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GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers Review

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GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers Review Highlights

Highly efficient speaker with built-in bass subwoofers powered by 1,600 watt digital amps in each speaker. The Triton One offers exception clarity with a D'Appolito midrange/tweeter array and the highly regarded High-Velocity Folded Ribbon (HVFR™) tweeter.



GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers Highlights Summary

- Excellent dynamics full range
- Powered subwoofer offers in-room adjustability
- Clean design and format
- Very affordable

Introduction to the GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers Review

I must admit, I'm late to the party. Hate when that happens. The GoldenEar Triton One speaker has been reviewed and given the preverbal thumbs up by everyone who has heard them, touting them as setting the quintessential bar very high. Show attendees, reviewers and now many owners have done what I haven't done, spend some significant time with the Triton One. For my tardiness, I had the pleasure of having Sandy Gross himself along with John Miller, the Eastern Regional Sales Manager deliver a pair and they graciously spent time adjusting the One's until we were all satisfied with the placement. Sandy travels with a handful of quarters that came in handy during the setup, more on that later but I was grateful for their efforts. As an architect people ask me all the time how I get my inspiration, sometimes it's just a thought or an image that show up at the oddest times. I was curious myself about where Sandy gets his ideas. He basically iterated the same thing but said he sometimes does wake up with an idea, sketches it and goes back to sleep. With the One being what I would consider the pinnacle of the series, I asked Sandy, where go from here!? He responded sheepishly, "I don't know, I'll sleep on it."



Design of the GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers

To anyone who is now in the least familiar with the GoldenEar Triton lineup, the One stays on course, hardly straying from the resemblance of the others: the Triton Two, Three, Seven, and now the remarkable Five recently introduced. However the Series resemblance, you can't appreciate the size of the One until you have the Two for example placed next to it. I've always considered the Two hardly modest in size yet placed side-by-side, the One by volume is much grander in scale. The appearance is clean and simple; black fabric covers 95% of the speaker save for the top piece which hides the drawstring for the fabric. The glossy plinth or base is MDF and provides solid footing for the tall, slender design. The base is fitted with carpet spikes. What's also clear in the look is the front is rounded and each side is tapered wider towards the back indicating non-parallel walls. The One also has a thicker MDF chassis than the Two, further bracing and dampening

reduces chassis resonance. Sandy and his team at GoldenEar simply set out to improve on the performance of the Two when developing the One. The primary goal was more refined dynamics that included "better bass" and cleaner, highly resolved reproduction.



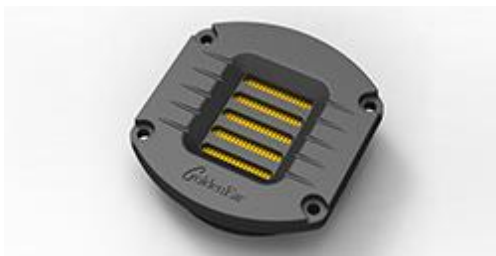
It's not hard to see the increased size of the One yields a larger internal chamber. Sandy points out that this allowed them to lower the crossover from 160Hz to 100Hz. The larger size also allowed them to increase new pair of bass/mid drivers from 4.5" in the Two to 5.25".

A 1,600 watt digital amplifier drives three front-mounted bass/sub drivers adding one from the Two. At 5" x 9" they are coupled with a quad set (two per side) 7" x 10" passive drivers said to be stiffer. The engineers refer to the amplifier as balanced drive. By sending mirror images of the audio signal to each driver (versus a single image and ground to each driver) making it fully balanced. Any identical noise or non-linear distortion from ground is thus "not passed on" while different signals do make it to the next stage resulting in a cleaner signal. Likewise, the Triton One is also matched with balanced differential input signals.



The engineers refer to this same configuration used in pro audio.

