

GoldenEar Technology Triton Two Loudspeaker Reviewed

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Don't call it a comeback because [GoldenEar](#) creator, Sandy Gross, never left - he just started anew...again. Sandy Gross is arguably the most prolific loudspeaker designer in history, having founded (or co-founded) some of the best, most successful, loudspeaker brands in history: brands such as [Polk Audio](#), [Definitive Technology](#) and now [GoldenEar Technology](#). GoldenEar Technology has been in the works for some time now, though its "official" unveiling came at the [2010 CEDIA show in Atlanta, Georgia](#). While GoldenEar may be a relative newcomer in the space, Gross is hardly wet behind the ears; he knows what dealers and customers want, evident in GoldenEar's initial product offering.



Out of the gate [GoldenEar Technology](#) offers two sizes of lifestyle-oriented LCR (left, center, right) on-walls, the SuperSat 50 and SuperSat 3, which can be combined with GoldenEar's new subwoofers to create a SuperCinema System. Speaking of subwoofers, GoldenEar is launching with two compact [ForceField subwoofers](#), the 10-inch ForceField 4 and eight inch ForceField 3, both of which are powered by 1,000 plus Watt internal amplifiers and feature a shape and design unlike a lot of the competition. Of course the entire line is anchored by GoldenEar's \$2,500 per pair flagship loudspeaker, the Triton Two, reviewed here.

The Triton Two is a truly full-range tower loudspeaker that bares a modest resemblance to some of Gross' previous work yet manages to be different enough not to be glossed over as a "me too." Sporting a shape reminiscent of the Flatiron building in New York City, with a curved front baffle and sloping top, the Triton Two measures seven and a half inches wide by 15-inches deep and 48-inches high, though it sits on a high-gloss, piano black base that increases its footprint to 11 and a half inches wide by 18-inches deep. No official weight was given nor specified in any of the Triton Two's literature; suffice to say they're heavy but easy enough to be moved by one person. The Triton Twos are clad in wrap-around black speaker cloth capped top and bottom with high-gloss, piano black end pieces.

Behind the Triton Two's sock rests two four and a half inch mid/bass drivers in a [D'Appolito](#) arrangement above and below a new High-Velocity Folded Ribbon Tweeter (HVFR). HVFR tweeters are becoming a little more common as of late; [MartinLogan has begun using them in their new Motion line of loudspeakers](#), though [MartinLogan](#) calls theirs a FoldedMotion tweeter. The basic

premise behind a HVFR tweeter is that instead of simply pushing the air towards the listener the way a traditional tweeter does, the HVFR tweeter squeezes/pressurizes the air through its use of high-temperature film, which is folded like an accordion, for a smooth dispersion of sound that shares traits with traditional ribbon tweeters but is compact enough to be utilized in small bookshelf loudspeakers like a traditional dome tweeter.

Below the [D'Appolito](#) mid/bass and tweeter array rests two, five by eight inch oval Quadratic Sub-Bass Drivers. The Triton Two also has two seven by 10-inch Planar Infrasonic Radiators that, coupled with its internal 1,200-Watt ForceField subwoofer, give the Triton Two a reported frequency response of 18Hz to 35kHz. The Triton Two has a stated efficiency of 91dB into a fairly benign eight-Ohm load making it an ideal loudspeaker for today's modern home theater receivers on up to cost no object amplifiers.

Around back you'll find the Triton Two's input plate that houses a single pair of robust, five-way binding posts, a LFE or subwoofer input, a detachable power cord (for the internal subwoofer amplifier) and a dial for subwoofer level.

The Hookup

The Triton Twos arrived at my home the day another fine affordable loudspeaker, the Aperion Audio Verus Grand Towers were set to depart. In fact the two passed each other on the way out my front door - the trucking company dropped off the Triton Twos as FedEx picked up the Verus Grand Towers. Got to love it when a plan comes together.

The Triton Twos come individually boxed in what I can only describe as loudspeaker coffins. I call them coffins because unlike conventional loudspeaker boxes that you lift overhead, the Triton Two's box mandates that you lay it flat on the ground and open the side, I mean top, much like a coffin lid. This makes unpacking easier for those flying solo or with lower rooflines, however it requires far more floor space than what is common. Once open, removing the Triton Twos from their heavy foam padding is relatively simple. Once removed (I recommend doing one at a time) you can begin attaching the pedestal base and top. Attaching the base is simple enough; I laid the Triton Two on its side across my ottoman with the bottom hanging off the edge, then positioned the base accordingly and using the supplied Allen wrench and bolts to fasten it to the Triton Two's undercarriage. The top piece is easier still: simply position it atop the Triton Two's gently sloping top and press down until the protruding plastic pieces snap into their respective mounting holes. The entire process of unboxing and assembly of the Triton Twos took me roughly 20 minutes start to finish.

