

# CEPro

APRIL 2020  
CEPRO.COM

INTEGRATION  
AUDIO/VIDEO  
NETWORKING  
CONTROL  
BUSINESS

## Inside a High-End Rebrand

Reworking website, stepping up service fuel identity initiative.

PAGE 24

**Avidia**  
YOUR HOME TECHNOLOGY EXPERTS

Matt Cwiokowski (left) and Kamil Lazarczuk of Avidia, Northbrook, Ill.

PLUS:  
**10TH ANNUAL QUEST FOR QUALITY AWARDS: STANDOUT SUPPLIER SERVICE**



# CE PRODUCTS

FIELD TEST NEW PRODUCTS

## Sonus faber Sonettos Make a Rockin' Statement

BY ROBERT ARCHER



The Sonetto Center I is a two-way design that provides frequency response of 60Hz to 25kHz.

**F**OR YEARS I've heard many Sonus faber products at trade events such as CES and to be quite honest, they never really suited my taste. My impression was the loudspeakers seemed more designed for classical music listening than other genres and home theater.

However, after using the company's new Sonetto line of products for music and immersive audio, I can happily admit that I was wrong: Sonus faber can indeed rock, and do so at a high level. Testing the company's products in my analog stereo as well as 7.4.2-configured object-based surround systems, I thoroughly enjoyed the speakers' performance and elegant looks.

### FEATURES AND SETUP

First, here's a breakdown of the models. The Sonetto III is a three-way floorstanding loudspeaker. Internally, the speaker features a 29mm DAD (damped apex dome) tweeter, along with a 150mm cellulose pulp and fiber midrange driver and a pair of 150mm alumi-

num-cone woofers. The 4-ohm Sonetto III is 89dB sensitive and it provides a frequency response of 42Hz to 25kHz.

The two-way Sonetto I bookshelf utilizes the same 29mm tweeter and the same 150mm midrange driver that's in the Sonetto III, and these drivers reside in a front-ported enclosure. The 4-ohm speaker is 87dB sensitive and it provides a frequency response of 45Hz to 25kHz.

The Sonetto Center I handles center-channel duties. Similar to the bookshelf Sonetto I, the Sonetto Center I features a 150mm midrange driver and 29mm tweeter. It also features the company's lute-shaped cabinets, and incorporates a pair of rear ports that surround the binding posts.

The Center I is rated as a 90dB-sensitive speaker, and it provides a frequency response of 60Hz to 25kHz.

Sonus faber's 4-ohm Wall speaker is an on-wall speaker that provides a frequency response of 60Hz to 25kHz. The two-way,

### SPECS

#### Sonus faber Sonetto

- ▶ Cabinets feature a lute shape, which Sonus faber popularized many years ago
  - ▶ Leather cap adds touch of elegance to the speakers' appearance
  - ▶ Speakers feature silk-dome tweeters with damped apex dome (DAD) and midrange drivers with natural fiber and paper blend cones
  - ▶ Sonus faber offers the speakers in wood, white and black finishes
- [sonusfaber.com](http://sonusfaber.com)

#### MSRPs:

- ▶ Sonetto III floorstanding speaker \$3,999 per pair
- ▶ Sonetto I bookshelf speaker \$1,699 per pair
- ▶ Sonetto stands for bookshelf speakers \$499 per pair
- ▶ Sonetto Center I center-channel speaker \$999 each
- ▶ Sonetto Wall speaker \$1,099 each

89dB-efficient speaker places the 29mm tweeter between a pair of 150mm midrange drivers in a vertical array.

Rounding out the system, the Gravis II subwoofer uses a 350-watt RMS Class A/B amplifier to drive the unit's 10-inch woofer. The sub includes an LFE input, as well a line-level input and a high-level signal, Neutrik four-pole Speakon input.

The entire system didn't take long to integrate into my home. I started by assembling the floorstanding speakers' outriggers, which only took a few minutes. From there I connected my speaker cables, which employ banana plugs.

The only speaker unique in the con-

figuration was the Wall, which features spring-loaded binding posts in a small recessed cavity, which makes them somewhat difficult to work with.