GoldenEar credits the new DSP device with more precision in the crossover between woofer and upper bass/midrange drivers resulting "phase perfect" output. By increasing the sampling rate from 96kHz to 192kHz and 48 bits to 56 bits the engineers measure reduced distortion and noise in the limiter. Sandy writes, "The result is side by side the Triton One limiter is measurably more clean and transparent on bass transients than any other limiter we have measured." He continues. "The Triton One amplifier utilizes many small, separate, power supplies for each circuit section to provide isolation, so there is little opportunity for coupling through the power supplies. Past designs relied on single larger supplies to power everything and this can lead to signal coupling between sections. For the most part, only the very top of high-end amplifiers opt for this many-small-power-supply architecture. Also, the reconstruction filters have been redone, which results in improved damping factor." No discussion of any GoldenEar speaker ignores the High-Velocity Folded Ribbon (HVFR™) tweeter. All tweeters must have as near to zero for mass for speed. The folded ribbon design of isn't like a conventional dome tweeter, it doesn't move in and out but rather the folds squeeze together and apart. Thus the driver is much more efficient, with higher output and less distortion. What I will say is getting the tweeter at ear height is most critical, and the One's D'Appolito midrange/tweeter array is focused at that level.



Finally, the rear of the speaker yields not only line level speaker binding posts, but also an LFE input if you want your processor to separate the LFE channel via RCA cable in the case of a theater setup, for example. Otherwise you will also find the subwoofer volume control which you will find extraordinary helpful in your setup and for various

recordings. Dial up your own bass level. No two people agree on the proper bass level to their own liking. Add in the room quirks and bass can be a mystery. The Triton One comes closest to any speaker I've owned or reviewed to manage room bass issues without having to EQ. Although I kept the dial to 1 o'clock for most of my listening, I did raise or drop the volume a dB or two here and there depending on the recording.

Setup of the GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers

It seems the preferred placement for GoldenEar and perhaps specifically by Sandy himself, is to set the speakers far apart within the space with a severe toe in, keeping them a nice distance from both side wall and rear walls. Consistent with his manuals, Sandy likes the equilateral triangle all sides equal. In my situation the speakers are placed about 10 feet apart and as close to a 30 degree toe-in.

The second issue we felt with was my ear height while seated. To direct the speaker's D'Apolito midrange/tweeter array centered about 42" off the floor to align with my ears that are about 34" off the floor while sitting, we adjusted the front "tilt" of the speaker. Considering how close I sit, this seemed more critical. A couple of quarters were placed under each of the rear carpet spikes. I think perhaps some adjustable carpet spikes might do the trick in future designs.

The Triton One is relatively easy to drive so I varied amplifiers from a modest 55 watt tube amp from Onix, as well as solid state gear from Parasound. Towards the end of my review I also swapped in a Rega Elex-R integrated I'd just received for review. Sources included a Marantz turntable and SACD player along with digital files played through a Benchmark DAC. Interconnect cables from Transparent Audio and power cords from Wireworld.



The GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers In Use

Hands down, the first thing noticeable about the Triton One is the ease of which instruments are cleanly reproduced and how voices made clear and natural. That could be the end of the review with that one statement. It does what every speaker strives for, clean, clear and natural sound. I think when people refer to how a great system sounds live, I don't believe they mean as in sitting in a performance space but rather what an instrument or voice sounds like when played - at least for me. The Triton One is remarkably very much live-sounding.

The test XRCD24 sample disk called Super Sounds II opens with an extraordinary version of the theme to The Magnificent Seven from the London Festival Orchestra. The compilation CD has excellent dynamics and a large soundstage. The track opens with a brassy trumpet, clear and hanging from the Triton speaker before transitioning to the sounds of a guitar. I'm struck by the treble, lack of graininess and slightly laid back.

The Triton One has the exceptional ability to play the subtleties from the low distant charging sound to the final build up and explosion of the full orchestra. The percussions simply shine and ring clear without harshness. Falling back to a guitar-lead wide sounding orchestra, the Triton One expresses the breath and width of this recording before a second charge. This is American Western Classic music at its best.

Regarding volume, some speakers don't exhibit their true abilities until they are played loudly and only to a point just before distortion. If you ever watch Sandy give a demo, you will notice he never raises the volume to uncomfortable levels. He doesn't have to; the Tritons are expressive at even the lowest volume without loss of dynamics or full, satisfying bass. This is very difficult to accomplish and probably goes unnoticed by most. On the opposite scale, pushing the One to higher volume thresholds, I'm struck by the clean control and lack of distortion.

