

Over \$6000



Sonus faber Domus 5-channel Speaker System

A delicious taste of egalitarian refinement. — by Neil Gader

Few loudspeaker companies are more intimately connected with high-end audio than Italy's Sonus faber. Its aristocratic designs evoke the craftsmanship and the culture of the legendary Cremonese violin makers and a taste of *la dolce vita*. But there is another facet to the Sonus faber personality that is not immediately evident as you sip your espresso and admire the speakers' lute-inspired woodwork, a facet summed up in the word Domus, Latin for *house* or *home*. Domus is Sonus faber's latest collection of loudspeakers, which have been purposefully designed to fit any media habitat—a quality that should resonate with both music and home theater aficionados.

The Concerto Domus, a two-way, bass-reflex design, is the smaller of two floorstanders that the Domus series offers. Attention to detail is evident everywhere you look—for example, in the way that the tweeter nestles close to the mid-bass driver thanks to its scalloped mounting plate. The mid-bass driver features a vented phase plug design for low-compression performance. A heavy, crackle-finished steel pedestal bolts to the Concerto's base for stability, while adjustable spikes tilt the Concerto back a few degrees for transducer time alignment. The Center Domus is a dual woofer, three-way center channel speaker that sports a 3.5-inch midrange unit, plus an integral mounting plinth. The Concertino

Domus, in turn, is ideal for surround duty where a petite monopole is desired.

The voice of the Concerto Domus is expressive on macro and micro levels, and its seductive warmth is non-fatiguing across the octaves. The speaker's generally well-controlled bass offers good pitch definition and confident extension down to the upper 30Hz range. There is, though, a mid-bass warmth region that, at its best, enriches acoustic bass lines, bassoons, and bass drums. The treble range, while not anvil flat owing to a shallow dip in the presence region, has an inherent sweetness that reflects the quality of the Concerto's ring radiator tweeter. The most obvious beneficiaries are vocals of all stripes. For example, the deep sonorities of bass-baritone Bryn Terfel on "Shenandoah" [*Sings Favourites:*

DG] are lush and expressive, while deep waves of energy from lower strings have cushion-like underpinnings that give the orchestra a much needed foundation.

Soundstages are wide with better than average dimensionality, and the sweet spot invitingly large. Images and low-level details are cleanly drawn

REL R-305 subwoofer

For those seeking another half an octave of bass slam from the Domus system, REL Acoustics has your ride with its new R-Series subwoofers. The R-305 is a small footprint, sealed-box unit with a 10-inch woofer backed by 300W Class D power. Beautifully executed in a black piano finish with sporty panel strakes and aluminum accents, it offers a front panel control module with controls for phase, low pass, and gain. The module is easily removable for placement in a location of the users choosing. Performance is as visceral as it is musical, with bass extension to the mid-20Hz range. The match between the REL R-305 subwoofer and Sonus satellites is so pure that the sub almost seems to intuit what the other speakers are thinking.





without artificially etched edges. During Jackson Browne's "Color Of the Sun" [*Greatest Hits*: Asylum] there's an alternating hi-hat figure that varies in intensity and character with each strike—a distinction the Concertos make clear, conjuring up the live listening experience.


Topping my list impressions is the Concerto's combination of midband dynamic liveliness and lower range oomph—muscular attributes I don't normally associate with Sonus speakers. Whether it's the propulsive kick drum intro of the Police's "Murder By Numbers" [*Synchronicity*: A&M] or the bottomless, flat-pick electric bass of Mary Chapin-Carpenter's "Stones in the Road" [*Party Doll*: Columbia], a bit of the beast hides beneath this system's beauty. Fortunately, low-end guttiness rarely interferes with the finer points of bass pitch and definition. Only near its prodigious limits does the Concerto give the sense that its reflex port is shouldering too much of the

burden, making the bottom end sound somewhat under damped. There is also a slight softness on upper-midrange and lower-treble transients.

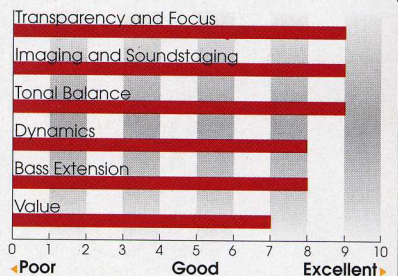
Two factors elevate the performance of the Domus multichannel system. The first is the performance of the Center Domus—home theater's perennial beast of burden. Typically, Sonus has added a midrange transducer to create a center channel that can master not only the dynamic demands of summer blockbusters, but also the delicate details of low-level dialogue or of solo violins. The Center Domus showed unflinching energy and dynamism in the face

of the T-Rex tag-team ambush during *King Kong*—where the scale and weight of Kong's labored breathing blew me back in my seat!

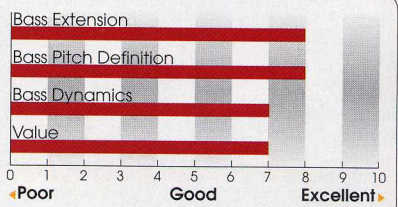
The second essential ingredient is the unified family voicing of the system, which empowers a soundfield to reproduce ambient cues while simultaneously reproducing a barrage of bullets from *The Matrix*, or the buttery smooth panning heard during a dynamite sequence early on in *North Country*. Continuity of voice is exceptionally important if you enjoy multichannel music, such as Elton John's multichannel SACD remixes of *Honky Chateau* or *Captain Fantastic*, where surround channels not only provide ambience, but also the punctuated sounds of a mandolin, a horn section, or a vocal chorus. The fact is that our ears are keenly sensitive to whatever timbral discontinuities there might be in multichannel speaker systems—a problem that never arises with the Domus system because its elements speak with one common voice.

The Sonus faber Domus System combines refinement, evanescent musicality and excitement in equal measures—and a free-wheeling character that's as much at home in the mosh pit as in the orchestra pit. Whatever theater of entertainment you choose, Sonus faber has designed the Domus to make you feel right at home—perhaps to never leave home. 

Sonus faber Domus system



REL R-305 subwoofer



The Last Word



- Exceptional balance for music and cinema
- Dynamic center channel
- Gorgeous fit and finish



- Transient softness
- Conservative styling not for everyone

System Price

\$6285, or \$7880 with REL subwoofer (Domus Concerto, \$3495/pair; Domus Concertino, \$1495/pair; Domus Center, \$1295; optional REL R-305 subwoofer, \$1595)

Manufacturer Information

Sonus Faber
www.sonusfaber.com

Rel Acoustics
www.rel.net

Distributor Information

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