My side surround cables use spade termination and I was able to make the connection, but if I were mounting the speakers — I placed them on Auralex decoupling pads on a shelf — I would have likely used another style cable termination such as bare wire or pins.

The listening area in my 13x23-foot room contains two separate cabinets. One holds an Onkyo Dolby Atmos cable receiver, along with an LG Ultra HD Blu-ray player, 4K Apple TV; the other, a stereo setup with Bryston electronics, Cary phono preamp, Meridian DAC that's connected to a Sonos Connect and a Pioneer Blu-ray player I use to play CDs. The Cary preamp is connected to a Thorens TD-160 turntable.

In the theater system, I went through the receiver's setup menu to set speaker distances, levels and equalization. This process took roughly 20 minutes. In total, it took me a couple of hours to unpack, set up and fully install the multichannel Sonos faber speaker system.

Positioning the Sonetto III for my stereo system (I just swap speaker cables) took only a few minutes using the placement of my Aerial Acoustics Model 6 floorstanding speakers as the starting point.



The Sonetto III is available in a choice of wood, white and black finishes.

## PERFORMANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

After a couple of weeks running the system, I began more critical listening using my stereo setup that includes a Bryston five-channel 9B-ST amplifier in a biamp configuration.

Listening to varied artists such as Audioslave, Tesla, Candlebox and Natalie Merchant, I thought the Sonetto IIIs via the combination of the Sonos Connect and Meridian DAC provided plenty of bottom end with a warm midrange and a nicely extended top end.

Later I listened to trumpeter Chris Botti's *In Boston* as well as AC/DC's *Back in Black* on vinyl and via Amazon's music service. The transparency and detail of the Sonetto IIIs revealed to me dynamic differences between the streaming and vinyl versions of *Back in Black*, as well as finer details such as the roundness of Cliff Williams' basslines and the more "pointed attack" those same basslines offered in the digital version.

One of my favorite rock recordings is Zakk Wylde's Black Label Society's *Hangover Music Vol. 6*. The guitars sound immense, aggressive and really capture Wylde's Gibson Les Paul, EMG active pickups, Marshall JCM800 driven sound high-gain tone. With this CD, the Sonetto IIIs sounded crisp and dynamic reproducing the album's massive wall of multitracked guitars, as well as dense low frequencies and Wylde's gravelly, high-midrange vocals.

For some home theater samples, I popped in *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* on Blu-ray and watched the Netflix series *Wu Assassins*.

In both cases, the collective speakers showcased how well their driver arrays create a seamless, timbre-matched, immersive soundfield — even with the non-object-based DTS HD Master Audio soundtrack from the *Lord of the Rings*.

The well-mixed Dolby Atmos soundtrack included with *Wu Assassins* features lots of lower midrange and bottom-end to convey the impact of martial arts combatants' punches and kicks, and the subwoofer handled it convincingly.

Later, with the Ultra HD Blu-ray release of *Avengers: Endgame*, I thought the center channel provided nice, clear dialog that complemented the action.



The Sonetto Wall is a 4-ohm speaker that is 89dB sensitive.

I was able to get the sub to play down to 31Hz. Its strongest levels of low-end extension were 40Hz, but when I added more subwoofers, I managed to gain about 6dB extra output.

The speakers performed nothing like other Sonos faber products in my subpar tradeshow demo experiences. The Sonetto products are exceptionally engineered, they provide elegant looks, and the line meets a range of music and home theater demands.

If you're already a Sonos faber fan, these speakers may exceed expectations. If you're skeptical as I was, do your homework and I think you'll be as impressed as well. This is one case where I am happy I was wrong. 🌟

## CE PRO VERDICT

### Sonos faber Sonetto

**PROS:** Exceptional sound quality, high levels of detail, big sound stages; Italian design elegance should complement just about any home design; line addresses stereo and immersive audio

**CONS:** A common complaint I have with center-channel and on-wall speakers, access to binding posts is limited; more subwoofer choices such as a 12-inch model would be welcome