

GoldenEar Triton One.R – A User Review



From the GoldenEar website

SPECIFICATIONS (From the GoldenEar Website) Dimensions: Speaker: 8" (20.3 cm) W x 16-5/8" (42.3 cm) D x 54" (137.2 cm) H (is with base installed, no spikes) Base: 12-3/8" (31.4cm) W x 19-13/16" (50.3cm) D

Frequency Response: 13 Hz – 35 kHz.

Efficiency: 92 dB.

Nominal Impedance: Compatible with 8 ohms.

Driver Complement: Three 5"x9" long-throw subwoofers coupled to Four 7"x10" quadratic planar infrasonic radiators, Two 5-1/4" high-definition cast-basket mid/bass drivers, One High-Gauss Neodymium High-Velocity Folded Ribbon (HVFR) Tweeter.

Rec. Amp: 20 – 650 Watt/channel.

Built-In Subwoofer Power Amplifier: 1600-Watt SuperSub Subwoofer digital/DSP amplifier.

Weight: 80lbs

MSRP: \$3299.00 each

Well, sadly it suddenly happened.... One of my long term Hi-Fi companions gave up the ghost. The BG Radia FS520i on the right side said “no more” and the 50” ribbon driver (BG RD50) just went silent.

I had owned these speakers for over ten years buying them new and they have served me well. I played them loud... I played them softly.... They always delivered. One reason I purchased them was the LIFETIME WARRANTY. Well crap! It’s hard to exercise such a thing when the company folded five years ago. In retrospect (and reality) I guess the ten years was the lifetime that was guaranteed.

I had hopes of finding a replacement or getting it fixed. I took a few days to look around but could not find anything in the way of help. I did find a matched pair of the RD50 on eBay in Spain for \$3600. No thanks! I looked but found no mention of anyone capable of repairing the driver.

After a few tears and much gnashing of teeth, and after having assured myself that I could not fix the speaker myself, I gave in, set a budget, and started shopping.

All things considered, my financial manager (read WIFE) was not only reasonable and understanding but literally asked me how much I wanted to spend. Believing that to be a trick question I thought about it and reasonably (for me anyway) replied \$6000 - \$8000. Much to my surprise she said OK.... “Hmmm... I should have started higher!” I thought to myself with some chagrin.

Anyway, for main speakers I already had a few in mind. I determined to use a local dealer and started my list based on what was available within a few miles of me.

Based on research and what I had heard at Axponia in 2019 I decided to look at, and listen to, Revel, GoldenEar, and Monitor Audio speakers. And, having owning a pair of Polk SDA-2A speakers in the past I really wanted to listen to the new Polk Legend 800 and the non-SDA Legend 600 as well.

The first dealer advertised they stocked GoldenEar and Monitor Audio. This was Stereo East in Frisco Texas. When I showed up there armed with a fistful of CD’s they surprised me by telling me they no longer sold Monitor Audio products. OK.... GoldenEar it was then! I listened to the full line of GoldenEar Tritons from the Reference on down to the Triton Five. Even though the Reference was out of my price range I wanted to see just what it sounded like as compared with my actual targeted speaker, the Triton One.R.

Even when compared to the Reference the Triton One.R sounded good to my ears. After listening for about an hour I talked to the salesman for a while and headed to my next stop, Nebraska Furniture Mart. Yes, you read that right. Surprisingly NFM has a large AV department with some top brands hiding out among four well equipped sound rooms. When I finally was able to capture a salesman (not always easily done) we were escorted to a sound room that contained what I was looking for. Sadly there was no facility for playing CD’s in any of the rooms! Instead I had to use a streamer they had set up, a Bluesound Node 2i.

In the middle sound room I auditioned the two Polk speakers I had wanted to hear, the Legend 600 and Legend 800. While the Legend 600 sounded very good I was a bit disappointed in the Legend 800. Based on my prior experience with the SDA-2A I was expecting better things. Now don't get me wrong it could have been set up issues in the room but it certainly was not impressing me right out of the gate.

