

Sonus faber Lumina V Amator

There's more to this slender, stylish Italian floorstander than striking wood veneers as trickledown hits the target
 Review: **Andrew Everard** Lab: **Paul Miller**

Think Sonus faber, and the chances are you'll imagine speakers with luxurious finishes and price tags to match. After all, the company used the 2024 CES event to roll out its Suprema speaker system [p22], comprising two main 'towers' and two subwoofers, with a £695,000 price tag. But such lofty ambition also brings the option of 'trickling down' new technologies to less expensive models, including the £2999 Lumina V Amator floorstander we have here.

There's more to the new arrivals – there's also a £1299 Lumina II Amator two-way bookshelf speaker – than the eye-catching real-wood veneers of the main baffle, available in glossy red, walnut and wenge finishes with a striking 45° grain orientation. In common with other Sonus faber Amator models [HFN Apr '21], the new speakers also feature additional tuning to set them apart from the 'standard' offering.

PAYING HOMAGE

As part of the upgrades, the midrange driver does much of the heavy lifting: the transition between it and the tweeter has been raised to 2.85kHz, up 250Hz from that of the regular (£2499) Lumina V, while the bass crossover remains at 260Hz. A new 'Hybrid IFF/Paracross Topology' network draws on the development of the company's Homage speakers and uses components from the G5 versions of its Amati [HFN Aug '23] and Guarneri designs.

The main enclosure, wrapped in faux-leather, looks simple and rectilinear but within the enclosure is a version of the company's lute-shaped housing, here to set the tweeter and midrange driver apart from the bass units while also reinforcing the entire sub-cabinet. Another 'hidden' feature is the substantial bass reflex port,

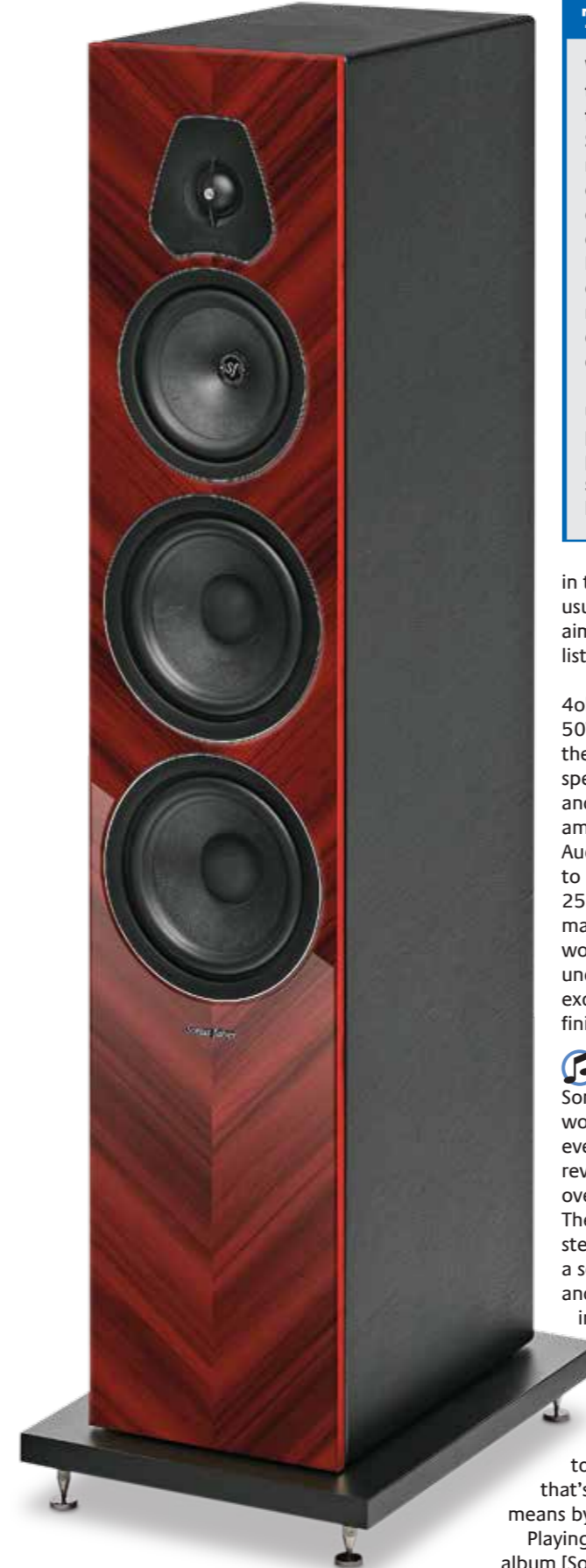
venting downwards through the bottom of the enclosure and the stabilising plinth. This is designed to make the Lumina V Amator less sensitive to room boundary positioning but does mean the rather tall spikes supplied are vital to provide the space into which the port works.

