

GoldenEar Technology Triton One.R Loudspeaker

Value City

Jacob Heilbrunn

“...solemnly majestic—dare I say it?—a renaissance of sound.”

When Sandy Gross, the president of GoldenEar Technology, visited me in 2015 to help set up his Triton Five loudspeakers, he later confessed to me in an email that it had been a somewhat hair-raising experience for him. His worries had centered upon an LP of Led Zeppelin II that I played at what might be deemed healthy levels through the Triton Five. He admitted that he had been concerned about the punishment that we might have been inflicting upon his precious drivers, yet they made it through with aplomb.

But when Gross showed up once again with his new Triton One.R, he clearly had no such worries. The One.R is a true full-range loudspeaker, loaded with heaps of drivers, that delivers a real wallop. And, incidentally, Gross' new progeny come in at a truly more-than-reasonable price of \$2999 each. Heck, I might as well avoid any preliminary throat-clearing: This is a superb loudspeaker that had me scratching my head in disbelief at how much sonic prowess it boasts. What's more, the piano-black lacquer version that I demo'd looked quite nifty as well with its appearance slicing through the air like a blade. This latest addition to the Triton line also doesn't occupy much space, which helps it to perform an even better sonic disappearing act.

If you've ever met Gross—he tends to pop up at audio shows, where you may find him poring over bins of LPs for sale—you'll immediately discern that he's committed to music and musical reproduction in a way that inspires a lot of confidence. (I've spent a goodly amount of time listening to several superb sampler discs that he burned and bestowed upon me.) He and his partners, Don Givogue and Bob Johnston, also manage to create loudspeakers at what amounts to bargain-basement prices. His speakers' performance is high end, but their cost is not.

As expected, Gross packs a lot into the One.R. I was able to carry the loudspeaker into my basement listening room myself, though I had to move carefully. The speaker weighs almost 80 pounds and stands about 4' tall. It comes with a proprietary base and feet, though the Wisconsin company Stillpoints tells me that you can also upgrade with its custom feet, as you can do with a variety of loudspeakers. (Personally I have found their aftermarket products to be extremely efficacious.)

The most novel aspect of Gross' new loudspeaker is the number of powered subwoofers that it contains—no fewer than three. The oval subwoofer cones are constructed out of a polymer-impregnated Nomex material. An internal switching amplifier controlled by a 56-bit DSP chip allows you to tune the bass via a dial



in the rear of the loudspeaker—so you'll need nearby wall sockets or, alternatively, long power cords to run the One.R. In addition, GoldenEar always likes to use planar infrasonic radiators (GoldenEar's name for a flat passive radiator) to further extend the bass, and the One.R is no exception. When it comes to the treble, Gross employs a neodymium “High Velocity

Folded Ribbon” tweeter. Two 5.25" midrange cones round out the driver complement. As this approach suggests, Gross, who owns a huge pair of Sound Lab electrostatic speakers at his home in Baltimore, is seeking to emulate the speed and coherence of an electrostat or a planar in a dynamic-driver design. To a remarkable extent, he has succeeded in his quest.

What struck me most in listening to the One.R initially was its lucidity. Coming off the \$855,000 Wilson WAMM Master Chronosonic loudspeaker, I wasn't quite sure what to expect in listening to the One.R, but I was immediately taken by its planar-like qualities. It created a wide and deep soundstage that allowed instruments to pop in and out with a minimum of overhang. Now I'll grant that a good part of this had to do with the top-notch front-end equipment that was powering the GoldenEar loudspeakers, including Ypsilon Hyperion monoblock amplifiers. But the One.R, by the same standard, was fully capable of revealing the glorious heights that those amps can deliver.

On the nifty CD *A Trumpet Celebration by the Masters of Leipzig* that features Edward Carroll and organist Edward Brewer, I was very impressed by the One.R's coherence. Some of my favorite works on this CD include several airs by Georg Philipp Telemann. The Triton One.R vividly conveyed not only Carroll's total command of the trumpet, but also the multifarious shadings and purity of tone that he achieves in playing baroque music. On a Bach chorale, kettle drum whacks came through with the most satisfying thumps, a testament to the clarity and power of the bass region. But the most captivating aspect here was the sheer airiness of the overall presentation. The One.R had no problem distinguishing between the three drums, bassoon, kettle drums, and organ on this boisterous chorale.

The clarity of the One.R was also shown to good effect on another trumpet re-

cording, an EMI Classics CD of the British virtuoso Alison Balsom. On a transcription of Vivaldi's violin concerto in A minor, Balsom's fleet runs up and down the scale were carefully rendered by the One.R. Another enticing aspect that came through in listening to the Balsom CD was how deftly the One.R positioned the height and reproduced the scale of the instruments; I never had the sense that they were oversized or bloated. Instead, the soundstage was deep but also very focused in the appropriate sonic plane. It always felt as though you were facing the orchestra head-on rather than staring up into the distance at it. In my experience, this helps immerse you in the music more—in my book, anything that serves to efface the sense of electronic reproduction is to the good.

A problematic yet winning disc that I like to listen to is a Musical Heritage Society CD featuring Venetian brass music—problematic because it simply can sound a bit glazed; winning because the performances are so darned good. The clarity and coherence of the One.R, coupled with its ability to anchor the soundstage, all contributed to make the Gabrieli canons and sonatas on this album a pleasure to listen to. The One.R neatly separated the various brass choirs and nailed the timbres of the trumpets, trombones, French horns, and tuba. What could have been cacophonous instead emerged as solemnly majestic, even—dare I say it—a renaissance of sound.

For my money, the greatest strengths of the Triton One.R are its hand-

Specs & Pricing

Type: Floorstanding loudspeaker with powered subwoofer

Driver complement: One neodymium High-Velocity Folded Ribbon (HVFR) tweeter, two 5¼" mid/bass drivers, three 5" x 9" long-throw subwoofers coupled to four 7" x 10" quadratic planar infrasonic radiators

Subwoofer power amplifier: 1600W SuperSub Subwoofer switching amplifier and DSP control

Frequency response: 13Hz–35kHz

Sensitivity: 92dB

Nominal impedance: Compatible with 8 ohms

Dimensions: 8" x 54" x 16 5/8"

Weight: 80 lbs.

Price: \$2999 each

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some soundstage and airy treble. I tinkered with the controls in the bass region, but you're not going to get the kind of crunch that much more expensive loudspeakers from Wilson, Magico, Rockport, or other leading high-end manufacturers deliver. Bass, as always, remains the most difficult and expensive region for a loudspeaker manufacturer to control. Physics is physics. The technical wizardry that GoldenEar deploys can take you a long way, but not all the distance that superlative bass requires. This isn't meant as a knock on the One.R. As I noted at the outset, there is something baffling about the overall performance level of this Triton model considering its price. Whether the source material is solo piano or orchestra, these speakers supply uniformly elegant and suave musical reproduction. If you've purchased a high-dollar loudspeaker, I don't think the Triton will cause you to doubt your choice, but it will certainly take you aback. In selecting the name GoldenEar for his company, Gross has set a high bar. With the Triton One.R he easily clears it. **tas**

