

hi-finews

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& Record Review

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REVIEWS
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ULTIMATE HI-FI 2012

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and essential music

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• **DIGITAL DISC & MEDIA PLAYERS** Burmester to TAD • **TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS** Anthem to VTL
• **LOUDSPEAKERS** Cabasse to Wilson Audio • **VINTAGE** B&O, Electrocompaniet, KEF, Sony and more

UK £4.50 US \$10.99 Aus \$10.50



AUDIO
FILE

Floorstanding three-and-a-half-way loudspeaker
 Made by: Sonus faber SpA, Italy
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds
 Telephone: 0208 971 3909
 Web: www.sonusfaber.com; www.absolutesounds.com



Sonus faber Aida

(£80,000)

The Aida exudes all the sumptuous design allure typical of Sonus faber but which 2010's rather bluff, utilitarian The Sonus faber so obviously lacked. And while it draws on many of the TSF technologies it melds and dresses them differently.

The cabinet is a braced clamshell construction lyre-shaped in cross section, with spaced curved wooden side cheeks. A gentle lean-back helps time alignment of the midrange driver and tweeter.

A 320mm driver is mounted in the base of the cabinet, with its port behind. Crossover from this subwoofer to the twin front-mounted 220mm bass drivers is at a low 55Hz, and these two drivers only operate over a passband of

'Signor Verdi, your masterwork's name has not been used in vain'

about two octaves before handing on to the 180mm midrange driver, which in turn crosses over to the 29mm soft dome tweeter at 3kHz.

Diaphragm materials echo those used in TSF but this time all the drivers bar subwoofer and rear-firing midrange unit are Sonus faber designs manufactured by Scanspeak. Unlike in TSF, the tweeter is placed above the midrange unit rather than below and is a new Damped Apex Dome design. Adjustment of tweeter level is provided to allow an optimum tonal balance to be achieved in rooms with differing amounts of soft furnishing.

LUSH IN SCOPE

As we listened through a gamut of '70s rock to the latest 'commercial' pop, including Adele's *21*, the Aidas delivered – unfailingly – the most luxuriously appointed music, rich in

RIGHT: The curvaceous Aida cabinet has seven drivers. Internal dampers act to cancel out residual vibrations

detail and lush in warmth and scope but never sickly sweet. Bass was exceptionally deep and so smoothly extended that you could envisage the most obnoxious of room modes being avoided.

The 'whoomp' of bass from 'Bye Bye Blackbird' from Patricia Barber's *Nightclub* album [Blue Note] was palpable even at modest volume, a groundswell with the sweet percussive impact of piano and string bass floating above, the ensemble filling the room and the push of air from the bass loading it up at LF in exquisite fashion.

With Bonnie Raitt's finest LP, *The Glow*, the percussion opening alone on 'Standing By The Same Old Love' would be enough to make you realise this was one of those speakers that

comes along maybe once every five years. It married in perfect proportions the impact and the feel of real drums, while the bass and guitar enjoyed in-the-room presence. Raitt's voice was rich and expressive, each nuance captured with utter authenticity.

On a fundamental level, the Aida *sings* to you – more 'Sonus faber' than *The Sonus faber*. Signor Giuseppe Verdi, we thought, your masterwork's name has not been used in vain!

VERDICT

These speakers are all about the musical performance, their sound big, their reach – especially through bass – truly awesome. Moreover, the music escapes the cabinets with no 'boxy' presence, these beautifully crafted enclosures slipping from the aural view. They are at the pinnacle of the speaker builder's art. ☺



HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	89.5dB/89.6dB/89.5dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	3.3ohm @ 96Hz 11.1ohm @ 2.1kHz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–31° @ 2.9kHz 26° @ 153Hz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±1.1dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	40Hz / 39.5kHz/37.1kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.3% / 0.4% / <0.1%
Dimensions (HWD)	1725x482x780mm