SET-UP SIMPLICITY

The drivers here are the same as those found in the standard Lumina models: the tweeter is the company's 29mm DAD (Damped Apex Dome) unit, derived from the Sonetto range [HFN Nov '18] and with its hand-coated silk diaphragm damper carried on the vertical crossbar in front of it. Meanwhile, the 150mm midrange driver blends fibre and paper, also used in the Sonettos, while the twin 165mm bass drivers employ a sandwich paper cone and were designed specifically for the Lumina.

While Sonus faber's floorstander looks imposing in the pictures, the speaker is neither huge nor massively weighty, standing just under 105cm tall and, at 22.5kg, about light enough for one-person set-up, adding convenience to the room-friendliness. Positioning is no trickier, in no small part due to that downward-firing port. I spent some time moving the Lumina V Amators backwards and forwards in the room, finding very little difference wherever I placed them, and concentrated instead on experimenting with toe-in for the most coherent stereo image. Again, I was unable to effect any huge changes

RIGHT: Available in Gloss Red, Wenge and Walnut 45° angle wood veneers, the Lumina V Amator's baffle hosts a 29mm DAD tweeter, a 150mm paper-cone midrange driver and two 165mm pulp/syntactic foam sandwich diaphragm woofers venting through the base



THE SWEET SPOT?

With the arrival of some recent loudspeakers, it seems the gap between the high-end speakers we all dream of, and drool over, at hi-fi shows and the ones we can actually afford is getting ever smaller. Designs such as Sonus faber's Lumina line, using trickle-down technology from pricier models while retaining the USP of Italian build and style, are an example of this trend, as is the KEF R series [HFN Jan '24], which seems to inch ever closer to the company's flagship Reference lineup [HFN Jun '23] when it comes to both technology and performance. Elsewhere, the entry-level Bowers & Wilkins 600 series [HFN Dec '23], which once jostled with those overachieving 'Brit boxes' down in the £100-£200 arena, has gradually moved up in terms of the performance it delivers, thanks to technology derived from the company's pricier models, and is now knocking on the door of the midrange 700 series [HFN Mar '23].

Then again, a manufacturer can fill a gap with some clever thinking and use of what it already has quite literally on the shelf. For example, PMC's prodigy models [HFN Nov '23] have become quite a hit at a new, affordable price, thanks to some judicious cost-cutting. You can only have it in black satin, and grilles are an extra-cost option, but the component quality has been maintained, and the sound is a revelation at the price.

in this department, so stuck to my usual positioning with the cabinets aimed just slightly in front of the listening position.

With their rated 89dB sensitivity, 4ohm nominal impedance and a 50W minimum power requirement, these are not especially demanding speakers [see PM's Lab Report, p73], and worked well with the various amplifiers I tried, ranging from Audiolab's 9000A [HFN Aug '23] up to my vintage Naim NAC 52/NAP 250 set-up. I should mention that magnetic grilles are provided, but it would be a shame to cover up the understated dark wenge or more exotic gloss red and walnut wood finishes on offer!

CULTURE CLUB

Some speakers require real effort to work out just what they're doing, even with familiar music, only revealing their virtues (and vices) over an extended listening period. The Lumina V Amator, however, steps right up to the plate with a sound that's refined, cultured and supremely easy to enjoy. It impresses with a combination of bass richness, an open and attractive midband and sweet yet explicit treble. Best of all, though, is the way this design puts all these elements together to create a presentation that's all about the music, not the means by which it's being reproduced.

Playing cellist Sol Gabetta's *Mendelssohn* album [Sony Classical 19439934002],

on which she delivers the composer's complete works for the instrument, with accompaniment by pianist Bertrand Chamayou, the effortless nature of these speakers' delivery is much in evidence. With little finessing of their set-up, they presented the two musicians before the listener in a realistic, focused soundstage, and got on with the job of drawing the attention to the assured playing and the textures of strings and keys.

And it's not just with simple recordings that the Lumina V Amators shine. Listening to the lustrous Houston Chamber Choir recording of Daniel Knaggs' *Two Streams* [Capella Records CR-429], it's impossible not to be swept away by the intensity of both writing and performance, and the way the perfectly matched voices and accompanying musicians occupy a convincing concert hall acoustic. The latter, incidentally, extends well beyond the speakers in three dimensions, imbued with both weight and wide-open clarity.

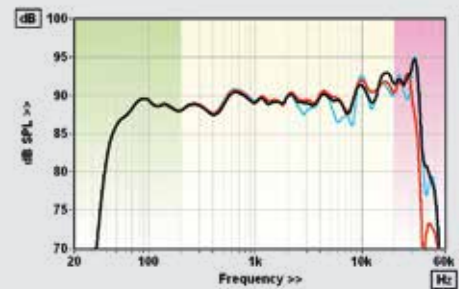
LET'S DANCE

A spot of chilly evening immersion in composer Ólafur Arnalds' 2013 big-label debut, *For Now I Am Winter* [Mercury 4810177], found the speakers as adept with the big sweeping themes as they were with driving the dancing rhythms of the title track. Similarly, the stripped-back 'Words Of Amber' held almost breathless attention at the way each note was struck and decayed against a subtly shimmering accompaniment. It's an act the album repeats with 'Old Skin', where the Lumina V Amator's combination of taut, pulsing bass and mid/treble detail brought out all the strangeness of the music. ↻

