


RATING

 GoldenEar
Technology Triton
One.R Loudspeaker

PERFORMANCE

BUILD QUALITY

VALUE


Reference Redux

By Al Griffin



Each Triton One.R houses three 5 x 9-inch active drivers augmented by four 7 x 10-inch passive radiators.

GOLDENEAR TECHNOLOGY'S Triton Reference, a model that I reviewed in the June 2017 issue of *Sound & Vision*, was the result of a value-oriented audio brand throwing caution to the wind to produce a cost-no-object loudspeaker. Even so, since we're dealing with GoldenEar Tech here, the Triton Reference ended up priced at \$8,498/pair—not exactly cheap, but well below what you'd pay for the flagship efforts of other speaker brands.

A regular rotation of speakers passes through my doors, but the Triton Reference is the one I was truly sorry to ship back—its powerful, full-range sound and sophisticated cosmetics gave clear indication that co-founders Sandy Gross and Don Givogue were capable of successfully stepping up their game while managing to keep costs in check. For that reason, when GoldenEar Tech asked if I wanted to spend time with its latest creation, a scaled-down \$5,998/pair version of their flagship called the Triton One.R, I jumped at the chance.

Standing 54 inches tall, the Triton One.R is four inches shorter than its big brother, and the other dimensions have been pared down as well to create a more compact model than the towering Triton Reference. That said, this is very much a full-range speaker, with frequency response down to 13 Hz according to GoldenEar's tech specs. And while many other full-range tower speakers require heavy lifting from an attached amplifier, the Reference One.R's rated 8-ohm impedance and 92 dB sensitivity mean you can use it with even modest integrated amps and receivers. Also like its big brother, the One.R has a built-in subwoofer section—this one with three 5 x 9-inch active bass drivers powered by a 1,600-watt DSP-controlled digital amplifier. The sub's output is augmented by four 7 x 10-inch passive radiators, two of them mounted on each cabinet side to balance out movement.

The Triton One.R uses the the same High-Velocity Folded Ribbon (HVFR) tweeter as the one found in the Triton Reference. A revamped design with 50 percent more neodymium magnet material than the tweeter units found on earlier speakers from the company, this next-gen HVFR offers improved efficiency and power handling. Rounding out the speaker's driver complement is a pair of 5.25-inch upper bass/midrange drivers. According to GoldenEar Tech, fine tweaks including a "balanced" crossover configuration, a reworked internal speaker wire topology, and the use of high-quality capacitors all make a contribution to the speaker's sound quality. Last but not least, the One.R was voiced by the company to mimic the performance of the larger Reference tower.

Whereas the Reference's large size made it a visually overpowering element in my near-3,000 cubic foot listening room, the One.R's reduced scale was more to my liking. As

with the company's other tower models, the cabinet tapers in dramatically from back to front, which gives it a slim, streamlined appearance when viewed face-on but also serves to minimize diffraction effects. A very welcome carryover from the Reference is the One.R's piano black lacquer-coated mediate cabinet. This gives the speaker a solid look and is also, according to GoldenEar Tech, "engineered with the goal of making it as non-resonant and inert as possible."



FEATURES AND SETUP

The Triton One.R's lower back features a panel with gold-plated cable connections plus an RCA jack to provide a subwoofer LFE input option when the speaker is used for surround sound applications. There's also a level knob and an IEC power connection. Four rubber-coated levelling feet are included with each speaker, and there are also metal carpet spikes and discs for use on wooden floors.

Initial positioning of the speakers for best sound in my room was carried out by Sandy Gross himself. While Sandy's setup favored a tightly angled arrangement for optimal imaging, I later nudged the towers out into a less restrictive formation, one that widened the soundstage a bit but still maintained a solid stereo image. The speakers were placed at a one-foot distance from the room's back wall and a nine-foot distance from my listening position.

Associated gear used for my main evaluation included a 2 x 150-watt Hegel Music Systems H190 integrated amplifier, an Elac Discovery music server streaming Tidal and stored FLAC files via Roon music management software, a Pioneer BDP-88FD universal disc player, and Nordost Purple Flare speaker cables and interconnects. For the home theater part of my test, I placed the One.R towers in a system consisting of a GoldenEar

Technology SuperSat 50C center channel speaker and Triton Two tower speakers for the rear channels, an Anthem AVM-50v surround preamp/processor, a Sunfire Cinema Grand multichannel amplifier, and an Oppo UDP-203 UHD Blu-ray disc player.

While the Triton One.R does have a low-frequency level control knob, same as with the other powered towers from GoldenEar I've tested I found that leaving it at the default 12 o'clock position resulted in the most linear-sounding bass. This was definitely the case with music, and it carried over as well when I relocated the One.R pair into my home theater for movie-watching. For the latter situation, you simply configure the front speakers in your receiver or processor's setup menu as Large and select "No" for the subwoofer output option. The main reason why you might want to use the speaker's LFE input (with the receiver or processor's own controls handling LFE level adjustment) is to compensate for really large rooms, or ones where the layout necessitates asymmetrical front speaker placement.

