

room delivered both optimal focus and timbre, and the best low frequency uniformity. Additional boundary gain was not required.

The *Olympica II* is rated at 50 - 250W power capacity, with an 88dB voltage sensitivity alongside a 4ohm load impedance. The speaker might be slim, but beware its near 44kg (97lb) weight.

This speaker is actually built in Vicenza, Italy, in contrast to the less costly *Venere* range. The *Olympica* series also adopts audiophile components: Sonus Faber boasts of crossover networks that incorporate selected Janzen inductors and top quality Mundorf polypropylene/oil-filled film capacitors.

While described as a 2.5-way design (where the bass/mid driver typically operates in parallel with a larger bass unit at low frequencies), a series capacitor is used here to set a low crossover point for the bass/mid unit, to keep this smaller driver out of trouble on the larger demands for bass cone excursion. But they do share power in the upper bass region. The bass unit proper is a *W18XTR* 180mm cast chassis unit with a proprietary mixed pulp and fibre cone (a high excursion custom bass unit derived from flagship *Aida* technology).

The 150mm bass/mid unit is also founded on a die-cast chassis, and is fitted with an open pole and a machined alloy phase plug. Twin Faraday rings in the magnet are used for eddy current control, and the cone is a complex blend of a naturally dried uncompressed paper pulp, kapok and kenaf (a hibiscus cannabis effective for paper and fibre reinforcement) plus other natural fibres, all contrived for the most natural sound characteristic.

The *DAD29XTR* treble driver is a 'new generation' design, larger than usual at 30mm diameter, partly ring dome in behaviour, thanks to the sharply pointed clamp at its apex (an almost needle-like point unfriendly to children or even passing adults).

The filter network is described as a nonresonant (low Q factor), progressive slope crossover design, for optimised amplitude and phase response, and best time alignment for the driver outputs at the listener location. The crossover frequencies are nominally 250Hz and 2.5kHz.

The beautiful enclosure has dense wood laminate sides, built into a complex lyre-shaped profile to suppress panel resonances, and braced with multiple solid walnut vertical staves. The double reflex ports are almost concealed and comprise a pair of narrow recessed slots.

Sound Quality

This speaker was well liked from the start, demonstrating almost honeyed midrange tones and



pleasing classical music perspectives: string orchestras were particularly impressive, consonant with Sonus Faber's classic string instrument heritage. While not the most transparent or explicit among its peers, it was aurally inviting and showed a fine sense of ease and natural perspectives. The intelligently shared loading for the two large drivers at low frequencies delivered surprising bass slam and power, provided that it wasn't worked too hard (a rather tempting prospect it must be said).

There is no brittleness, screech or whine in the upper frequency range, making for easy listening, and confirming the clever crossover design whose skilful blending was also evident in the lab test results for frequency response. Stereo imaging was particularly fine, showing notably crisp focus across a wide soundstage. All frequencies seemed nicely in place, reinforcing the sense of image stability with different program and recordings. With its gently laid back presentation (for the music that is, not the tilted enclosure), soundstage perspectives were impressive, coupled with good image depth; this was particularly noticeable when using more immediate and open sounding solid state/transistor amplification.

(Although not tested here, Devialet has recently introduced a technique called SAM which may be applied to Sonus Faber's *Olympica II* as well as other popular speakers. The intention is to advance the performance envelope under the control of an intelligent amplifier, which can deliver optimal programme drive for cleanest and most extended bass, and protect against low frequency distortion and overload.)

As the lab results indicate, the *Olympica II* is quite a tough amplifier load, and this is an example where multiple amplification (bi-amping) could well give