



## ATC SCM150ASL PRO makes mastering clear as day at Jacob's Well

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- Sangwook 'Sunny' Nam (Owner, Jacob's Well Mastering)

Grammy®-nominated mastering engineer **Sangwook 'Sunny' Nam** has installed a pair of custom **SCM150ASL PRO** three-way active loudspeakers at his unique **Jacob's Well Mastering** facility founded in 2012...

*"The reason I decided to go with ATC is that I had used ATC speakers during my time at The Mastering Lab."* So states **Sangwook 'Sunny' Nam**, a protégé of mastering legend Doug Sax at The Mastering Lab in Hollywood (and, later, Ojai, California) from July 2005 until flying solo, setting up shop towards the Eastern Seaboard at a scenic riverside location in West Lebanon, New Hampshire.



How, why, and when Korean native Nam needed to seek out a mastering mentor before becoming an internationally sought-after mastering engineer in his own right makes for fascinating reading.

“I began my career as a recording engineer in 1998,” Nam begins. “Establishing myself as a top producer for classical music recordings and as an engineer for audiophile recordings in Korea, I worked with well-known musicians, such as Myungwha Chung, Daejin Kim, and Yeol Eum Son, and also a range of orchestras, including the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Polish National Radio Symphony, and Nashville Symphony. I also got involved in the mastering process to preserve the quality of my audiophile recordings, but then I was able to enjoy mastering recordings produced by other people. Even though my interest in mastering stemmed from classical music, I mastered many musical styles, ranging from hip-hop to heavy metal. My passion to become a better mastering engineer drove me to e-mail Doug Sax, asking him to be my mentor. Doug generously allowed me to work with him and I also had the honour of working with great engineers like Al Schmitt, Bill Schnee, James Guthrie, and Don Murray when I joined The Mastering Lab.”

By the time of Nam’s noteworthy tenure, The Mastering Lab (TML) was equipped with **ATC** loudspeakers, which speaks volumes about their perceived quality when considering the unique transfer system employed there. “TML has a very unique signal chain,” notes Nam. “While it’s a commonly held belief that one has to have the cleanest signal path to be of service as a top-quality mastering studio, this is easier said than done. TML has ploughed its efforts into realising this simple but demanding belief since 1967, designing and building equipment in-house to achieve the cleanest possible signal path. A lot of elements in the signal chain there are quite unconventional, requiring extra effort from mastering engineers — unlike using modern equipment in other mastering setups. So the most important thing that I learned at TML is how to evaluate the elements of the signal chain that can serve to implement the best transfer system.”

Which was exactly what Nam took with him when family commitments compelled a cross-continental move: “My wife was hired by one of the Ivy League colleges and wanted to take our kids with her. I sort of commuted for about a year before deciding to stay with my family. It was pretty hard for me to leave TML and Doug, but my priority lies with my family.”

Far from the madding crowd, Nam chose to build his own biblically-named **Jacob’s Well Mastering** facility close to his newfound family home: “My studio sits on a riverbank of the Connecticut. It was originally a big storage unit attached to a small office building, so I built the studio inside it from the ground up. My room is designed by Rick Ruggieri, who designed TML’s room in Ojai — basically, it’s the same design, but scaled a bit differently because my room is built for stereo channel mastering only.

The uniqueness of my room lies in the placement of the equipment rack behind the engineer. To achieve the cleanest signal path possible, putting nothing between yourself and the speakers is pretty obvious. This makes it much harder for the engineer to work, but both TML and myself don't mind going the extra mile to maintain our philosophy at every stage of the signal path, and, actually, once you're used to that placement, it's not that hard to work in that way."

Specifying **SCM150ASL PRO** three-way active loudspeakers for Nam's new room at **Jacob's Well Mastering** may not have been a hard choice for its driven owner, but fulfilling the order was far from standard practice for manufacturer **ATC** since soffit mounting was the order of the day. Concedes Nam: "This is quite rare in mastering studios, but this setup works for me, and Rick did wonderful work to mitigate the problems that could come out of the soffit design. Also this enabled me to put in a big window through which I can enjoy the beautiful view of the Connecticut river without affecting the room acoustic. ATC handled all my requests for a custom wood enclosure and different placement of the mid and tweeter units with grace. The amp pack was also sent separately to JCF Audio, who built all of my custom transfer system, for modification to suit my needs."

As for the finished result, Nam is clearly happy with his room and the custom **SCM150ASL PRO** setup within: "With the design of the room, the ATCs translate the sound that I'm getting into other speaker systems very well. When it comes to speakers, most of the time people talk about bass and high frequencies, but, for me, midrange is most important, because that's where most of the music is. The biggest strength of the ATCs are their ability to present the midrange at its best, which helps me a lot in terms of evaluating the mix and deciding what to do with it."