Once assembled I maneuvered the Triton Twos into position, placing them where [my reference Bowers & Wilkins 800 Series Diamonds](#) once sat, though because of their smaller footprint this meant they sat further out from my front wall, which paid dividends in terms of their soundstage performance. Once in place and toed in, the Triton Twos sat eight feet apart and three feet from my front wall with nearly four feet between them and my side walls on either side. Over the course of the review I tweaked their placement an inch or two here and there but for the most part they were extremely happy occupying the same space as my 800 Series Diamonds.

I connected the Triton Twos to a variety of electronics ranging from a \$500 Onkyo receiver on up to a full Classe stack consisting of their new Delta Series stereo amplifier and Omega two-chassis preamp. I even powered the Triton Twos with my [Decware SE84ZS](#), which is a two-Watt single ended triode amplifier, which I'll talk about later. As for sources, I utilized my [AppleTV/Cambridge Audio DACMagic combo](#) as well as my [Sony ES Blu-ray player](#). I used Transparent Reference cable throughout, except for my listening sessions with my Decware amplifier, opting instead for my Mapleshade Clearview Golden Helix Speaker Cable and Clearview Ultrathin Analog Ribbon Interconnects, which work better with the diminutive Decware amplifier

A quick note on speaker cables as they pertain to the Triton Twos: due to the Triton Two's binding posts resting on a semi-recessed amplifier plate, fitting large spade lugs can be a bit cumbersome. The Triton Twos really do prefer banana terminated speaker cables or better still bare wire, as was the case with my Mapleshade Clearview Speaker Cables.

Once everything was connected it was time to dial in the Triton Two's internal subwoofers. GoldenEar recommends starting with the subwoofer level set to 12 o'clock and then dialing it in from there once the speakers have broken in. I found this to be an accurate statement, though the longer my pair of Triton Twos broke in the more I turned down the subwoofer level. After about 40 plus hours of playing time I ended up with the subwoofer levels resting at around eight o'clock, with six o'clock representing full off.

You can power the subwoofers in two ways: running the Triton Twos full-range via the binding posts or by treating the internal subwoofers as you would a conventional sub and connecting them to your receiver or processor's LFE or subwoofer out and setting your left and right main speaker settings to large or small depending on your receiver or processor's settings. GoldenEar recommends running the Triton Twos full-range; letting the speaker's internal crossover create the seamless integration between drivers and subwoofer. For the purpose of this review I took GoldenEar's advice and simply connected the Triton Twos to my amplifier or receiver via single runs of speaker cable.

Performance

I kicked things off with Matchbox 20's debut album Yourself or Someone Like You (Atlantic) and the track "Back to Good." I played this track via my Onkyo receiver to begin with and found the Triton Two's overall tonal quality to be a touch lean, with good extension in the upper midrange and treble with solid bass, especially when it came to the opening kick drum. Vocals had great presence and were well defined amidst a very spacious soundstage that was clearly defined both side-to-side and front to back.

Switching from the Onkyo receiver to my reference Classe stack the Triton Twos changed their tune considerably, this time possessing more warmth and liquidity throughout the midrange that blended better with the Triton Two's HVFR tweeter giving vocals, guitar riffs and cymbal crashes a more natural focus and weight. The HVFR tweeter's extension and air was also improved as instruments and vocals seemed to hang more effortlessly in space, though in terms of extension the Triton Two's tweeter didn't project too far forward as to call adverse attention to itself. I tend to be critical of D'Appolito arrays for I find nine times out of ten that instead of achieving a single, point source sound, you get a overly bloated, syrupy midrange that a lot of people mistake as warmth. I think this occurs largely because the tweeters being used in a lot of D'Appolito arrays don't possess the high frequency detail, dynamics and ultimate extension to cut through the midrange, which is why I feel a lot of D'Appolito arrays come across as warm, but soft and a bit laid back and even vague. Fortunately, the Triton Twos do not have this problem for the HVFR tweeter is unlike anything I've heard before, matching even my reference Bowers & Wilkins 800 Series Diamonds in terms of air and extension (within the soundstage), but lacking a bit in detail. High praise, when you consider the Triton Two's asking price compared to the 800 Series Diamond's.

