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GoldenEar Technology

Triton One.R Loudspeaker Reviewed

By Dennis Burger | January 7, 2019



I'm starting to think that GoldenEar Technology may be playing a bit of a long prank on tech journalists. I say that in all jest, of course, but look--the reality is this: the company keeps dropping incredibly high-performance, high-value speakers on the market. Speakers that we in the specialty AV press absolutely slobber over. Speakers on which we hang any and every superlative known to man. And then a few years later, GoldenEar follows up with a souped-up version of said speakers, leaving us who write about such things scrambling for our thesauri to find even more superlative superlatives. The latest speaker in GoldenEar's repertoire to transmogrify into something wholly new with nearly the same name is the company's former flagship, the Triton One, which stood atop the Triton mountain until the beastly Triton Reference crashed the party back in 2017. On the one

hand, you can think of the new Triton One.R as an evolved Triton One, borrowing as it has many of the Reference's design and performance innovations by way of lateral gene transfer. You more magically minded folk in the audience might choose to think of the One.R instead as a Triton Reference that's been subjected to a Permanent Potion of Diminution.



Whichever way you choose to look at it, the One.R is a decidedly different beast from its forebear, which you'll notice at a glance thanks to its new gloss multi-density medite monocoque cabinet. Gone is the big black sock of yore. The One.R looks instead like a more traditional speaker, which my wife noticed at a glance as soon as she walked into the room soon after I installed a pair of One.Rs in place of my old Triton Ones. "Can we leave them like that?!" she exclaimed, not realizing that I hadn't simply undressed my old speakers.

The numerous other enhancements that separate Triton One from Triton One.R aren't quite so obvious, though. They include the newer, Reference version of GoldenEar's High Velocity Folded Ribbon tweeter, with fifty percent more neodymium than that of the Triton One; a redesigned baffle; newly designed active bass drivers; new 5.25-inch upper bass/mid drivers; a completely redesigned crossover network; upgraded capacitors; all new internal wiring; and a new focused-field magnet structure borrowed from the Triton Reference.

Aside from that, the Triton One.R's reported specifications are largely similar to that of the One. It weighs a little more at 80 pounds apiece, and boasts rated low-frequency extension down to 13Hz as opposed to 14Hz (although, I mean, come on), but still stands at 54 inches high and eight inches wide in the rear.

The Hookup

GoldenEar_Triton_One_R_Rear_Panel.JPG Unsurprisingly, the Triton One.R's connectivity remains virtually unchanged from its predecessor. Each cabinet features a pair of speaker-level binding posts, an optional LFE input, a subwoofer level control that works whether you're using the LFE input or relying on the One.R's internal crossovers, and a power connection for delivering juice to the bass section's 1600-Watt DSP amplifier.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, setting up the GoldenEar Triton One.R is a bit of a different experience from setting up the original Triton One. Anytime I set up the old Triton Ones as the front main speakers in my media room system--usually after moving them to vacuum or install new gear in my AV cabinet--I begin with them pointed straight out into the room and tweak their toe-in by ear to taste before running room correction. That generally involves cueing up some Hendrix or Björk or some other music with which I'm intimately

familiar and jogging back and forth between the speakers and my seat until the I'm happy with the tonal balance and soundstage.

When I dropped the Triton One.Rs into the position left by my Triton Ones, though, and began this process, I noticed something nearly immediately. They didn't need any toeing in. Not a bit. Any experimentation I did with toe-in resulted in no significant improvements to the speakers' tonal balance. And as such--mostly to provide better coverage to a wider variety of seats in the media room--I left them un-toed.

This isn't to say that zero toe-in would be the right approach for your room. If your first reflections aren't well treated (either with dedicated treatments or judicious application of things like draperies or bookshelves), by all means--angle those puppies inward. You might also want to experiment with toe-in if you're prefer to listen to the Triton One.R as its creator intended. When I spoke with designer Sandy Gross about my initial impressions of the speakers, he was pretty adamant that he prefers them toed in. In his experience, toeing in results in a wider sweet spot. So it may be worth experimenting yourself to see which you prefer. In any case, there's no doubt that the improved off-axis response of the Triton One will give you greater flexibility in terms of placement and orientation.

As mentioned above, the Triton One.Rs replaced my Triton Ones in my media room for the bulk of this review--a setup that also included a pair of Triton Sevens in the rear of the room, a SuperCenter XXL (at first, at least), and a pair of SVS PB-4000 subs. The subs came into and out of the equation at times. For the most part I ran the system in a 5.2-channel configuration (except when listening to two-channel music, of course), relying on Anthem amplification, a Marantz AV8805 for processing, and Straight Wire speaker cables and interconnects. I also dragged the Triton One.Rs into my dedicated two-channel listening room for a couple days to compare them with the Triton Ones directly.



Room correction, when employed, came in the form of Audyssey via the Marantz, with filters limited a little more strictly than I would normally limit them in this room. I set a max filter cap at around 200Hz for the bulk of my listening, just to deal with the most egregious standing waves in my listening space.

