



# GoldenEar Technology Triton Two

**G**oldenEar Technology is a new brand in South Africa, but the US marque has been raising eyebrows and pleasing discerning ears in the US for some time, with countless glowing reviews to prove it.

The company is the latest endeavour of the legendary Sandy Gross, of Polk Audio and Definitive Technology fame. Both are revered speaker brands that have benefited from his considerable speaker design experience and overall knowledge.

The GoldenEar loudspeaker line-up is an extensive one, spanning both stereo and home theatre applications. Under scrutiny here is the Triton Two, an innovative, multi-driver floorstander with integrated active subwoofer.

Although the Triton Twos arrived in huge, coffin-sized boxes, the actual loudspeaker is surprisingly slim and elegant. The tapered enclosure features a narrow front baffle (great to combat diffraction), non-parallel sides and a sloping top panel, and is bolted to a sturdy plinth.

Instead of a grille, the entire speaker chassis is wrapped in a close-fitting black cloth sock, offset by the glossy black finish of the top panel and the plinth. The effect is not only smart, but also understates the physical presence of the Triton Twos. Besides, the cloth also acts as a damping agent integral to the speaker's design.

The enclosure itself is manufactured from dense fibreboard known as medite, and is comprehensively braced and damped. It provides a home to no less than seven proprietary drive units, although two of those are actually passive radiators.

Let's start with the tweeter, which is a variation on the Heil ribbon transducer, and is described here as a high-velocity folded ribbon tweeter (HVRT). It consists of a pleated diaphragm suspended in a magnetic field that reacts to the input signal. Compared to a conventional dome

tweeter, the HVRT is said to achieve greater control, and a smoother, extended response.

The HVRT is accompanied by a pair of mid/bass drivers, one located above and the other below the tweeter. The



114 mm units have a cast alloy basket, a motor system with powerful magnets, and an unusual multi-vented phase plug, combined with a custom-designed cone profile, to allow an extended response all the way to 20 kHz and beyond,

GoldenEar claims – despite a 3,5 kHz crossover point.

The HVRT and its mid/bass partners are accommodated in their own, sealed chamber in the upper third of the main enclosure.

Occupying the lower part of the baffle is a pair of rectangular, front-firing subwoofer drivers featuring aluminium voice coils and composite, Kevlar-reinforced cones.

Dubbed quadratic sub-bass drivers by GoldenEar, these long-throw designs are longitudinally arranged, one above the other, and are coupled to a pair of laterally positioned planar infrasonic radiators on each side of the cabinet, which GoldenEar says operate similarly to a transmission line, but with superior transient response and control.

The subwoofer array is powered by a Class D power amplifier rated at 1 200 watts, and equipped with a programmable logic device (PLD) that manages functions such as soft clipping, DC offset control and discrete multi-band limiting. The amp's low THD allows minimal use of negative feedback, which benefits transient performance.

Installing the Triton Twos was a breeze. Once unpacked and fitted with their plinths, they were easy enough to manoeuvre, with rubber-tipped 'feet' aiding the process. These should be substituted for the proper coupling spikes supplied once positioning has been finalised.

Given their slim design and narrow footprint, the Triton Twos were easily accommodated about 60 cm from the side walls and just more than a metre into our listening studio, with a bit of toe-in applied to sharpen the focus of the sonic image.

With their built-in subwoofers, I was concerned that exaggerated bass extension would be a problem, but as it turned out, the interaction between the Tritons and the room was far less critical than expected, and there seemed no low-frequency exaggeration, almost regardless of placement.

The built-in subwoofers have a rear-mounted level control, and once the position of the Tritons had been finalised, some time was spent determining the ideal sub-bass level. I eventually settled

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on just less than half of the controller's adjustment scale, which seemed to offer the best combination of bottom-end thrust and overall integration.

The review pair was well used and required no burn-in time. The initial listening sessions were performed with our reference Electrocompaniet PI-2D integrated amplifier, but I later swapped that unit for a pre/power combo consisting of Classé's new CA-D200 digital power amp, partnered by an Electrocompaniet 4.7 pre-amp.

Source components were the marvellous Primare BD32 universal deck, and our faithful Oppo BDP-95EU universal player. Also employed was an Ayre QB-9 USB DAC, with source files provided by my 13-inch MacBook Pro 2.7 GHz Intel Core i7 running OSX 10.9.4, and delivered using Audirvana 1.5.12.

