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Sonus faber Olympica III

Standing over a metre in height, the Olympica III is imposing without being a room-dominator. Our review example was in natural walnut, with joints in clear maple, while accenting this are leather inlays with highlighted stitching. As standard, the front baffle and back are also covered in natural hide.

The construction comprises 'progressive thickness' triple curvature cabinet walls, with solid walnut clamps reinforcing the structure. For treble duties, Sonus faber has fitted its now familiar 29mm 'Arrow Point' Damped Apex Dome, with neodymium magnet – its technology derived from the much dearer Aida [see *HFN* Apr '12].

Mids are handled by a 150mm midwoofer, designed by Sonus

'You felt you had Nina Simone herself almost close enough to touch'

faber, with a special custom-made diaphragm that's treated with a transparent coat of a viscous surface damping.

Among the most impressive of the Olympica III's virtues is bass with a richness, a fullness and a sense of scale that warrants special mention. The lower octaves are delivered by a brace of Sonus faber W18XTR woofers, said to descend from the 9in units found in the Aida. Their construction includes sandwich cones using a rigid syntactic foam and treated cellulose pulp.

While these are instantly recognisable as Sonus fabers thanks to the oft-copied 'lyre' shape, the eagle-eyed will note the unusual side-firing 'Stealth Ultraflex' reflex port running the height of the speaker, trimmed with a perforated metal sheet. The speakers are supplied in mirror-image pairs, but

neither is specifically 'left' or 'right' – depending on tastes, room size or other considerations, you might opt for these ports to fire either way.

ENTHRALLING

Our first test for the speaker was the gorgeous, silky, inviting 'My Baby Just Cares For Me,' from Nina Simone's debut, *Little Girl Blue* [Verse Music Group]. That signature song features her sublime piano playing and a lean-but-purposeful backing of drums and bass.

With the piano rolling under her smoky vocals, the percussion to the right and at the back, piano occupying the centre of the listening area, and the bass creating a perfect foundation, the results were enthralling. Impact?

The percussion – both the more energetic moments at the keyboard and the actual drum kicks – were rendered in a wholly lifelike and convincing manner. And you had the walls of the listening room disappearing

to be replaced with the sound of the venue, and with Ms Simone herself seemingly almost close enough to touch.

Matthew Sweet and Susannah Hoffs' *Under The Covers 3* [Floating World] comprises jangly guitars and chiming tones and two contrasting voices: the Olympica III demonstrated a prowess with detail retrieval that we associate most closely with Wilson Audio speakers, eg, the Alexias. Their respective character traits truly reflect the designers' personalities!

VERDICT

Sonus faber has produced its best speaker since the Stradivari. The sound is commanding yet capable of great delicacy, the soundstage huge, yet the imagery specific and precise. An achievement to rank with the Amati [*HFN* Sep '06]. ☺

RIGHT: Gorgeous wood, with metal and leather accents embracing the company's signature 'lyre' cross-section. The Olympica III is ported down its length, with a quartet of multi-way binding posts at the bottom to allow for bi-wiring if so desired



HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	89.0dB/88.8dB/88.5dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	2.6ohm @ 103Hz 22.5ohm @ 2.3kHz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	-37° @ 2.9kHz 46° @ 1.5kHz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±0.8dB
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	67Hz / >40kHz/>40kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.6% / 1.8% / 0.5%
Dimensions (HWD)	1114x403x508mm