PERFORMANCE

To get a sense of how the speakers sounded in my room during his visit, Gross played a mix of demo tracks he typically uses at audio shows. Thankfully, he left that CD behind. One track, "Nomads," by jazz bassist

Buster Williams, really captured my attention. Listening to it, Buster's standup bass sounded completely seamless as he wound his way from the highest to the lowest registers of the instrument. Cymbals and piano had a crisp, airy presentation, and a vibraphone floated across the soundstage in a strikingly 3D-like manner during Stefon Harris' solo. The powerful sense of atmosphere that the One.R speakers conveyed conjured up memories of my time with the Triton Reference, which had a similarly vivid and realistic presentation.

Another thing that captivated me about the Triton Reference when I reviewed it in 2017 was its incredibly transparent rendering of vocals, and the new One.R proved equally adept in that department. Streaming "Stay" from the new Cat Power album *Wanderer* via Tidal, Chan Marshall's fine-textured voice came through in an effortless manner and stood in solid relief against the piano chords in the background. Pulling out a CD of *Push the Sky Away*, by Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, the singer's deep, upfront voice on "We No Who U R" sounded distinctly fleshed-out, but also well-blended with the song's female backing vocals.

On a recent road trip, I was impressed by how good some tracks on the new *The Beatles* (White Album) reissue sounded, even when streamed through my car's none-too-great stock audio system. I looked forward

At a Glance

- + Full-range sound with powerful bass
- + Reasonably compact form factor
- + Excellent value
- Nothing major

Price: \$5,998/pair

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to returning home and hearing those same tracks. Listening to new mix of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" via Tidal, the panoramic soundscape that the One.Rs rendered was a revelation. Drums and percussion spread impossibly wide to the right and left, leaving loads of space for the piano and George Harrison's smooth vocals. Eric Clapton's "weeping guitar," meanwhile, towered hugely over everything during his solo. The One.R's vivid presentation of this remixed track left nothing to the imagination—all detail contained in the now 50-year-old recording was brought forth and laid bare.

A full-range tower speaker should be expected to reproduce orchestral works with a convincing sense of dynamics and scale. To confirm that with the One.R, I turned to Mahler's *Symphony No.1* as played by the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by James Judd (Harmonia Mundi CD). Listening to the tentative intro of the symphony's first section, the delicate, extended scrape of bows across violins cut cleanly through space and the fluttering piano and woodwinds were conveyed with equal clarity. As this section neared its climax, the One.R's folded ribbon tweeter presented the piercing blasts of brass in a detailed, airy manner, while the slam of the kettle drums and cymbals were appropriately thunderous.

With the Triton One.Rs dispatched to my home theater

GOLDENEAR TECHNOLOGY TRITON ONE.R LOUDSPEAKER

setup, I didn't once feel a need for additional subwoofers, even when watching action flicks with ass-kicking DTS-HD Master Audio soundtracks. The footfalls of the monstrous Kaiju in Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim*, for example, had a window- and bone-rattling punch, along with ample low-end extension. Playing the new Ultra HD Blu-ray of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the eerie massed voices in *Requiem*, the Ligeti choral work that director Stanley Kubrick uses in the scene where the black monolith first appears on earth, seemed to blast through the room like a wind-storm. And when the action cut to a scene where a pre-human creature is bestowed with the insight that bones can be used as tools to *smash* things, the bombastic swells of brass and kettle drums in Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra* displayed even more intense gut-punching slam than what I had heard during the Mahler symphony.

CONCLUSION

My time spent reviewing GoldenEar Technology's flagship Triton Reference speaker in 2017 turned out to be something of an event—I had never before had an opportunity to listen with a serious full-range tower speaker in my listening room, and I absolutely liked what I was hearing. To me, the Reference's \$8,498/pair price seemed very fair for the quality and scale of sound that those speakers delivered.

Listening to the company's Triton One.R in the same space, I have to say I'm even more floored than I was by the Reference. That's because the new model delivers equally full-range sound, along with many of the same qualities that made that earlier speaker so impressive: clear, fleshed-out mids; airy, transparent highs; and linear, low-reaching bass courtesy of a built-in subwoofer that lends itself equally well to music or movie soundtrack reproduction.

The Triton One.R's more compact form-factor proved to be another plus in my room since it didn't loom as large and intimidatingly. At just under \$6,000/pair, I expect that this formidable new speaker will cut into the company's sales of the Reference, but I'm sure they knew that going in. If I could pull a Spinal Tap and push the Triton One.R's Value rating past our usual maximum, I'd do it in a heartbeat.

Specs

5 x 9 in cone subwoofer (3), 10 x 7 in passive radiator (4), 5.25

in cone bass/midrange driver (2), pleated planar magnetic tweeter; 1600-Watt subwoofer amplifier; enclosure, 8 x 54 x 16 in (WxHxD); base, 12.3 x 19.8 in (WxD); 80 lb

PRICE: \$5,998/pair

The Verdict

GoldenEar Technology's scaled-down version of its Triton Reference delivers similar dynamic, full-range performance as the company's flagship speaker, but does so at an even more reasonable price.