Boom! Ba-boom! The shock of thunderous bass waves is what the GoldenEar Triton Seven speakers greet me with to start a surprising review experience. Put away your preconceived notions of what slim, budget mini-towers should sound like—these are the first such speakers that don’t prompt me to add a subwoofer, even just to see if any bass response is missing. Unless you’re trying to outthump the teenage neighbor with the 15-inch woofers in the back of his hatchback, the Sevens provide as much bass as you could ever want from a $1,400 pair of speakers.

Thanks to their dual passive radiators, the Sevens go down to 29 Hz, which is plenty of low-frequency extension for most listeners. From the instrumental thunderclap in James Taylor’s “Gaia” and the cannons in Tchaikovsky’s “1812 Overture,” to Dire Straits’ “The Man’s Too Strong” and non-ear-bleeding hip-hop or techno dance music, these speakers easily provide the necessary weight to get the job done.

If imaging floats your boat, the Sevens flood the room with that characteristic—so much so that my small man cave (about 9 by 12 feet) isn’t quite large enough to let them breathe. In my 14-by-18-foot living room, the speakers thrive, with instrument placement that reminds me of much more expensive speakers.
The individual percussion whacks of the Indigo Girls’ “Three Hits” rotate around the outside of each speaker, with the individual voices placed far left and right, and the magical harmony point placed well in front of the mini-towers.

Aerosmith’s classic “Dream On” is a stress-test song. Steven Tyler’s vocals can push many tweeters in the sub-$1,500 range into screechy wail. Though they thrive with the 150 wpc Vista Audio i35 tube integrated Simaudio Moon i-7 integrated, the 35-watts per channel of my reference easily. Though it’s that easy to determine a cable’s absolute character, or, better yet, verify its lack of character, then why does AudioQuest offer more than one cable ever made and used it in a bypass comparison. OK, so borrowing every series of cables? Shouldn’t one cable or the other always be better (or worse)?

But, Which Path To Take?
If it’s that easy to determine a cable’s absolute character, or, better yet, verify its lack of character, then why does AudioQuest offer more than one cable ever made and used it in a bypass comparison. OK, so borrowing every series of cables? Shouldn’t one cable or the other always be better (or worse)?

Yes, There Is A Best Cable For Your Speakers
A low-level audio interconnect doesn’t carry power and doesn’t have to manage strong magnetic fields, so we almost always recommend it as the first component to approach any speaker setup. Though it’s that easy to determine a cable’s absolute character, or, better yet, verify its lack of character, then why does AudioQuest offer more than one cable ever made and used it in a bypass comparison. OK, so borrowing every series of cables? Shouldn’t one cable or the other always be better (or worse)?

And, yes, you can find that cable. Or, you could—if you borrowed every series of cables? Shouldn’t one cable or the other always be better (or worse)?

Tech and Setup
Optimizing the Sevens takes very little effort. In my room, I achieve the best results using an equal triangular measurement, with the speakers toed-in directly to the listening position and placed four feet out from the wall. If you place the speakers too far apart, male vocals will hollow out and the center image will collapse. During setup, I suggest moving them apart a few inches at a time until you’ve gone too far, and then move them a touch closer.

With an 89 dB sensitivity rating at 8 ohms, the Sevens get jumping pretty easily. Though they thrive with the 150 watts per channel of my reference Simaudio Moon i-7 integrated, the 35-wpc Vista Audio i35 tube integrated still delivers plenty of punch though with a slightly softer presentation than the Sim. These speakers are truly amplifier-friendly, as they work equally well with class-D amps.
Standing just under 40 inches tall, 7.25 inches wide, and 10.5 inches deep, the Triton Sevens appear quite ordinary from a distance. Step up close and the first difference becomes apparent: A black grill sock topped with a shiny black plastic cap covers each speaker—no veneer or vinyl anywhere. Why the grill sock? It provides a sleek and uniform look and covers the dual passive 8-inch radiator bass drivers located near the base on either side panel. This old-school usage of the passive radiators comes from Golden Ear president Sandy Gross’s experience as cofounder of Polk Audio. The result is an impressively detailed bass response down to 29 Hz.

The two midrange drivers and the Heil-inspired HVFR tweeter are mounted in a D’Appolito mid-tweeter-mid array. Incorporating the passive radiators requires only a single third-order crossover set at 3 kHz. Other speakers I’ve reviewed with a Heil-type tweeter have a much lower crossover point, but 3 kHz works just fine in the Sevens. The speakers come with a sturdy piano gloss covered melamine base, and four spiked or rubber-tipped feet are provided, for those desiring such floor coupling.

(continued)
Further Listening

Never one to shy away from testing a speaker’s limits, I play a multitude of symphonic recordings and discover that the Sevens will expose poorly recorded performances. Two versions of Gustav Holst’s *The Planets* aptly demonstrate this characteristic: One recording gives a muddy, undefined soundstage during the thunderous “Jupiter” movement, while the other recording is open and enveloping.

