

GoldenEar Triton Two Rewrites the Rules

What's that? Another new speaker brand in the market you say?

More than any other audio category, it's the loudspeaker segment that sees the most churn and new entrants, often received with scepticism by critics and hard-nosed audiophiles alike. Nothing short of a miracle, GoldenEar burst on to the scene just about a year ago and is already becoming a rage amongst all sorts of ears. Having extended their product line-up at the recently held CEDIA Expo, GoldenEar now has a full assortment and AudioVision India have been appointed the local distributors. That was good enough for us to pinch a freshly shipped pair of the loudspeaker of the moment, the Triton Two.

The Triton Two was the first model that saw the fruition of the vision that founders Sandy Gross and Don Givogue had. A vision that had sonic perfection at its core but built around the factor that everyday music lovers associate with — value for money. The result can best be described as a forward step from where Sandy Gross left his Definitive Technology days. Yes, he was the founder of Polk Audio and DefTech, so the aesthetic similarity of the Triton Two to these brands is no coincidence! Of course, there are differences and it's a case of form follows function. A narrow profile allows for pinpoint 3D imaging and it's the only practical way of using two passive radiators on either side of the cabinet, mated to dual 1200 watt subwoofers per speaker! But that's where any DefTech hangover ends. The driver design is really where GoldenEar comes into its own. The star of the show is the High-Velocity Folded Ribbon tweeter (HVFR) that, unlike a regular ribbon HF driver, squeezes air and uses that pressure to create sound instead of just pushing air in front of it. Audibly, what you notice instantly is the ease in the high frequencies and just oodles of detail and resolution, without ever getting stingy or harsh. Next in line is the 4.5in midrange driver that uses a patented phase plug design said to provide a linear response and the driver itself is capable of resolution beyond 20kHz, that's higher than a lot of tweeters out there are capable of! It hands off to the unique dual racetrack bass drivers measuring 5x9in, thus providing more surface area than a comparable 6.5in woofer. Finally, the dual quadratic planar passive radiators help tune the bass in its delivery. The website claims they work like a "well-tuned transmission line but with superior transient performance." After a brief listening session involving the bass-happy Massive Attack's *Mezzanine* CD, there was no contest about that claim. But what about the rest of the frequency spectrum?

As with any floorstanding speaker, a bit of experimenting with location and plenty of break-in time is required. That said, the Triton's made themselves at home pretty quickly in our listening room. With the sub-bass level knob set to the 12 o'clock position and a slight bit of toe-in, we put them a tad further apart that the usual "equilateral triangle" sweet spot arrangement. The result was instantly gratifying. Jack Johnson's *Sleep Through the Static* is a wonderful album with a very dry and full sound. The Tritons locked his vocals right in the middle of the soundstage while the organ, guitar and brushed drums filled out the background with as much lushness as a bunch of musicians having a beer-n-bbq afternoon jam in your living

**Magnificent ... Astonishing...
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room. The blending of the multiple drive units is so refined that it never lets you realize that there actually are a total of five drivers working in this 3-way design. That's a commendable feat and something that we last experienced with the Totem Wind Design speakers. The purity of the top-end has to be heard to be believed and playing an A.R.Rahman album like *Lagaan* highlights its strengths. The usually shrieky voice of Lata-tai sounds sweet and mellow without the need to lower the volume level. A good female vocal especially is a treat to listen to on these speakers as they seem to present the recording in honey-coated sweetness without ever taking away from the actual atmosphere of the record or the artist's true pitch. Why more speakers don't use this driver technology comes as a major surprise after spending a few days with the GoldenEars. But let's also give the other drivers their due credit. It is no mean feat to keep up with the ultra-fast transients of the folded ribbon tweeter so the mid and bass drivers have an uphill task just keeping up with the fervent nature of this HF driver. Thankfully, the design of the Triton Two is so refined, there is no such thing as incoherence in its vocabulary. Timing between the drivers is absolutely spot on and regardless of what you are listening, it never gets fatiguing even after extended periods. Almost every driver in the Triton Two gets its own chamber and this helps in keeping the end result clean and tight, without any spurious resonances or time-delay associated errors to show up in the listening session. Sure, the very shape of the speakers, with their non-parallel sides definitely aids in breaking up the standing waves and the

narrow baffle minimizes diffraction. But, once you start going through your CD collection, you soon realise that the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts and that GoldenEar Technology has achieved something really magical at this price point. The amalgamation of effortless smoothness in the treble, supreme musicality in the midrange and the powerful yet perfectly controlled bass is what makes this loudspeaker a joy to audition and perhaps, even more so to own.

It might be useful at this point to highlight the upstream electronics and cables that we used for this review — a Jeff Rowland pre/power amp duo, Kimber Kable power cords and balanced interconnects and a Meridian CD player. It's fair to say that this is not the kind of set-up that would usually be used with the Tritons. But even with a Onkyo TX-NR809, not much could be taken away from their sense of 3D imaging and grasp on the pulse of the music. Their easy-to-drive 91dB efficiency rating means you could get away with even as little as 50 watts of power without huge sacrifices in their performance. A good example would be Inception's *Mombasa*, with its distorted horns, urgent string arrangement and a propulsive bass line, it is a trying track for many audio components, most of all loudspeakers. Yet, the Triton Two was almost waltzing through the track without breaking a sweat, giving the sense of ample headroom to spare. Its transient response can be compared to a planar design whereas the bass depth is nothing short of a well-tuned REL.

For any speaker to do as many things well as the Triton Two is quite an achievement, let alone excel at them. With no real flaws except a boring design, this is the speaker of the year!

Rating

FOR Magnificent top-end and powerful lows mated to perfect timing and coherence

AGAINST Won't win any design awards

VERDICT You will not and better value for money in any other loudspeaker on the market currently — period!

TECH SPECS

Design 3-way **Woofers** 2 x (5x9in) **Midrange** 2 x 4.5in **Tweeter** 1 x HVFR **Passive Radiator** 2 x (7x10in) **Frequency response** 16Hz-35kHz **Sensitivity** 91dB **Impedance** 8ohms **Subwoofer Amplifier** 1200W/each



NEED TO KNOW

CONSIDER IF

If you want something different and don't mind the tall-boy design



48in

YOU'LL NEED

To break them in for a considerable amount of time to sound their best

MAKE SURE

You don't use the LFE input if you're using them just in two-channel mode

AVOID

Removing the sock grill cloth as the speaker is tuned with them on

HIGHLIGHT?

Astonishing detail, depth and resolution partnered with awesome bass