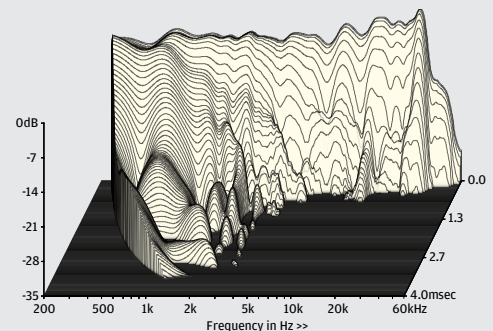
SONUS FABER LUMINA V AMATOR

The drivers in this three-way floorstanding speaker are, on the whole, well behaved with only the 150mm pulp mid unit slightly stretched – a step in response once into its stride after the 260Hz crossover [see Graph 1], and a mild resonance just before the top 2.9kHz crossover visible in the CSD waterfall [Graph 2] likely to be a mild cone/surround misterrmination. Otherwise the V Amator's rated 89dB sensitivity is well met at 89.1dB/1kHz and 89.5dB (500Hz-8kHz). The forward response, too, is flat to within fairly tight ± 2.2 dB and ± 2.6 dB limits (200Hz-20kHz), respectively, with the largest undulations occurring above 7kHz as the 29mm DAD tweeter builds to a resonant peak at 31kHz [pink shaded area, Graph 1]. One of our pair did not have quite the same extension [red trace, Graph 1] but pair matching is otherwise superb at a tight 0.45dB from 200Hz-10kHz, 'slackening' slightly to 1.2dB above 10kHz. In practice, listening at or above the top of the cabinet, or toeing the speakers inwards by 10-15°, will sweeten the top-end response, but the grilles exaggerate the treble dips and peaks by up to 3dB above 3kHz so are best employed when the speakers are 'resting' [blue trace, Graph 1].

Both 165mm sandwich-coned woofers peak at 97Hz and are supplemented by the robust 43Hz output of the huge, downward-firing port (beware thick carpets...) to deliver a diffraction-corrected bass extension of 42Hz (-6dB re. 200Hz). The minimum 2.8ohm/104Hz impedance, and -57°/70Hz to +42°/21Hz swings in phase angle, contribute to a tough EPDR of 1.15ohm/85Hz in the bass (and 1.7ohm/2.15kHz), so all that punch still demands a capable amplifier. PM



ABOVE: Response inc. nearfield summed driver/port [green], freefield corrected to 1m at 2.83V [yellow], ultrasonic [pink]. Left, black; right, red; w. grille, blue



ABOVE: Cabinet is well enough damped and just one mid-cone misterrmination visible prior to crossover

LEFT: Bi-wiring and bi-amping are accommodated via Sonus faber's split crossover while the wide, downward-firing port exhausts through the base of the cabinet and stabilising plinth

decades later, à la Green Day – the open sound of the Lumina V Amator allows the likes of 'This Is Pop?' and the immortal 'Statue Of Liberty' to slam out into the room with their spiky quirkiness intact. It's huge, hilarious fun and, for those of us of a certain age, a reminder it never sounded this punchy, nor as detailed, back then as it does through these sophisticated Italian loudspeakers.

SACKS APPEAL

Revert to the simplicity of flugelhorn player Angelo Verploegen and pianist Jerone van Vliet's *Little Dancer* set [Just Listen Records JL033] – one of those live, straight-to-DSD recordings which is the label's speciality – and the speakers seem to shrink down to deliver the intimacy of the event. It's just two guys playing live and bouncing off each other in front of the studio microphones, all recorded, mixed and produced by label founder Jared Sacks, and that's exactly what you get delivered into your listening room. It's delightful in its lack of pretension and the way it rejoices in sheer musicianship, and the smooth yet detailed presentation of these floorstanders is ideally suited.

Sure, the premise of the Lumina V Amators – ease of system-matching and positioning, allied to superb craftsmanship – may seem a bit 'lifestyle', but these are quite simply superb speakers made user-friendly. And who'd argue with that? ☺

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

These may be some of the most affordable speakers in the Sonus faber catalogue, but there's little sign of any trade-off in the quality of the build or the sound. As a relatively more mass-market prospect than some of the company's exotica, they deserve to do well: they look the part (in three colourways), have some clever engineering touches to add to their appeal, and are beautifully built for the money.

Sound Quality: 88%



HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V - 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	89.1dB / 89.5dB / 87.9dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz-20kHz)	2.8ohm @ 104Hz 21ohm @ 27.2Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz-20kHz)	-57° @ 70Hz +42° @ 21Hz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz-20kHz)	1.2dB/ ± 2.2 dB/ ± 2.6 dB
LF/HF extension (-6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	42Hz / 36kHz/32kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	1.3% / 0.15% / 0.55%
Dimensions (HWD) / Weight (each)	1049x280x373mm / 23kg