Performance

The first thing you notice when sitting down to listen to the Triton One.R is that--oddly enough--you just don't notice it as much. It simply draws less attention to itself as a source of sound. The original Triton One did a fantastic job of integrating its powered bass section with its passive bass and lower midrange, mind you. The One.R simply takes this to a new level.

It may not be an audiophile torture test, but the song that shone the brightest light on this key difference during my initial listening sessions was Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours)" from the Motown Records CD of nearly the same name. The bass line that kicks off in the song's third measure tiptoes all over the line between woofer and subwoofer, a fact that--I'll admit--never really caught my attention until I heard how deftly and seamlessly this speaker handled the handoff. Via the Triton One.R, the bass simply exists as its own thing, with its own place in the mix, never drawing the slightest attention to the fact that it's hopping between drivers. The speaker passes off those bouncing tones from one driver to the next with all the nimble cunning of a Level 20 Lightfoot Halfling Rogue with a +11 Dexterity modifier.



Here's the thing: it's not as if the Triton One.R digs any less deep than its forebear. Just the opposite, in fact. It's simply that the speaker inches closer to that seemingly impossible ideal of sounding less like the collection of disparate drivers that it is. There's a natural, effortless fluidity and unity to the bass, upper bass, and lower midrange that's simply a step up from the Triton One.

With further apologies to those of you in the back row looking for some raw recordings with no compression or EQ, I next turned my attention to Mates of States' "Maracas," from the Barsuk Records CD release of the duo's latest record, Mountaintops. It's a quirky track that shines further light on the refinements of the Triton One.R over the original One, mostly in its handling of Kori Gardner's heavily filtered Roland Juno G keyboards. It takes little more

than a casual listen to notice that GoldenEar has made further refinements to midrange and especially upper-midrange neutrality up to at least 7,000 or 8,000 Hz here, especially in the delivery of the isolated keyboard solo around two minutes into the song. Again, the One was great in this respect; the One.R is simply better.

Of course, those midrange and upper-midrange improvements point to advancements in both the 5.25-inch drivers, as well as the High Velocity Folded Ribbon tweeter, which--just to remind you--is the new-and-improved version found in the Triton Reference. Perhaps the biggest improvement imparted by this trio of drivers, though, is the One.R's enhanced soundstage width.

One song that really spotlights this is Mumford & Sons' "I Will Wait," from the CD release of Babel (Island Records). Not so much in the song's first verse, mind you, although there you really get a sense of how well the Triton One.R maintains its composure in the face of a pretty dense mix.

But as the chorus kicks in and those gorgeous harmonies take over, a pair of Triton One.Rs really kick the width of the soundstage into overdrive, spreading the wall of voices far beyond their physical placement in the room, with undeniably enhanced clarity and articulation. And that really isn't an effect that you have to be sitting in the sweet spot of the room to enjoy.

Switching over to movies, I started my evaluation of the One.R with my pair of SVS PB-4000 subwoofers in place, then removed them from the equation and re-ran Audyssey room correction. Did I miss them when they were gone? A little at first, yeah. Would I be perfectly happy having the pair of Triton One.Rs deliver LFE if didn't have room to run such gargantuan standalone subs? Hoooboy, yeah. Granted, the One.R doesn't dip quite as deep as the best dedicated subs. Despite the rated specs, I found that I ran out of truly useful low-frequency extension in the low-to-mid 20s. Honestly, though, the number of films in my collection that contain sub-25Hz bass are few and far between, and the One.R rolls off so gracefully at the bottom end that the lack of subsonic attack in films like The Incredible Hulk weren't really a sticking point. I've auditioned a lot of dedicated subs (sealed ones, mind you) that don't deliver this kind of attack and authority in the low frequencies.

I mentioned earlier that, unlike the Triton One, the One.R doesn't really need to be toed in at all--at least not in my media room--and although I appreciated that with tunes, music listening still tends to be a solitary experience for me. It was in a home cinema environment where I really appreciated the extra placement flexibility afforded by these new speakers. It meant that I could cram more friends and family into my media room on movie night and not stress out as much about whether they felt "outside the bubble."

Speaking of home cinema, as my review was drawing to a close, GoldenEar also loaned me a sample of its new SuperCenter Reference--a new center speaker that mimics the form of the old SuperCenter XXL, but with the upgraded Reference HVFR tweeter, bass/mid drivers, crossovers, internal wiring, and voicing of the Triton Reference and One.R. After a day or so of listening to the new center, I had to rewrite the Downside section of this review.

My original criticism (which I may as well share here): I felt that the (formerly) flagship center speaker in GoldenEar's lineup simply wasn't enough to keep up with the One.R (much less the Triton Reference, but I've only ever auditioned that larger speaker in a

stereo setup). With the old SuperCenter XXL partnered with the new Triton One.Rs, I felt that the former held back the latter. I constantly found myself playing a balancing act of trying to find the right spot on the volume dial--one that pushed the One.Rs to the point where they really shined, without pushing the SuperCenter XXL to the point of stress.