What I was impressed with were the Revel speakers that I listened to. The Revel F328be three way speakers were impressive in every way and sounded good! But at close to \$12K I couldn't really justify the improvement over the GoldenEar, if any, that I was hearing. And so, even though NFM was willing to make a good deal on the overall price I had to say no and went with the GoldenEar Triton One.R.

Delivery and Unpacking

Ahh! The joys of purchasing from a local dealer! I purchased the Triton One.R's from Stereo East in Frisco Texas and they were delivered on December 24th (Merry Christmas Little Tommy! :-). They were delivered on time and carried to my Media Room by two wonderful delivery folk and unpacked very carefully and set up as I directed. We ran some sound through them and I turned the guys loose with my thanks. I knew I had a few hours of tweaking, playing and breaking in to do before seriously listening to the speakers so I just allowed them to play at a fairly high volume while I went about doing some other things.



The speakers were each packed in large imposing carton of heavy cardboard inside of which was a three piece foam clamshell completely surrounding the speakers on all sides. A plastic bag and another layer of no-scratch, soft, closed cell foam wrapping material swaddled the speakers. Accessories such as the manuals, spikes and rubber feet were tucked into compartments top shell as pictured below.

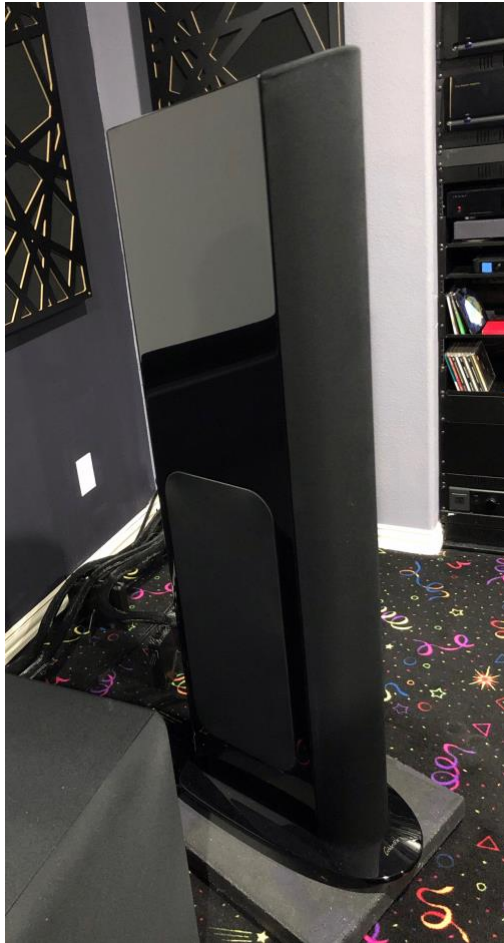


My delivery guys had obviously done this routine more than a few times and carefully opened the box and folded back the cardboard to reveal the foam clamshell. I judged the packing to be very good and appropriate for the eighty pound speakers.

Fit and finish of the speakers was flawless. The sides and top of the speakers are an elegant black piano gloss finish with cloth panels on each side hiding the Four passive 7"x10" "Quadratic Planar Infrasonic Radiators". The bass section of the cabinet is loaded by the Passive Radiators coupled to the movement of the subwoofer speakers. There are no ports that open the low frequencies to the room.

The front non-removable grille is a about 4" deep radiused unit that goes from the top of the speaker to the shiny black base displaying the GoldenEar logo. The grille is said to be an integral part of the of the speaker design and voicing and is removable only by using a special tool for servicing. All of the three subwoofers, two mid-ranges and the folded ribbon tweeter are hidden behind the grille.

The body of the speaker has a narrow front widening toward the back and has a pronounced rake downward on the top (no place to rest your beer on this speaker :-)) making for non-parallel internal walls for the elimination of resonances. The speaker is solid and very well braced passing the "knuckle-thump" test handily. The two mid-range speakers and the folded ribbon tweeter are all in their own chambers while the subs and the planar passive resonators are open to the main cabinet.



