

Since its founding in 1983, the Italian company Sonus Faber SpA has created speakers that highlight exquisite natural materials to look as good as they sound. Last year it even acquired its longtime collaborator, the De Santi woodworking factory. The new \$1,999 wireless Omnia speaker is shaped like an elegantly minimalist barge—its “deck” is made of bookmatched walnut from De Santi and is embedded with touch-sensitive light strips that manually control sound inputs and volume. Elsewhere it’s mercifully light on gimmickry: no sensors calibrating the size of the room, no screen showing album art, no app to download. Plug it in, connect to Wi-Fi or physically hook up to a turntable, and the 490-watt system is ready to rock.

THE COMPETITION

- Bowers & Wilkins’s redesigned \$799 Zeppelin speaker takes its inspiration from the air: Its ovoid shape contains a 240-watt amplifier and five drivers.
- The black quadrex grille on the curved face of JBL’s \$1,500 L75MS Music System conjures the company’s classic speakers. But behind the foam is a tech-packed feature set, with Bluetooth and Wi-Fi streaming at up to 32 bits and 192-kilohertz resolution.
- The allure of McIntosh’s glowing green logo and blue output meters is irresistible for a certain class of component-crazed audiophiles. Its new \$1,200 RS150 integrates those touches into a compact 120-watt system that can deliver Tidal’s hi-res playback at 24 bits and 192 kHz.

THE CASE

Most one-piece wireless speakers struggle with creating a soundstage—that is, the ability to project not only stereophonic sound but also proximity and placement. (It’s the feeling that the string section seems closer than the brass or the singer is whispering in your ear.) Omnia uses Crescendo, Sonus Faber’s digital signal processing system, to simulate the effect of having a traditional stereo pair. It does this by, among other things, adding carefully calibrated delay to its pair of side-firing full-range speakers, a downward-aimed 6.5-inch aluminum woofer, and front-facing tweeters. The result is a remarkably detailed, natural sound without the complications of components. \$1,999; sonusfaber.com



Wood Vibrations

Up-to-the-minute tech meets ancient materials in a brilliant wireless speaker

By Matthew Kronsberg

Photograph by Stephanie Price