With the SuperCenter Reference in place, that's no longer a struggle. It can thankfully keep up with the One.R, and its lower-midrange tonal balance is greatly improved over the XXL. You can really hear this in the early scenes of Solo: A Star Wars story, especially in the hushed dialogue between Han and Qi'ra. There's a more natural effortless to the SuperCenter Reference's delivery of male vocals especially, which you can particularly hear when Alden Ehrenreich utters the fictional word "Coaxium." The XXL's bit of resonance at what sounded to my ears to be centered around 700Hz isn't an issue with the SuperCenter Reference. And overall, the newer center is simply capable of taking the sort of sonic beating that the XXL at times struggled with.



The Downside

As I said above, my original criticism of the Triton One.R--now deleted and left on the cutting room floor--is that GoldenEar didn't really have a center speaker beefy enough to keep up with its two largest tower speakers. With that criticism allayed by the new SuperCenter Reference, I'm really only left with one caveat, which I also hinted at above.

The Triton One.R likes to sing. It positively begs to be played at reference levels (or louder, if that's your thing). That's not to say that it sounds in any way bad when played more quietly. It's simply that, aside from the increased soundstage width, the improvements of

the One.R over the One definitely start to become less apparent as you turn the volume knob anticlockwise. This really isn't a concern for me personally, since the only times I'm likely to dial my loudness controls to any number other than 0 are generally limited to when I watch the current crop of mastered-way-too-loud UHD Blu-ray discs.

But your system is your system, and you're free to do you, Boo. Listen at whatever level makes you happy. Just know that if 90dB peaks make you jump out of your seat, you may find that in large part the improvements of the Triton One.R over the original Triton One are largely aesthetic.

Comparison and Competition

While Definitive Technology's Mythos ST-L SuperTower hasn't been updated since I originally pitched it as worthy competition for the original Triton One, I still think it's worth considering if you're in the market for a speaker of this stature and roughly this price. At \$2,499, each ST-L is \$500 cheaper than a Triton One.R, which may sway your decision. At the same time, though, its powered bass section isn't as powerful, and its more traditional magnesium/aluminum dome tweeter may not be quite as enticing to those who prefer the sound of GoldenEar's folded ribbon tweeter.

Polk's LSiM707 is also still very much worth considering, as well. At \$1,995, it'll save you a few bucks more, and it's a wonderfully dynamic loudspeaker that also benefits from an optional cherry wood finish that I really dig. It's not a hybrid powered speaker, and as such doesn't boast the low frequency extension of the Triton One.R, that also means you don't have to plug it into power, which is something to consider. It also means that it'll be somewhat more of a strain on your amplifiers. I have, at times, run the Triton Ones with a typical mass-market AV receiver, and I think you could easily do the same with the One.Rs. I can't quite imagine doing that with the LSiM707. Also, beware that the Polk's extra twenty pounds over the Triton One.R makes it an unwieldy refrigerator of a speaker to set up and maneuver.

Paradigm's newer Persona 3F (reviewed [here](#)) also comes to mind as a sonically comparable speaker, although at \$5,000 apiece we may be stretching the bounds of "competition" here. The 3F comes in a rainbow array of different finishes (23, last I counted), and gets much of its sonic sparkle from its Beryllium tweeter and woofers. Despite not being a hybrid powered speaker (you have to step up to the \$17,500 Persona 9H for that), the 3F still boasts low-frequency extension comparable to that of the Triton One.R.

Conclusion

Here's the question that I know a lot of current Triton One owners are asking about the Triton One.R: is it worth the upgrade? It's the sort of question I always hesitate to chime in on, because I'm not here to tell you how to spend your money. I just hope to help you make more informed decisions when you do so.

But what the hell? Let's play ball. If you're currently happy with your Triton Ones, if you tend to listen alone or with just one partner, and/or if you like to listen at lower loudness levels, I say keep on rocking those original Triton Ones until they rot. They're still amazing speakers, no ifs, ands, or buts.

If, on the other hand, you're outfitting a listening space that accommodates more listeners on the regular, if you like listening at reference levels or thereabouts, and/or if your significant other is all like, "Those big black sock-things are the bane of my freaking

existence!" then by all means, rush to your local GoldenEar dealer and audition the Triton One.R posthaste.

Other potential buyers? Those of you who've been drooling over the Triton Reference but just don't have the space to justify such monsters (he says, raising his hand sheepishly).

Even if you're not ready to upgrade to the Triton One.R, though, I seriously recommend giving the new SuperCenter Reference a serious listen if you're already a GoldenEar owner or thinking of becoming one. I'm almost inclined to say that it's more of an upgrade over the SuperCenter XXL than the One.R is over the One (ignoring aesthetics).

Of course, with all that said, one has to wonder where we go from here. Are we likely to see a Triton One.R+ down the road three or four years from now? Who knows. I know this for sure, though: if we do, it'll be another step forward in terms of performance. But at the same time, it won't in the slightest diminish what an achievement the Triton One.R is today. True, the One.R isn't quite the revolution that the original One was. It's more like evolution--small, incremental improvements that, on their own, might not seem that huge, but that when combined result in an entirely new animal.