The back of the speaker contains a plate with a single set of banana/spade lug capable connections. There is also a volume control for the built-in 1600 watt sub-woofer amplifier and a bright blue LED power indicator. The sub-woofer amplifier is an auto-on device.



The speakers are NOT bi-wire/bi-amp capable for a reason. Sandy Gross, the lead designer of the speakers has stated his team put a lot of effort into the voicing and the design and construction of every component of the speaker and a lot of attention was given to the crossover. GoldenEar calls the crossover a "Perfect Phase Crossover" and would obviously like users to use the speaker as designed. My speaker cables were made with the idea of "bi-wiring/bi-amping" but work just fine as they have a set of spade lugs on one pair and locking banana plugs on the other wire pair connecting easily and securely to the three-way binding posts of the Triton One.R's.

Setup

Initial setup was a breeze. Since I am heavily vested on the "sub-age" factor (2- Rythmik F18 and 2 – Definitive Technology PF-15 subwoofers) I set up and ran the Triton One.R's as full range speakers instead as separate subs on the LFE. On my Marantz processor I set the LR speakers to "Large" and the BASS setting to "Main + Subwoofers" and went to work.

I started with the speakers in the same position as my old BG FS-520i's and placed them on the same DIY de-coupling stands (18"x18"x2" concrete pavers with 4-3" Penn-Elcom rubber iso feet) using the GoldenEar supplied rubber feet attached to the bottom of the speakers as the support. I set the subwoofer in the Triton One.R's at the suggested starting point of 12:00 o'clock and left my Rythmik F18's right where I had them previously knowing that was going to be a lot of bass...

I quickly partially ran Audyssey XT-32 using the Marantz AV-7703 and after adjusting the F18's through the subwoofer level matching did a quick bit of listening.

I didn't like what I was hearing so I repositioned the speakers with a slightly milder toe-in than recommended by GoldenEar and moving both the subs and the Triton One.R closer to center, closer to the edge of the screen (Triton's) and a bit closer to the wall. I liked this positioning a bit better and decided I was in the ballpark enough to do a full Audyssey run through.

The first Audyssey run through sounded good enough that I decided to leave it alone and allow the speakers to break in. Over the next few days I constantly played the Triton One.R's at moderate and moderately loud volumes before doing any serious listening.

Initially, right out of the box, I was hearing a muddled and somewhat muffled midrange and highs that were somewhat harsh, fatiguing and a bit on the nasty side (how's that for a nice "audiophile-like" technical descriptor?). **NEW** speakers are the one hi-fi piece that I believe do benefit from a real "break-in" and after about 14 days at 6+ hours of use per day I was hearing something very different. The highs were open and only the tiniest hint of harshness remained, the lows were better defined and much more articulate.... And the midrange.... Stellar!!! Now, before you say it, yes... it could have been me that was adjusting to the speakers and not the speakers "breaking in" but it was such a change, albeit gradual, that I don't think so and I'll stand by my belief that the new speakers benefited greatly from a real break-in period.

Final Setup and Listening

I changed out the rubber feet for the supplied spikes and began my, hopefully, final setup. I once again ran Audyssey through the complete setup routine. Once that was done. To document things I ran a few room curves using REW. For these curves I turned off the Definitive Tech PF-15's as I only use them during movies anyway.

The Audyssey supplied corrections were then tweaked using the Audyssey MultiEQ Curve Editor App to smooth the Audyssey high end roll off and to fill in a notch at 70Hz and add in a little something to fill in a small dip at 38Hz. I tried the Audyssey Mid-Range Compensation (about a 4db dip between 1.5KHz and 2.8KHz) both on and off settled for "on" as the better sound option this time.

It was evident from even these initial trials that response in the room was smoother than the old BG's and extended well beyond the BG's on the high end.