My listening sessions extended over several days, initially with the EC PI-2D on amp duty. I started out with a so-

VITAL STATS

Enclosure type .....	Sealed
Drive units .....	1x HFVR folded ribbon tweeter, 2x 114 mm MVPP mid/bass drivers, 2x 127 x 229 mm quadratic subwoofers, linked to two 178 x 254 planar infrasonic radiators
Bi-wiring .....	No
Impedance .....	8 ohms compatible
Sensitivity .....	91 dB
Frequency response .....	16 Hz – 35 kHz
Power handling .....	20 – 500 watts
Subwoofer amp .....	1 200 watts, Class D
Dimensions (WxHxD).....	191 x 330 x 1 230 mm
Weight .....	27 kg each

PRICE..... R44 900

VERDICT

Astounding presence and realism from these slim floorstanders. A particular penchant for authoritative low-end bass response. Hugely entertaining, too!

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OUR RATING: 88 / 100

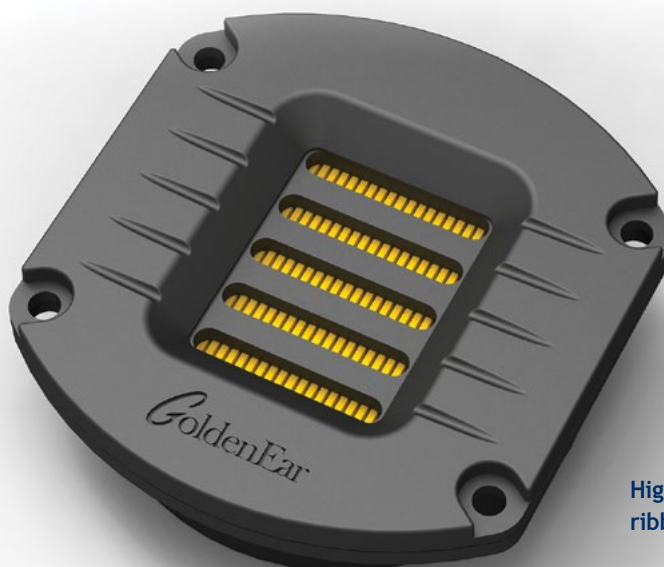




called audiophile CD from Accoustic Arts, showcasing great recordings of exceptional male vocal performances – although I like it because it contains some damn' fine music.

I was instantly entranced by the rich, embracing tonality of the Tritons, which captured the texture and the timbre of the music with an almost organic intensity and realism. The delivery of the towers was smooth and creamy, with a full but open midrange. Clean trebles allowed full access to the finest slivers of detail, without the slightest trace of malice or aggression.

The result was an easy, approachable and thoroughly engaging performance, underscored by a bass response that was, in one word, fantastic. It reached down bone-shakingly low, with a sonorous intensity that extended to the lowest registers, and could be felt as much as heard.



High-velocity folded ribbon tweeter (HVRT)

But here's the thing: that bottom end never sounded forceful or imposing, but simply *real*, with the kind of tactile presence and movement of air one would associate with much larger boxes and far bigger transducers.

The soundstage was open and inviting, allowing an unencumbered engagement with the music. There was a compelling sense of scale and dimension that defied the physical boundaries of the listening room, with a perfect allocation of dimensional positioning, so that the relative location of voices and instruments was easily and believably discerned.

The staging talents of the speakers extended to being able to recreate both the majesty and impact of a symphony orchestra in a concert hall, and the intimacy of an acoustic ensemble with an almost casual, accessible ease.

In fact, I'd go as far as to say that the Triton Twos have the rare ability to deliver a sound that is more music than hi-fi. There was an integrity, a sense of timing and coherence, that allowed anything from Santana to the Seattle Symphony Orchestra to sound just right.

While that sense of fluid pace and easy approachability certainly made the music more inviting and accessible, a further contributing element was the revealing nature of the Tritons: they were able to extract and present a plethora of fine musical and ambient detail, and to present that information in a thoroughly believable musical context.

I like the extended soundscapes and tongue-in-cheek performances of Robbie Williams' latest offering, *Swings Both Ways* and the Triton Twos made listening to this set all the more entertaining. On 'Dream A Little Dream For Me', the initial mono

## Associated Equipment

Primare BD32 universal deck  
 Oppo BDP-95EU universal deck  
 Rega Planar 3/Moth RB250/Ortofon 2M Red  
 Electrocompaniet ECP-1 phono stage  
 Ayre QB-9 USB DAC  
 Electrocompaniet PI-2D integrated amplifier  
 Electrocompaniet 4.7 pre-amp  
 Classé CA-200D power amp  
 KEF R500 loudspeakers  
 Dynaudio Focus 26 loudspeakers

