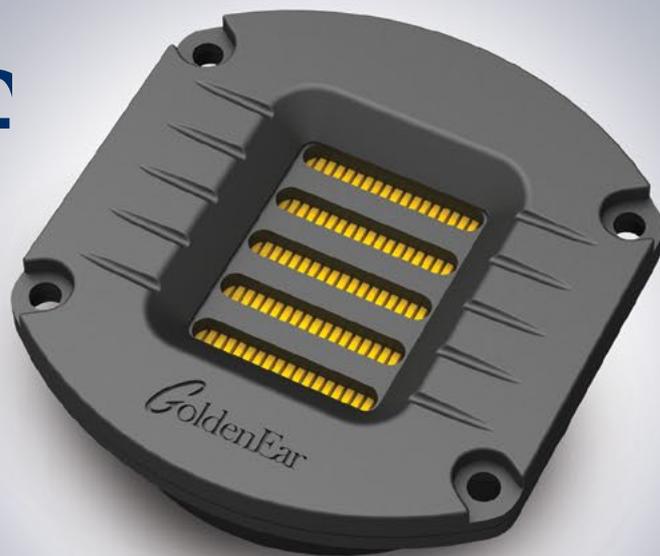




## GoldenEar Technology Triton One

# Towers of power!



It's been just more than a year since I set up and listened to the GoldenEar Technology Triton Two loudspeakers for a review.

The slim, pillar-like floorstanders, with their tapering sides and top, and fitted with a sock-type covering, looked smart but almost too unassuming, while that sock also did a good job of hiding the Two's unusual driver complement — and its integrated active subwoofers.

But as they say in the classics, the proof is in the listening — and as I rapidly found out, there was nothing unassuming about the Triton Twos in sonic terms. In fact, quite the opposite: they sounded big and bold, but also musical, delivering their sonic wares with a real sense of scale, impetus and realism.

Best of all, they cost a lot less than their elevated performance standards suggested, making for an unusually compelling value proposition. All of which poses the question: if the Triton Two is that good, how much better could the flagship Triton One be?

The fact that it's taken the best part of a year to extract a pair of Triton Ones for review should have been a clear hint that there is something special about the biggest member of the GoldenEar Triton family: it wasn't that the folk at Volco Enterprises didn't want to let me have a pair to listen to — they just kept on selling all their stock before I could borrow a set for review!

For that reason, it was with some surprise that I finally took delivery of a brand new pair of Triton Ones, with strict instructions to run them in properly — at least 100 hours, I was told.

And so, after extracting the big towers from their large cardboard boxes, installing the coupling spikes, and provisionally positioning them in the listening room, that's what I did: I let them

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run continuously for five days, popping in occasionally to hear what progress was being made.

But first, let's take a closer look at what makes GoldenEar's flagships tick. The tall, slim enclosure has sides that taper outwards from the narrow front baffle, and a top panel that slopes

rearwards. Thus, there are no parallel internal surfaces to prevent standing waves.

The enclosure features a dedicated internal chamber for the mid/bass drivers and the high-velocity folded ribbon-tweeter, which are arranged in a D'Appolito configuration along the

upper third of the baffle. Foam damping pads and substantial bracing provide inertness and rigidity.

The integrated subwoofer employs three forward-firing long-throw quadratic sub-bass drivers, and four quadratic planar infrasonic radiators, arranged in pairs on each side of the enclosure. The sub is powered by a 1 600 watt Class D power amplifier featuring 54-bit DSP control.

Integrating the subwoofer not only negates the need for a separate sub enclosure, but more importantly, ensures superior low-frequency integration. It also means that the Class D amp does much of the hard labour to deliver fast and punchy low-frequency bass, suggesting that the partnering amplifier doesn't need to be particularly powerful.

The two mid/bass drivers are equipped with GET's multi-vented phase plug, meant to promote a smoothly extended response all the way to an unusually high 20 kHz, although they're only required to reach the 3 kHz crossover point, thus ensuring a smooth and linear transition.

