

# SONUS FABER

## HOMAGE TRADITION 'SERAFINO'

### LOUDSPEAKERS

Reviewer Edgar Kramer

The high-end audio sector prides itself on offering designs that don't agonise through the same restrictions as components pinned at more modest budgetary levels. In the upper tiers, there are freedoms both in terms of production resources and intellectual creativity where an astute designer can stretch the concepts behind adopted technologies. Liberties can also be taken with appearance and design where larger production budgets allow for the use of higher quality materials and components from a technical perspective (drivers and crossover parts), while on a cosmetic level it may mean exotic cabinet materials, finishes and enhancements. *Ergo* the subject here at hand — both technically advanced and strikingly beautiful. Yes, there are beautiful speakers... and then there's the Sonus faber Homage Tradition collection.

#### FIERY ANGELS

The Homage Tradition range — here the Serafino model — drips with Italian styling flair and gorgeousness. Each aspect has been carefully examined in order to produce an aesthetic that will surely appeal to discerning eyes. But you have to 'get' Italian design. Aside from its angelic biblical meaning as *seraphim*, this model, the 'Serafino Tradition' for short,

celebrates Santo Serafino, an understudy of Cremona's master violin maker Nicolò Amati, himself celebrated in the Serafino's higher-spec range-topping sibling, the Amati Tradition. Of course, Sonus faber has been using design motifs inspired by both the violin and lute in its cabinets for a number of generations. The current Tradition series employs and exploits the concept, as do the Olympica and Venere ranges below it while, in the flagship series, the superb Il Cremonese, Lilium, and outrageously stunning Aida take it all even further.

The Serafino Tradition, then, is a mid-sized 3.5-way floorstander with Sonus faber's latest thinking in enclosure, driver and crossover design. The Italian leather baffle houses Sonus faber's own H28 HTR-04 28mm silk-dome tweeter featuring an "Arrow Point" DAD (Damped Apex Dome) phase plug-like arrangement and sits in a shallow flare which provides marginal acoustic loading in order to aid efficiency. The tweeter is mounted on to a machined brushed aluminium plate which also houses the Sonus faber-designed M15 XTR-04 150mm midrange driver which features a powerful neodymium magnet system. The low-end is handled by dual 180mm synthetic foam/cellulose pulp sandwich cone drivers (Sonus faber-designed again and called W18XTR-08). The drivers cross over at 80Hz, 250Hz and 2500Hz, and Sonus faber specifies the system

▽ A 'STEALTH ULTRAFLEX SYSTEM' FEATURES DAMPED EXTRUDED ALUMINIUM FINNS, CONTROLLING THE AIR FLOW OF THE SERAFINO'S THREE LONG DUCTS AS WELL AS REINFORCING THE ENTIRE CABINET.





▲ SOLID ALUMINIUM OUTRIGGERS COUPLE TO A MASSIVE SPIKING ARRANGEMENT ENGINEERED TO DECOUPLE THE SPEAKER FROM THE FLOOR VIA ITS STEEL-AND-SANDWICHED-ELASTOMER DESIGN.

as having a nominal impedance of four ohms. System sensitivity is 90dB at 1m/2.83V while the frequency response is stated at 30Hz to 35kHz, though with no minus/plus points stated.

There's lots to tell about the gorgeous cabinet but let it be said at this point that she's not just a pretty face — there's some solid engineering behind the construction. Firstly, the extensively-braced enclosure is tapered towards the back in a lute-ish type of shape, or 'violin/boat hull' as Sonus faber labels it. This contour provides benefits both physically and sonically. The curved sides and narrow rear stiffen and augment structural integrity while preventing internal standing waves in the enclosure.

What's more, Chief of Industrial Design Livio Cucuzza and Chief of R&D Paolo Tezzo, artist and engineer respectively, have capitalised on the rear shape by seamlessly integrating an effectively invisible aperiodic reflex system — or 'Stealth Ultraflex System' in faber-speak — engineered to provide the required bass extension. The Ultraflex

system features damped extruded aluminium fins running the length of the rear panel that, aside from controlling the air flow of the three long and narrow ports or "ducts", further serve to reinforce the entire cabinet, being part of the exoskeleton. The bottom rear of the speakers are home to high quality bi-wire terminals which can be easily hand tightened without the need of a wrench.

Additional resonance and vibration control are incorporated via a patented 'ZVT' (Zero Vibration Transmission) system. This encompasses a solid aluminium outrigger which couples to a massive spiking arrangement — derived from the system used in the II Cremonese — engineered to decouple the speaker from the floor via its steel and sandwiched elastomer design. The top metal section in each of the heavy and beautifully machined spiking cones has a little 'give' via the elastomer, providing decoupling while the sharply-pointed cone itself couples to either the floor or to provided floor-protecting pucks. The system promises improved bass performance in

addition to the possibility of better imaging and soundstaging (room acoustics permitting).