The Triton One's mid-range is also exceptional in the ability to isolate the voice from instruments, lacking coloration and blur. A sense of layering is obvious on one of my favorite Nat King Cole and his Trio recordings, *After Midnight*. This swing style recording features some excellent individual instruments in the alto sax, violin and star trumpet that accompanying Cole on the piano. Cole's sweet, textured and sometimes raspy voice lacks any coloration, neither boxy nor chesty while remaining within the collaboration with the instruments, it all just works beautifully. This is precisely what music playback is supposed to sound like, give the Triton One full credit.

Female voices are no exception. Speakers that attempt to be rich and detailed tend to be too bright and usually portray a woman's voice with an annoying sibilance. The Triton One tames that harshness again without losing detail.

Besides her live performances, Diana Krall's *Girl In The Other Room* on SACD is probably my favorite of her albums. I wouldn't call her voice exceptional; I find her musical timing and arrangements the highlights of this recording. Through the Triton One, I'm struck again by the full and wide soundstage with her piano front and center. Anthony Wilson's guitar is palpable in several tracks as a duet with Krall's voice. This seductive relationship between her voice and the guitar is engaging, the GoldenEar loudspeaker draws you into that connection by giving shape and space to each while emphasizing neither. That makes the Triton One speaker emotional and musical.

Bass adjustability in itself is a significant feature on the Triton One, but what is astounding is how well the bass sounds. I don't speak of just deep, tight bass; the One proves that in all of the music pieces I've already described. Rather, I am referring to clean, articulate bass where the nuances of instruments, vibration, and notes extend and ring out. Percussions like bass drums and snare drums are easy, but it's the low bass notes from the cello, the guitar or French horn that really highlight what the One accomplishes.

I have reviewed both the Triton Three and Triton Two in the past, and one piece of music I always pull out for comparison is grand pipe organ. I love the big bold and unearthly sound of pipe organs. The Pipes Rhode Island CD recordings are both, large big in scale and smaller more intimate for the various venues used. In my notes, I wrote; "The Triton reverberates throughout my own space, rattling pictures on walls, flutters my pants legs and sends deep chills through my stomach."

It's an excellent recording, and the Triton One sounded no less deep and powerful, but what I sensed from the One that went slightly beyond the others was that articulation, whether an echo in the space, or how a deep note hung there just a bit longer. The bass note was dynamic in itself. No flab, no mud, just a pleasing weighty presentation.

Conclusions about the GoldenEar Triton One Floor-Standing Speakers

Likes

- Excellent dynamics full range
- Powered subwoofer offers in-room adjustability
- Clean design and format
- Price can't be touched

Would Like to See

- Easier slight vertical off axis tweeter setup

It's rare that there are game changers in speaker design, price and performance. The One is just such a game changer. My only recommendation when you purchase the One is proper setup. Get it right and it will blow you away. When people hear "value" as describing a speaker, the questions are always can you live with this speaker, does it offer enough performance to overcome its shortcomings? Interesting, however, about the GoldenEar Triton One is that people don't ask that question, because it's not relevant. They don't say it's good enough; they say simply, I want them. There is no feeling that by living with the One you are settling or compromising. I find that epic.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Design: 3-way, Ported (Passive Radiators)
- Drivers: Three 5" x 9" Long-throw Quadratic Subwoofers Coupled to Four 7" x 10" Quadratic Planar Infrasonic Radiators. Two 5.25" High-definition Cast-basket Mid/Bass Drivers, One HVFR™ High-Velocity Folded Ribbon Tweeter
- Built-In Subwoofer Power Amplifier: 1,600 Watt, Digital/DSP Amplifier
- MFR: 14 Hz – 35 kHz
- Nominal Impedance: 8 Ohms
- Efficiency: 92 dB
- Dimensions: 54" H x 8" W x 16.6" D
- Weight: 80 Pounds