And then there's the high-velocity folded-ribbon tweeter, effectively GET's take on the Heil Air Motion Transformer. It operates by using a folded ribbon to squeeze the air, rather than the push-pull action of a normal tweeter dome, in the

## Associated Equipment

*Oppo BDP-95EU universal deck*  
*13-inch MacBook Pro/8 GB RAM/OSX Mavericks/Audirvana 1.12.5*  
*Exogal Comet Plus D/A converter*  
*Ayre QB9 USB DAC*  
*Primare PRE32 pre-amplifier*  
*Parasound Halo A21 stereo power amplifier*  
*PS Audio BHK stereo power amplifier*  
*KEF R500 loudspeakers*

## Software

*John McLaughlin — The Mediterranean (CBS CD, ripped to WAV)*  
*James Taylor — Before This World (Concord/Universal CD, ripped to WAV)*  
*Beck — Morning Phase (Capitol 96/24 FLAC)*  
*Steve Earle and The Dukes — Terraplane (New West 88,2/24 FLAC)*  
*Saint-Saëns — Cello Concerto Op. 33 — Julian Lloyd-Webber/English Chamber Orchestra/Yan Pascal Tortelier (Philips CD, ripped to WAV)*

interests of smoother response, improved control and enhanced dynamic range.

Enough of the technical bumph, though: those with an appetite for more detailed tech info can spend time perusing the comprehensive info on the Golden Ear website. But what do the Triton Ones actually sound like?

Pretty good right out of the box, although the midband was a little constrained, and the bass response seemed somewhat forced. Oh yes, and there was some glare in the upper frequency region.

However, I have to admit that those observations only became truly apparent with the benefit of hindsight – in other words, once the Ones had settled in, and started performing closer to their full potential, I realised that the initial delivery wasn't close to what they are really capable of.

Once the 100-plus hours had been logged, I set about fine-tuning the position of the Triton Ones in our listening room. I ended up with the speakers placed quite far forward into the room, and relatively close to the side walls, with enough toe-in to fire the sound just slightly wide of the optimum, central listening position.

I did have some concerns about the proximity of the side walls, which were about 45 cm from the Triton Ones, but moving them further away didn't seem to make a difference, and I preferred the sound with as much width as possible between the speakers in our 4 m wide listening room.

Remember also that the subwoofer levels can be adjusted – an aspect that takes a bit of initial experimentation. Getting it just right is critical as far as overall tonal balance and integration are concerned, but it does allow the Triton One to be fine-tuned for specific applications and room locations.

The quoted 92 dB sensitivity suggests that you don't need a beefy amplifier to drive the Ones, and that's true: as I did with the smaller (and slightly less sensitive) Triton Twos, I initially connected them up to our Electrocompaniet PI-2D integrated amp. The result was a smooth and amiable sound, with a well developed soundstage and attractive, involving imaging.

However, the Triton One deserves better – perhaps not so much in terms of power, but certainly as far as outright resolution and focus are concerned. Swapping over to the Primare PRR32 pre-amp and Parasound Halo A21 power amp exposed the EC's softer but less precise musical approach, and really allowed the speakers to show off their imaging and staging prowess.

John McLaughlin's *The Mediterranean* is a stirring, quasi-classical guitar concerto that captures the intricacy and virtuosity of the ace guitarist's playing against an expansive, dynamic orchestral backdrop.

The recording affords the guitar centre stage, as it should, but also allows the orchestra to flex its muscles, and to occupy a wide, full and deep sonic landscape. The Triton Ones rose to the challenge with majestic ease, portraying the freshness, the energy and the dynamic

range of the orchestra with confidence, while never losing sight of McLaughlin's intricate fretwork.

The Ones were able to extract and contextualise the finest strands of detail, digging deep into the sonic character, the timbre and the percussive intensity of the solo passages, yet at the same time offering the orchestra the space, pace and the sheer impetus to make for an absorbing, compelling listening experience.

The Tritons excelled at delivering an extended tonal range, and there's no doubt that the performance of the integrated active subs play a key role in this regard. Lower registers were rendered with a clean, succinct and fast intensity that underpinned the entire performance, and allowed the speakers to believably recreate the power and the authority of the orchestra.