Through the Sevens, powerful vocals appear dead center and about a foot out in front of the speakers. Adele’s “Daydreamer” shows off her conversational singing style between the powerful moments, with the Sevens picking up her soft accent. On “Best for Last,” the second track of her debut album *19*, there is a background chorus humming that I’ve never heard from similarly priced speakers—and the Sevens present it with ample clarity. When Adele lets loose with full-thrust vocals, these speakers don’t shrink; they stay faithful to the performance.

Getting timbre right in the listening sweet spot is one step, but getting it right off center is another level altogether. Even with the toe-in, I find reasonable timbral accuracy in off-angle listening spots. Achieving faithful tonal character of unique vocalists is something I always look for, especially when it comes to James Taylor. Many speakers in the sub-$2,000 range either embellish his nasal sweetness or thin out his voice. The Sevens lay off the sugar just a bit, thus keeping his vocal character intact.

The Seven’s most stunning musical performance during my review comes from live small jazz ensembles. On Bill Frisell’s *East/West [Live]*, all the characteristics mentioned above come together. The soundstage presented is a three-dimensional revelation—an audiophile nirvana experience, where the listener gets totally lost in the music. Every instrument has a place but at the same time comes from everywhere; it’s stereo reproduction at its best. For a $1,400 pair of speakers to so strongly recreate a live performance is a remarkable auditory feat.

Solo piano recordings are notorious for showing speaker flaws. The Sevens perform admirably here, producing a very natural-sounding piano. George Winston’s “Ike La Ladina” does show a bit of midrange congestion, but not as much as a pair of Totem Rainmakers, another pair of speakers in this price category with fine imaging. Other George Winston albums and songs don’t show the same level of congestion, though on a couple of occasions a slight hint can be detected.

For head bangers on a budget or limited in real estate, the Sevens will make you toss your hair with abandon. My ears fly the white flag of surrender numerous times at the 103 dB mark, while the speakers continue to provide a solid soundstage. The instrumental layering on “Stairway to Heaven” doesn’t muddy up the overall sound that the speakers present. Instead, the 5.25-inch midrange drivers create ample acoustical space without limiting the multiple instruments. Good speakers recreate the strength of individual instruments, and that is what the Sevens do consistently.
During my last weekend with the speakers, I hook them up to my 2.0 home theater setup and am not disappointed. Dialogue is clear, sound effects during car chase are well placed, and gunshots make me feel like I’m in the middle of the violence. Most importantly, I never need to reach for the remote to turn the volume up or down, as I neither strain nor feel sonically overwhelmed.

**Final Tally**

For speakers that do so many things well for just $1,400 a pair, one might ask what was sacrificed? The Triton Sevens don’t have the level of resolution of my reference Harbeth Compact 7ES3 speakers, but the extra 15 Hz on the bottom end earns some serious points, especially when the speakers are used in a home theater set-up. The Sevens do the basics well and add in the treats of outstanding imaging and real, prodigious bass.

These are speakers that a family with myriad musical tastes can enjoy. Watch out competition: Sandy Gross has a winner in his lineup.

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**Modern Classic: V40 SE**

For the discerning music aficionado,

The V40 SE is a push-pull pentode integrated amplifier delivering 2 x 40W output power. OCTAVE has combined the sonic purity of the classic tube design for all sound-relevant circuit parts with modern semiconductors for tube circuit periphery, including innovative power management and electronic monitoring protection systems such as the energy-saving Ecomode.

The ease of operation via its exacting yet simple fixed bias control and comprehensive electronic safeguards, along with its state-of-the-art performance offers absolute refinement, enduring value and unmatched reliability. Further audible improvement and an upgrade path are offered via the optional OCTAVE Black Box power supply capacitance module.

Exhibited in a range of models that redefine the expectations of tube amplifier performance, OCTAVE’s timeless contemporary design and harmonious sound quality epitomizes the understated elegance of a true modern classic.

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**PERIPHERALS**

**Amplification**

- SimAudio Moon i7 integrated amplifier
- Vista Audio i35 integrated tube amplifier
- Virtue Audio Sensation M451 Tripath/hybrid integrated amplifier

**Phono Stage**

- SimAudio Moon LP5.3

**Source**

- Rega RP1 w/Ortofon Super OM40 cartridge
- MacBook iTunes/PureMusic

**Digital Processor**

- SimAudio Moon 300D

**Speakers**

- ACI Emerald XL
- Harbeth Compact 7es3
- Magnepan 1.6 w/Skiing Ninja crossovers
- Totem Acoustic Rainmakers

**Wires/Cabling**

- Shunyata Venom 3 power cord, AudioArt IC-3 interconnects, AudioArt SC-3 speaker wire