Through my Classe gear the lower midbass and bass firmed up considerably and became far more taut with copious amounts of texture and nuance, two things that were a little glossed over by the budget Onkyo receiver. Both the Onkyo and the Classe gear provided plenty of low end slam, even on a slow jam like "Back to Good;" it's just that the Triton Twos were able to exercise a bit more finesse in the bass through the Classe gear.

The soundstage was again larger than life, extending well beyond the outer boundaries of the speakers themselves and extending well beyond my front wall. I found the Triton Twos to be very dynamic, but

never pushy or forward. When pushed, or should I say punished, the Triton Twos don't really become aggressive, instead they seem to know where their limits are and simply back off until things settle down or better yet, you come to your senses and realize you're doing permanent damage to your hearing. Instruments were well placed and clearly and cleanly delineated from one another with the vocals remaining locked dead center. Overall I found the Triton Two's sound to be very smooth and deliberate, with tremendous air and high frequency sweetness coupled with a very firm and well-defined bottom end.

Playing With Single Ended Triode Tube Amps

Wanting to test the Triton Two's efficiency, I went ahead and connected them to my Decware single ended triode (SET) amplifier which puts out a "blistering" two-Watts per channel in pure Class-A goodness. Cuing up Primitive Radio Gods' album Rocket (Sony) and the track "Standing Outside a Broken Phone Booth with Money in My Hand" I set the volume on my Decware to about 50 percent and was simply blown away. I wasn't blown away in terms of volume, that's not what SET amps are for, but my God how sweet it is to be loved by a Triton Two. Not only could a miniscule two Watts drive the Triton Twos, it made them sing. While my Classe gear could make the Triton Twos sing and dance with a healthy dose of low end kick for good measure, the Decware-Triton Two combo proved there was a very solid, very musical audiophile loudspeaker in the Triton Two hiding in plain sight.

Through my Decware amp the Triton Two's midrange and high frequency performance was so sweet, so fluid and so rich that it just brought a smile to my face. Layer upon layer of detail was revealed as the soundstage said: "To hell with my room," and extended well beyond any physical boundaries and even at times managed to envelope me in an almost seamless 360-degree surround sound field. Keep in mind this is a purely two channel disc.

Because of the Triton Two's narrow front baffle, there is little to get in the way of the sound, making them almost come across like bi-poles or even omni-directional loudspeakers with the right electronics and source material - which I happened to hit just right with "Standing Outside..." Under the tutelage of pure Class-A power I found that the Triton Twos opened up even more in the midrange, blending seamlessly with the HVFR tweeter and shedding a bit of that laid back persona I spoke about earlier. The bass was firm and textured once again; however the Decware amp didn't have the juice necessary to really make the Triton Twos thump - we're talking about two Watts after all.

What I found most surprising though was the fact that the Triton Twos really remained the same speaker, be it at low volumes or high. A lot of loudspeakers have what I like to refer to as a "butter zone," or the loudspeaker's ideal power to volume ratio and for a lot of loudspeakers this is actually pretty high. Step outside the "butter zone" and a lot of what makes some truly great speakers great is lost. The Triton Two's comfort window seems to have less to do with volume than it does power, for even at low levels they retained their musicality and tone, however when mated to low-fi or even some mid-fi electronics the Triton Two's sound shifted dramatically. I'm not suggesting that you can't mate the Triton Twos with a capable home theater receiver, you absolutely can - but I wouldn't mate it to the first 100-Watt receiver I came across if there was say a 50-Watt receiver that was better built with more robust internal amplifiers available as well. The Triton Two's love good clean power. It doesn't have to be a lot, evident in my SET tests, but it has to be pure.

Performance Part II

With my inner audiophile satisfied, it was time to rock. First up, Audioslave's self titled album and the track "Show Me How to Live" (Sony). I set my Classe Omega preamp to rock (somewhere around 11, I think) and hit play and instantly the Triton Two's reached out, grabbed me by the short hairs and took me for quite a ride. Throw all that audiophile mumbo-jumbo out the door, these babies can rock and ROCK hard. The kick drum hits were so visceral that I could feel them in my bowels but more importantly the attack and decay was just incredible. The guitars were raw and raucous with the

appropriate grit and texture - even the bass guitar, an instrument that is often summarized versus clearly defined through a lot of budget loudspeakers, was rendered truthfully through the Triton Twos.