## Software

Various – *Uncompressed World Vol 3: Male Vocals* (Accoustic Arts CD)  
 Robbie Williams – *Swings Both Ways* (Universal)  
 Santana – *Corazón* (Sony Music)  
 Black Keys – *Turn Blue* (Warner Music)  
 WA Mozart – *Piano Concerto Nos. 21 and 24 – Eugene Istomin/ Gerard Schwarz/Seattle Symphony Orchestra* (Reference Recordings HRx High-Def Digi)  
 Ramirez – *Misa Criolla – Mercedes Sosa* (Decca CD and Digi)  
 Jack Johnson – *From Here To Now* (Universal CD and LP)  
 Melody Gardot – *My One And Only Thrill* (Verve CD and Digi)

effect, complete with simulated vinyl crackle 'n pop, expands into a generously dimensioned, lavishly delivered performance, spread wide and deep across the soundstage.

The Tritons ensured that the big-band sound was delivered in its fullest, most impactful glory, but never lost sight of the need to qualify the broad strokes on the musical canvas with fine, intricate touches: the stroke of brush on snare, the resonant pluck of a double bass string, the smooth sweep of the strings, were beautifully, lucidly presented.

On 'Soda Pop', the rollicking acoustic bass can easily sound overwhelming, but the superior bottom-end authority of the Tritons allowed the full impact of the double bass to be enjoyed, but without disturbing the overall balance. The built-in subs had both the muscle and the pace to cope with the challenge, and integrated seamlessly with the overall delivery.

Santana's *Corazón* is a celebration of Latin American-infused music, embroidered with the guitar ace's special licks and riffs. 'Margarita' is pure, foot-tapping pop-rock, and there are so many elements that the result can sound fragmented and flat.

But the Tritons brought insight and cohesion to the performance, from the power of the deep and muscular bass

to Santana's vivid, energetic guitar, and the intricate web of percussion and drumwork. Again, it was the ability of the floorstanders to present the music with cohesion and intent that made for absorbing listening.

*Turn Blue* by The Black Keys is hardly an audiophile masterpiece, but for exactly that reason, it presented the Triton Two towers with a different kind of challenge: to capture the raw essence and intent of this unadorned rock to best effect.

And they did: on 'Weight Of Love', Dan Auerbach's eloquent bass lines and searing guitar are offset by the hypnotic rhythms of Patrick Carney's drumwork, and the Tritons communicated the strangely addictive music to foot-tapping, absorbing effect.

Eugene Istomin's polite but no less absorbing performance of Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 21* on Reference Recording's HRx high-res label is a beautifully rendered, sensitively executed recording with superior detail, sweeping dynamics and a piano that displays all the intensity and majesty that instrument possesses.

The Tritons made the most of the excellent production, perfectly placing Istomin's piano on the wide-open soundstage, and recreating the timbre, impact and flow of the instrument against the

orchestra's sweeping, regal backdrop. Scale, power and authority were all in evidence, but always to the benefit of the musical message.

How much would the Triton Twos benefit from more urge? I swapped the Electrocompaniet PI-2D for a Classé CA-D200 (review pending) to find out, and was instantly rewarded with a sound that was tauter, cleaner and even more three-dimensional. There were gains in terms of the soundstage's space and air, while the integration of the sub-bass with the bass registers was more seamless.

Don't get me wrong: the PI-2D is a fine amplifier, and it partnered the Triton Twos beautifully. But doubling the power, and by implication boosting headroom and control, significantly benefited the overall performance, despite the independence in the nether tonal regions provided by those in-built active subs.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Triton Twos. They are inherently musical and utterly engaging, with a delivery that seems less critical of absolute recording quality than other high-resolution designs, and an ability to extract the essence and the intent of the music.

In fact, the sense of reality, of a performance magically transported right there, into the listening room, is a particular hallmark of the Tritons' delivery as a whole. This is a speaker that doesn't magnify or exaggerate, but simply recreates the original performance with intensity and purpose.

Are there any downsides? The Triton Twos aren't physically huge, but they deserve a listening room with enough air to show off their best. And as far as absolute transparency is concerned, they don't disappear as point sources in quite the same way that Dynaudio's Excite 38s, or even the KEF R700s do. Frankly, that never got in the way of enjoying them.

However, in terms of absolute authority and presence, of believably recreating musical performances, of thrilling the listener with real, lump-in-the-throat music, the GoldenEar Triton Twos are astounding. And for sheer bang-for-the-buck value in this league, they're impossible to beat.

Deon Schoeman

Triton 5x9 SubBass Driver