The Serafino is available in two extraordinarily beautiful finishes. The first uses a new Wenge veneer with maple side inlays, combined with the introduction of a leather-lined baffle in 'coffee' brown. In this veneer, the rear panel vents, outrigger and cone system are finished in natural aluminium. Then the 'Red' finish sports black aluminium on the same parts (barring the cones) and black leather on the baffle. Polished aluminium accents around the drivers provide further visual enhancement. The speakers' top panel features a round centrally-placed silk-screened glass plate bearing the 'Sf' logo — an elegant touch.

The home-friendly dimensions are 1091mm high by 396mm wide by 485mm deep while weight is a manageable 52kg. The Serafinos are provided with a soft black full-length cloth cover for preventing dust build-up, accidental scratches and sun fading when not in use. At this stage I should mention that, subjectively, these speakers are profoundly beautiful in either of the colours, with a build quality and fit and finish which is absolutely first rate. And trust me — in the 'flesh' their beauty exceeds even what these images are able to convey of their rich finishes.

#### PERFORMANCE

Placing the speakers in the room did not require excessive exertion, while the rear aperiodic venting system seems not too fussy in terms of room positioning and boundary acoustic loading.

This 'unfussiness' led to a bass register that was surprisingly solid, detailed and powerful beyond the speakers' size. Rage Against the Machine's *Bullet in the Head* from their self-titled album (a reference-level rock recording with vast dynamic contrast) features a nimble bass line just prior to the song's explosive conclusion. Tim Commerford's bass punctuations energised the room with power-pounding beyond what you'd expect from a speaker of this size. Similarly, Brad Wilk's kick-drum pulses punch through to provide the power and dynamic shock this music requires. Zach De La Rocha's manic vocals cut through the mix with clear intelligibility providing insight into the political message behind the album's lyrics, while Tom Morello's incisive guitar is never lost in the sonic mayhem.



the 'CucEzzo' team has elevated the company's speaker designs away from the romantic offerings of the past, targeting a more accurate and dynamic sound...





## SPECIFICATIONS

### SONUS FABER HOMAGE TRADITION 'SERAFINO'

#### CABINET TYPE:

vented box system

#### DESIGN:

3.5-way

#### TWEETERS:

Sonus faber Arrow Point DAD H28 XTR-04

#### MIDRANGE:

Sonus faber M15 XTR-04

#### WOOFERS:

Sonus faber W18XTR-08

#### CROSSOVER:

80Hz, 250Hz, 2500Hz

#### QUOTED FREQUENCY

**RESPONSE:** 30Hz–35,000Hz

#### SENSITIVITY:

90dB SPL (2.83V/1 m).

#### NOMINAL IMPEDANCE:

4 ohms

#### DIMENSIONS (HWD):

1091 × 396 × 485mm

#### WEIGHT:

52kg

#### WARRANTY:

Five years

#### PRICE:

\$29,999

#### CONTACT:

Synergy Audio

on 03 9459 7474

[www.synergyaudio.com](http://www.synergyaudio.com)

Quadro Negro's 'Mocca Flor' release presents a beautiful melange of Middle Eastern music and tango by four talented German musicians with an obvious passion for the genres. The subtleties of the acoustic instruments, be it bandoneon, oud or any other number of instrument exotica, were delicately reproduced by what is effectively a superb tweeter and midrange combination.

The Serafinos throw a large stage, with good depth and accurate image placement/focus especially benefitting expansive productions such as Ryan Adams 'Live at Carnegie Hall'. Ambience and the sense of the largeness of the legendary venue are aptly reproduced while Adams' close-miked vocals project well forward of the speaker plane. In track 7, *Gimme Something Good*, the singer oscillates back and forth from the microphone while fluctuating vocal dynamism. The Serafinos are capable of recreating both that swaying fluctuation and the dynamic articulation the mike technique reveals — Adams uses this as a powerful tool to accentuate emotion within the context of the song. And the Serafinos convey the track's emotive pulses wonderfully.

The superb tweeter — and the top band of the midrange driver too — come into play to

show the resolution and sweet detail at hand via Boris Belkin's beautiful violin solo in Decca's Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto, where the master's technique and vigorous attack are revealed alongside delicate nuance and microdynamic information. The instrument's tonality was also accurately rendered.

#### CONCLUSION

The Sonus faber stable of new designs under the solid guidance of Cucuzza and Tezzo has steadily grown over the last few years. From the entry points of the Principia and Chameleon series, through the more upmarket Venere and Olympica ranges and on to the top-end Tradition series and the independent models above, the young and dynamic 'CucEzzo' team has elevated the company's speaker designs away from the romantic offerings of the past, targeting a more accurate and dynamic sound signature while still expertly balancing a measure of tonal and aesthetic beauty.

In the Serafino Tradition, the traditional Sonus faber design magnificence is maintained, yet evolved, to previously unattained levels of both engineering and finish. Faberlous! £