Vocals were lifelike in their size and weight and projected forward of the cavernous, but well-defined soundstage that again begged belief. The HVFR tweeter failed to distort or glare at insane volumes, holding its composure up to the ragged edge of sane listening levels - in fact I got the mid/bass and bass drivers to give up their ghosts before I got the tweeter to cry uncle. Dynamically the Triton Twos were absolute juggernauts, able to start and stop on the proverbial dime with seemingly little effort.

Switching gears from driving rock to movies I cued up Christopher Nolan's Inception (Warner Brothers) on Blu-ray. Beginning with the scene in which Leonardo DiCaprio's character is teaching Ellen Page's character how to "construct" the dream world, the Triton Twos proved to be as adept with movies as they were with music. The quiet conversation between DiCaprio and Page at the corner café was rife with subtlety and delicate nuance amidst a somewhat subdued sonic backdrop of a quaint but bustling Parisian coffee shop. Vocals stood out in stark contrast to the passing cars and pedestrians retaining their natural timbre, definition and clarity while remaining free of coloration and "boxy" resonances, thanks in part to the Triton Two's narrow baffle and well constructed cabinet.

Once the spontaneous combustions began, the Triton Two's low end prowess sprang to life, rendering each burst, be it a crate of fruit or a bundle of newspapers, faithfully complete with the appropriate textures and spatial cues necessary to not only place them properly in space but also to distinguish them from one another. When Page's character begins to mess with the dream world, specifically when she folds it on top of itself, the subsequent low-end rumbling and mechanical grinding that accompanies the move was enough to rattle my light fixtures and even cause my reading lamp to vibrate across the surface of my side table. To say the Triton Two's internal subs can move some air is an understatement. The Triton Two's performance throughout the film was so utterly involving that I didn't care that I was watching it in stereo. In fact, I downright forgot and didn't realize that I had failed to switch the Triton Twos over to my home theater rig until the credits were rolling. Impressive when you stop to think that the Triton Twos were able to recreate a movie theater-like experience in my home using only two speakers where others would have you use five or more. Still, after realizing my mistake the only thought I had was how badly I wanted to watch Inception again, but this time with five Triton Two's in my system instead of two.

Competition and Comparisons

An obvious competitor for the Triton Twos has to be [Definitive Technology's Mythos ST and/or STS loudspeakers](#), both of which are Sandy Gross designs during his tenure at Definitive Technology. The [Mythos ST](#) loudspeakers are also a full-range loudspeaker featuring built-in subwoofers and racetrack-shaped bass drivers, not to mention a [D'Appolito](#) style midrange and tweeter driver arrangement. The Mythos ST and STS loudspeakers do not however utilize the Triton Two's new HVFR tweeter, which may or may not be a deal breaker for you, for the ST's and STS's traditional dome tweeter is still quite capable. However, the Mythos ST's retail for just under \$4,000 a pair (\$1,999 each) and the Mythos STS retail for close to \$3,000 a pair (\$1,499 each) which is more than the Triton Two's \$2,499 a pair asking price.

If you're a fan of the Triton Two's HVFR tweeter, then [MartinLogan's Motion series of loudspeakers](#), specifically the Motion 12 (\$1,499 a pair) are worth a look, for they use the same tweeter technology, though they call theirs a Folded Motion Tweeter. However, the Motion 12s do require a subwoofer or two for truly full-range sound.

Another floorstanding loudspeaker to consider in the Triton Two's price range is the [Aperion Audio Verus Grand Towers](#), which feature a D'Appolito driver array centered around a traditional silk dome tweeter and dual bass drivers. However, the Verus Grand Towers lack an internal subwoofer, which

means you'll need to shell out a bit more money and give up valuable floor space to achieve truly full-range sound reproduction. On the flip side the Verus Grand Towers come in two finishes, gloss black and gloss cherry, which are very striking, plus they retail for \$1,798 a pair and are sold direct over the Internet, whereas the Triton Twos are available via authorized dealers only.

While the Mythos ST/STS and Verus Grand Towers may be directly in the Triton Two's crosshairs, there are a number of higher-end loudspeakers that I believe the Triton Twos compete favorably with, starting with [Paradigm's Signature S8 loudspeakers](#). Retailing for a little over \$8,000 a pair the Signature S8's are a far more attractive loudspeaker visually, clad in real wood veneers and featuring sexy sloping lines, which make its large size seem far more compact. The Signature S8s also feature a Beryllium tweeter, which is a fine high frequency transducer and one that is not easily bested by other high-end or esoteric tweeter materials. Paradigm's Signature S8s served as my personal reference for a period of two years, which should tell you something about how favorably I view them.