## VITAL STATS

Enclosure type .....	Sealed
Drive units .....	1x HFVR folded ribbon tweeter, 2x 133 mm MVPP mid/bass drivers, 4x 178 x 254 mm quadratic planar infrasonic radiators, linked to 3x 127 x 229 mm long-throw quadratic subwoofers
Bi-wiring .....	No
Impedance .....	8 ohms compatible
Sensitivity.....	92 dB
Frequency response .....	14 Hz – 35 kHz
Power handling .....	20 – 650 watts
Subwoofer amp .....	1 600 watts, Class D with 56-bit DSP
Dimensions (HxWxD).....	1 372 x 502 x 314 mm
Weight .....	36,3 kg each

Price ..... R89 990

### Verdict

Majestic performance from these large but slim floorstanders. Integrated active subs deliver huge bass potential without any sign of flab or overhang. Finely focussed imaging provide the finishing touches.

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Website ..... www.volco.co.za

OUR RATING: 91 / 100





The brass sounded triumphant, the strings soared with unencumbered ease, the percussion was powerful and punchy – all while the most delicate elements of McLaughlin's guitar remained in close, fine focus.

Tonal linearity was equally impressive, with a seamless progression from the low-frequency range, through a smooth, detailed but never overstated midrange to the clear, accessible and revealing trebles. There was a wholesomeness and a realism to the music that made me sit down for longer during every session than intended, and had me exploring a wider selection of my music than I have for some time.

James Taylor's new release *Before This World* melds the singer/songwriter's gentle tunes with rich, often acoustic-biased arrangements and a recording that allows close examination of each instrument, yet never loses sight of the performance's overall balance and integrity.

The midband talent of the Triton Ones and their ability to capture the essence and timbre of Taylor's vocals and guitars was believably showcased, while the substantive bass lines present throughout the recording were delivered with just the right amount of control and impetus.

The Tritons presented the music on the kind of generous, airy and three-dimensional soundstage that gave each instrument, each element of the performance plenty of space and scope to come into its own. The music always flowed with a swift, unrestrained energy that never sounded forced, and made for easy, involving listening.

In fact, I found that they had a real ability to wrap the listener in the music, with their combination of inviting, three-dimensional staging, broad tonal range, closely focussed detail and dynamic prowess allowing full, riveting access to the performance.



Beck's *Morning Phase* is a lavish, luscious recording that can all too easily sound too saturated and even dull on less revealing systems. However, the inherent lucidity of the big Tritons, their nimble pace and their sleek tonality, all underpinned by the muscular, athletic bass delivery, made the most of the shimmering synths, rich and deep bass lines and Beck's melancholy vocals.

Again, the ability of the Triton Ones to dig deep into the heart of the music was ably demonstrated by the way they were able to render the full presence and richness of the acoustic guitars on 'Blue Moon' while also doing full justice to the synths, percussion and vocals of an arrangement that easily sounds too crowded and constrained on less lucid systems.

Can the Triton Ones rock? You bet! The sleazy, slow-fused, blues-laced rock of Steve Earle and the Dukes on 'The Usual Time', off *Terraplane* sounded raw and robust, with the edgy electric guitars, rumbling bass, snappy snare, splashy cymbals and hoarse harmonica all presented with close-miked, almost intimate accuracy. I could almost taste the Jack Daniels ...

Fortunately, the marvellous performance of Saint-Saënt's *Cello Concerto in A Minor* by Julian Lloyd and the English Chamber

Orchestra never sounds prim and proper, either: the full, smooth recording captures the richness and intensity of the cello's timbre, while the orchestra's power and emotive appeal is portrayed with pace and gusto.

The Ones made the most of the energy and tonal depth of the music, extracting loads of emotive appeal in the process, and allowing the listener to experience the full impact, scale and impetus of the performance.

I found the Triton Ones thoroughly engaging and enjoyable, regardless of the music they were asked to portray. They have a knack for reaching right into the essence of the music, and to apply their combination of power, pace, precision and scale to create a thrilling and thoroughly believable listening experience.

The caveat is that these towers deserve to be linked to top-class peripherals to ensure the source signal they receive is of a sufficient standard, and that the accompanying amplification offers the finesse, air and accuracy to fully exercise their own, considerable talents.

Best of all, the Triton Ones deliver their sonic wares at a price point considerably less than their indisputably high-end performance suggests, adding real value to a potent and desirable speaker package.

Deon Schoeman