

# hi-fi news

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& Record Review

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REVIEWS  
SEPARATES,  
VINTAGE  
& MUSIC

# ULTIMATE HI-FI 2015

The year's finest products  
and essential music

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THE  
HI-FI SHOW

Preview of  
the UK's premier  
high-end event,  
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## Equipment

Over 60  
standout  
separates tested

## Music

The best LPs,  
CDs and hi-res  
downloads

## Vintage

Audio icons  
of yesteryear

## Opinion

Our columnists'  
hi-fi high points

• VINYL DS Audio to VPI • CD/SACD PLAYER/DACS Quad to T+A • NETWORK/USB AUDIO A&K to Naim  
• TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS Audio Research to Rotel • HEADPHONE AMPS Auralic to Simaudio  
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UK £4.99 US \$14.99 Aus \$12.99



AUDIO  
FILE

Floorstanding three-and-a-half way loudspeaker  
 Made by: Sonus faber SpA (Fine Sounds Group), Italy  
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd  
 Telephone: 0208 971 3909  
 Web: www.sonusfaber.com; www.absolutesounds.com  
 Price: £47,000 (Gold leaf finish, +£20k approx.)



# Sonus faber Liliium

**W**ith this £47k Liliium floorstander, Sonus faber has produced perhaps a more 'realistic' loudspeaker than its flagship The Sonus faber [HFN Feb '11]. Though if you happen to be a Russian oligarch, an extra £20k will add a lacquered gold-leaf finish!

The tapering cabinet is shaped in the form of company's now-familiar 'lyre' cross-section. Another nod to Sonus faber's historical precedents is the sloped glass plate above the top-mounted infra-bass woofer.

The Liliium is a further exercise in eliminating vibration and spurious noise. The recipe includes separate enclosures for the subwoofer and isolation of the tweeter and midrange in their own sub-enclosure, and a 'no port noise' passive radiator. The structure is damped and ribbed to help reject 'spurious vibrations and standing

**'Eric Clapton's "Tears In Heaven" was as intimate as we have ever heard it'**

waves', and incorporates aluminium damping shelves at the top and bottom of each enclosure.

All the drivers are new. They include a 28mm H28 XTR-04 'Arrow Point' damped Apex Dome tweeter with neodymium magnet, and the M18 XTR-04 180mm mid with neodymium magnet and CCAW wire on a composite former.

The mid employs a diaphragm damped with a viscous surface coating and made with 'a blend of traditional cellulose pulp, kapok, kenaf and other natural fibres'. Behind the tweeter/mid sub-baffle is an acoustic chamber, with a coaxial anti-compressor to reduce cavity resonances and distortions.

Below this mini-baffle are the three W18XTR-16 180mm midwoofers. These feature sandwich cones made of a 'syntactic foam' core and two external surface skins of cellulose pulp. Further

reinforcing the bass are the SW26 XT-08 260mm infra-woofer and its companion ABR.

The crossover operates at 80Hz, 250Hz and 2500Hz, and incorporates Mundorf's Supreme Silver/Gold/Oil capacitors with Jantzen inductors. A rotary control on the upper back section sets the bass level, while there's a choice of single, bi- or tri-wiring.

## A NEW TRANSPARENCY

However much we may love small two-ways, when it comes to speakers there is no substitute for size. In this respect, Sonus faber's Liliium is a classic tower, with its broad stage width amply balanced by similar depth.


And with its additional transparency, Eric Clapton's 'Tears In Heaven' was as intimate as we have ever heard, the closeness apparent on every track. Our version was taken from the remastered *Unplugged* in 192kHz/24-bit, and every sparkling note, every plucked string had a presence so real that to say 'in the room' almost

seems insufficient. Transient attack? Nigh on perfect.

'Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out' had a glorious lilt, the piano accompaniment so authentic that we felt a pianist could tell the instrument's make. The ringing, chiming notes and the liquid flow... we were at a loss to find any area to criticise.

By contrast, two old recordings – vintage mono tracks from The Cardinals and George Formby – that we'd ripped from CDs spoke volumes about the Liliium's prowess... if getting closer to the music is what this is all about.

## VERDICT

Sonus faber has certainly rediscovered its 'mojo' for making huge floorstanders. Stradivari/Amati win on grace and subtlety, Liliium on power and sheer scale. This a truly magnificent loudspeaker. 

**RIGHT:** The complex 3.5-way topology includes a top-mounted infra-bass unit with a diffracting cover, 28mm tweeter, 180mm mid and three 180mm woofers. Bass level can be adjusted by ±2dB for the room or personal taste, while three pairs of terminals allow for up to tri-wiring or tri-amplification



## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83Vrms – Mean/IEC/Music)	92.4dB/90.2dB/89.5dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	3.1ohm @ 27Hz 15.9ohm @ 1.4kHz
Impedance phase min/max (20Hz–20kHz)	–42° @ 2.1kHz 45° @ 108Hz
Pair matching (200Hz–20kHz)	±2.3dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	<40Hz / 38.1kHz/38.4kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.4% / 0.8% / 0.2%
Dimensions (HWD)	1600x491x705mm