Other high-end loudspeakers that I consider the Triton Twos to be competitive with include [Revel Ultima Studio2s](#), [Bowers & Wilkins' XT4](#) and even [MartinLogan's Spire hybrid electrostatic loudspeakers](#). Now I'm not saying the Triton Two bests any of the before mentioned products, it just has a lot of the same high-end qualities that you'll find in costlier competition.

To learn more about floorstanding loudspeakers or for help in deciding which floorstanding loudspeaker may be right for you, please check out [Home Theater Review's floorstanding loudspeaker page](#).

The Downside

While the Triton Twos are capable audiophile and home theater loudspeakers, there are a few items I took exception with starting with their physical appearance. While the Triton Twos are narrow and relatively small in terms of their overall footprint, I found their all black appearance to be somewhat bland. Yes, the curves and gloss black caps do help to dress up what would otherwise be just another monolithic tower speaker. I just think that something more could be done to make them more visually appealing given the fit and finish of some of the competition. No doubt the Triton Two's outward appearance was a cost saving measure and it's hard to argue with their asking price given their sheer level of performance. I guess I just expected more.

Because the Triton Twos feature built-in subwoofers, you're going to have to place them in your room in such a way that they're near a power outlet or two. This isn't a huge deal given the length of the power cables that come standard with the Triton Twos, it just means you're going to have to route and/or stare at another pair of cables running across you floor in order to enjoy all that the Triton Twos have to offer.

For a speaker that manages to be more high-end than its asking price would have you believe, I was a bit disappointed in the Triton Two's somewhat cumbersome and poorly placed binding posts which made it difficult to use higher end speaker cables like my Transparent Reference cables. Actually, the binding posts made it difficult to use any higher-end spade lugs, period.

To get the most out of the Triton Twos you'll want to place them out into your room a good three feet or more, which may or may not be possible in smaller rooms. Place them to close to your front wall (or any walls for that matter) and you can expect boomy bass (even with the subwoofer level set ultra low) and your soundstage depth to suffer. This is not an issue that only the Triton Twos face; however they do like a lot of breathing room to sound their best.

Conclusion

It appears lightning can strike not twice but three times, at least if your name is Sandy Gross and you're the creator the Triton Two, arguably one of the best loudspeakers under \$5,000. While I'm confident many critics and enthusiasts alike will accuse Gross of going back to the well one to many times; that the new Triton Two is too much like the Mythos ST or even Gross' own Bi-polar Super Towers. However, there's no getting around the fact that of all the truly great loudspeakers Gross has

had a hand in, the Triton Two is by far his best yet.

For just under \$2,500 a pair the Triton Twos are stupid good, the new HVFR tweeter is simply glorious and puts many esoteric tweeters to shame. In fact in my listening tests the only other speaker I had on hand that bested the Triton Two in terms of high frequency performance was the diamond tweeter in my reference 800 Series Diamond loudspeakers from Bowers & Wilkins. At \$24,000 a pair the 800 Series Diamonds better come out ahead of the Triton Twos, though it was not the blow out victory I was expecting. The Triton Two's midrange is a touch warm but articulate, servicing a wide variety of musical tastes and genres nicely; it even managed to make lower resolution MP3 recordings from iTunes sound better than they should. Once properly positioned and after some subwoofer level experimentation, the Triton Two's coherence across the entire frequency range was amazing. It truly is a full-range loudspeaker. The internal subwoofers add more than just low-end thump, they really ground the Triton Two, making it feel and sound larger than its physical presence would have you believe. But what I found most impressive about the Triton Twos was how effortlessly they got on with the business of playing music and movies. Regardless of what electronics I was using, be it a mega-Watt Classe amp or a flea-Watt single ended triode, the Triton Twos simply disappeared, leaving in their wake a well defined, enveloping soundstage and natural sonic presentation that few speakers, regardless of price, can match.

Say what you want about their looks, make-up or designer, there's no denying the GoldenEar Triton Two is a fantastic high-end audiophile loudspeaker, well suited for both music and movies, that just so happens to NOT cost a fortune. In today's economy and audiophile market, the GoldenEar Triton is not only relevant - it's a downright bargain. Get your fine self out and hear these speakers, as they are the most important new speakers I've encountered in a long while.