

# Sonus faber Fenice

VENICE LAUNCH FOR ITALIAN FLAGSHIP SPEAKER DESIGNED TO REDEFINE HIGH-END PERFORMANCE



While the grandeur of a world launch does not necessarily correlate to the importance of the product, in the case of Sonus faber's new flagship, the pomp was warranted: Fenice signals a new era for Italy's most influential speaker manufacturer. Its name means 'Phoenix', though the company has *not* arisen from any particular pyre.

Rather, the setting for this break from the past was the arrival in 2009 of a new CEO, Mauro Grange, who brought with him a concept of scale usually denied the world of high-end audio. What he unveiled is a state-of-the-art floorstander of which only 30 pairs will be produced.

At the Palazzo Grassi, a suitably elegant art gallery, an audio/video presentation preceded the unveiling of a model that continues a Sonus faber tradition, in that it heralds a new shape. Its cross-section is that of a lyre, just as the Guarneri and Amati were inspired by the lute.

The form incorporates dual curvatures in a carcass made of cross-grained, double-thickness, marine-grade plywood. The enclosure is decoupled from the floor through a complex suspension with resonances controlled by the 'Anima Legata' system. This consists of two massive, CNC-machined aluminium clamps that form the speaker's top and bottom, connected by a steel rod called the 'Soul Pole'. This 'concentrates the vibrations to the Multiple Tuned Mass Damper' – another device used to dampen structural resonances, by oscillating in anti-phase.

Described as a 3.5-way system, Fenice employs a 25mm hybrid Neodymium/Samarium-Cobalt Larsen/Goeller ring radiator tweeter, visco-elastically decoupled from the main baffle. This is attached to a natural wood labyrinth rear chamber, with a mechanical anti-resonator. Middle frequencies are covered by 6.5in cone driver with 1.5in voice coil, the cone fashioned from traditional cellulose pulp with papyrus and other natural fibres. It is driven by a Neodymium magnet system, and its basket is fully CNC-machined from solid billets of



two different metals. The combination of the metals allows the chassis to cancel out any mutual resonance. As with the tweeter, the mid is decoupled from the main baffle.

Low frequencies are handled by two sandwich-coned 10in woofers made up of a high-tech syntactic foam core covered by coated cellulose pulp skins, to provide the same sonic characteristics of the midrange cone. The woofers are augmented by a side-firing 15in bass driver, also using a sandwich structure, but with skins made of nano-carbon-fibre on the syntactic foam core.

At the rear is the Sound Field Shaper, which looks like someone fitted a small two-way Sonus faber model to the back. It controls the direct/reverberant radiation of Fenice, and the module can be adjusted for both azimuth and SPL. Its tweeter is a ring radiator dome derivative, with the 'peculiarity of optimized off-axis radiation.' A crossover similar to that of the Cremona M and Liuto range matches it to a 4.5in mid-woofer. Its cone uses the same paper pulp/papyrus/natural fibres as the front mid.

And why would Sonus faber hold such a huge event for a speaker that will only be offered to 30 clients? A brief demonstration showed it to be world-class, even with unfamiliar material. And a private conversation with CEO Grange revealed that it will be followed by a family of models using the same technologies... at lower prices.

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