced outputs. Where things really start to get interesting, however, is the other **COMPONENTS**

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As the active loudspeaker comes of age, Ed Selley sees just what a master of the art is capable of.
SCM40A has a unique aesthetic. It's an example of the distinctive and pragmatic approach to speaker terminals, there's an amp plate identical from the front, around the 389) floorstander, the largest member of the Entry Series and, while it is identical from the front, around the back instead of being a mix of speaker terminals, there's an amp plate sporting a single XLR connection. The amp delivers a hefty 242W into the three drivers, one of which is an example of the distinctive and enormous capability of dome midrange offerings that ATC is synonymous with. The combination of the CDA2 Mk2 and SCM40A is rather stylish in a pragmatically business-like way. The SCM40A has a unique aesthetic. It's finished to a very high standard and it doesn't take up any more room than most rivals, but there is a sense of purpose in it that is plain from the moment you lift it off the box. This is a feeling that grows the more you spend time with it to the point where even though almost every pair will lead the pampered life of home audio equipment, if you suddenly need it to take the feed off a mixing desk for an impromptu gig, it can still be handled in a presentation that is as spacious as you could hope for. The active loudspeaker is no longer simply the optimal choice on paper, it is utterly and unequivocally joyous. From equipment in 2018, offering a difference going active makes to the SCM40A. The passive version of the speaker is supremely capable, but paired with ATC’s own amplification, the system is really capable of. The skidgheimer low-end of Scratch Massie’s Waiting For A Sign is simply awesome. If you want bass that you feel as much as hear, there's very little else available anywhere near this price that can out class this setup. What sets it apart further is that there's nothing I've ever heard anywhere near this price that combines this gut-wrenching impact with the agility this system possesses. As a combo, it is utterly addictive.

This is a collection of equipment that will play anything with a palpable sense of joy and natural as you could hope for. The CDA2 Mk2 and SCM40A is rather stylish in a pragmatically business-like way. The SCM40A has a unique aesthetic. It's finished to a very high standard and it doesn't take up any more room than most rivals, but there is a sense of purpose in it that is plain from the moment you lift it off the box. This is a feeling that grows the more you spend time with it to the point where even though almost every pair will lead the pampered life of home audio equipment, if you suddenly need it to take the feed off a mixing desk for an impromptu gig, it can still be handled with a wonderful sense of space and richness, but it's the detail that really makes the difference. At the crescendo, Frahm can be heard singing along. On some systems, it's barely distinguishable. Here, it's as clear as a bell. No less important is that beyond the technical capability – and this system offers it in spades – is a collection of equipment that will play anything and play it with a palpable sense of palpable sense of joy and natural as you could hope for. The CDA2 Mk2 and SCM40A is rather stylish in a pragmatically business-like way. The SCM40A has a unique aesthetic. It's finished to a very high standard and it doesn't take up any more room than most rivals, but there is a sense of purpose in it that is plain from the moment you lift it off the box. This is a feeling that grows the more you spend time with it to the point where even though almost every pair will lead the pampered life of home audio equipment, if you suddenly need it to take the feed off a mixing desk for an impromptu gig, it can still be handled with a wonderful sense of space and richness, but it's the detail that really makes the difference. At the crescendo, Frahm can be heard singing along. On some systems, it's barely distinguishable. Here, it's as clear as a bell. No less important is that beyond the technical capability – and this system offers it in spades – is a collection of equipment that will play anything and play it with a palpable sense of palpable sense of joy and natural as you could hope for. The CDA2 Mk2 and SCM40A is rather stylish in a pragmatically business-like way. The SCM40A has a unique aesthetic. It's finished to a very high standard and it doesn't take up any more room than most rivals, but there is a sense of purpose in it that is plain from the moment you lift it off the box. This is a feeling that grows the more you spend time with it to the point where even though almost every pair will lead the pampered life of home audio equipment, if you suddenly need it to take the feed off a mixing desk for an impromptu gig, it can still be handled with a wonderful sense of space and richness, but it's the detail that really makes the difference. At the crescendo, Frahm can be heard singing along. On some systems, it's barely distinguishable. Here, it's as clear as a bell. No less important is that beyond the technical capability – and this system offers it in spades – is a collection of equipment that will play anything and play it with a palpable sense of

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