

Opera Audio's Linea Classica -- Beautiful Speakers for a Beautiful Price

When I entered the Opera Audio room here at TAVES, nothing really jumped out at me. While readers may imagine that covering an audio show is a vibrant, almost electric experience for audio writers, that's pretty far from the truth. Going from room to room methodically copying down equipment information, I think it's fair to say that actual sound quality becomes something of an afterthought unless it's glaringly apparent that the sound is shockingly good. Or bad, for that matter.



What eventually drew my eye, as opposed to my ears, was the fit'n'finish of Opera's Linea Classica line of loudspeakers, with the top model of the five-speaker range, the Quinta, looking like fine furniture. Partially wrapped in leather, and with properly substantial wood cabinets, the floorstanders smacked of fellow Italian speaker maker Sonus Faber, minus the characteristic high-gloss finish. Whereas the Sonus Fabers are premium speakers that carry a premium price tag, the substantial yet understated Quinta retail for \$5500/pair. Along with the smaller \$4000 Seconda, the speakers use Scan-Speak midranges and woofers, while the smaller \$2500 Grand Mezza floorstander and \$1200 Mezza bookshelf designs make use of SEAS midrange-bass drivers. Every model uses the same Scan-Speak tweeter. The Centrale center-channel rounds out the collection, though a price was not available for that model.



Opera makes the entire Linea Classica line, which has been on the market since 1989, in Italy. It's clear that the Italians know how to design not only a fine speaker cabinet but also a fine-sounding speaker. The Quinta married a relaxed, slightly warm sound with impressive soundstaging abilities. The sealed three-way design threw out taut and tuneful bass that belied the relatively modest 6.5" diameter of the Scan-Speak bass drivers.

Chatting with Opera's Bartolemo Nasta about the line (and Italian football), I got the impression that the modest pricing policy for the Linea Classica line was nothing other than business as usual for the Italian firm, as he seemed surprised at my enthusiasm for the hugely attractive,

yet modestly priced line. This left me even more taken with the products. There was no marketing jargon thrown around, or mention of hitting certain price points -- only a pride in making deeply attractive loudspeakers that are effortless to enjoy.



While \$1200 to \$5500 is not an insubstantial sum for a pair of loudspeakers, I can say with confidence that the Linea Classica line contains some of the best-looking speakers that we have seen at TAVES, irrespective of price. We were flabbergasted when we heard their asking price, and confirmed that it was indeed for a pair of speakers rather than just one -- they're that pretty. Going without the sometimes garish high-gloss finish that other manufacturers elect to use on some loudspeaker lines, the Classic Line is aptly named. They are as unassumingly beautiful as they are humbly priced.

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