Please understand a smooth, flat, response curve was NOT NECESSARILY what I was going for but it was a good starting place none the less.

I was pretty satisfied with what I had accomplished but was hearing something not quite totally right.....

Another Final Setup and Then Really Listening

Luckily my friend Joe and his wife Charlene flew over from Nashville for a visit right after I had finished my break-in and initial setup of the speakers and before I had really started any serious listening.

I say luckily, because Joe is a professional soundman. He, his brother and I were partners in the first professional recording studio in Rockford Illinois in the mid-seventies. Joe had continued the studio for a few years after I had pulled out and grew it into a successful studio and branched it into a **VERY** successful sound reinforcement and equipment sales company that has continued until today. Recently retired, Joe continues to work in Church venues as a soundman and consultant. He has recorded and mixed hundreds of artists in the studio and mixed live sound for thousands, many top touring acts, during his 45+ years in the business... Joe knows sound!

He took a look and listen to my setup of the speakers and made a few suggestions that made all the difference. Joe understands intimately the manipulation of sound and the use of EQ.

1. He suggested a 6db to 8db shelving EQ boost between 40Hz and 110Hz for adding some definition to the mid- mid-low bass.
2. The second suggestion was to add another little 3db pop around 5kHz to add some "Air" to the high end
3. And the third was a 6db wide dip at 2.5KHz to 3.5KHz to smooth out a harshness he perceived in that range.

Every suggestion was right on and sound was instantly more balanced and listenable for music.

The boost on the bass bordered on *maybe* a little too much for movie soundtracks but that was easily remedied by manually dialing it back by 3db. Meanwhile music listening was much enhanced.

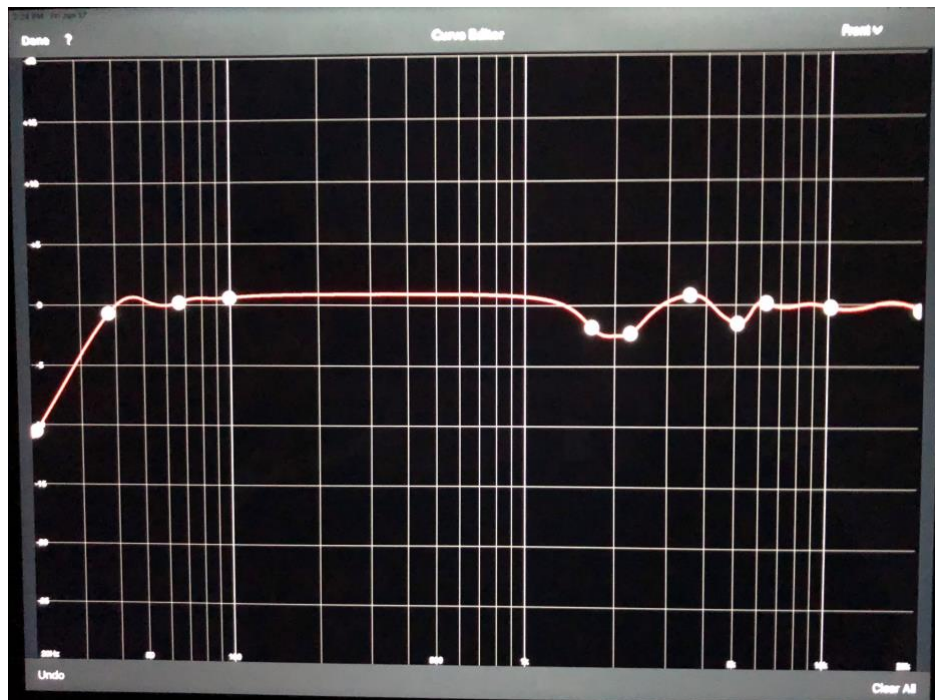
Joe and I listened to several music selections and watched several movies during his visit.

Joe Went Home

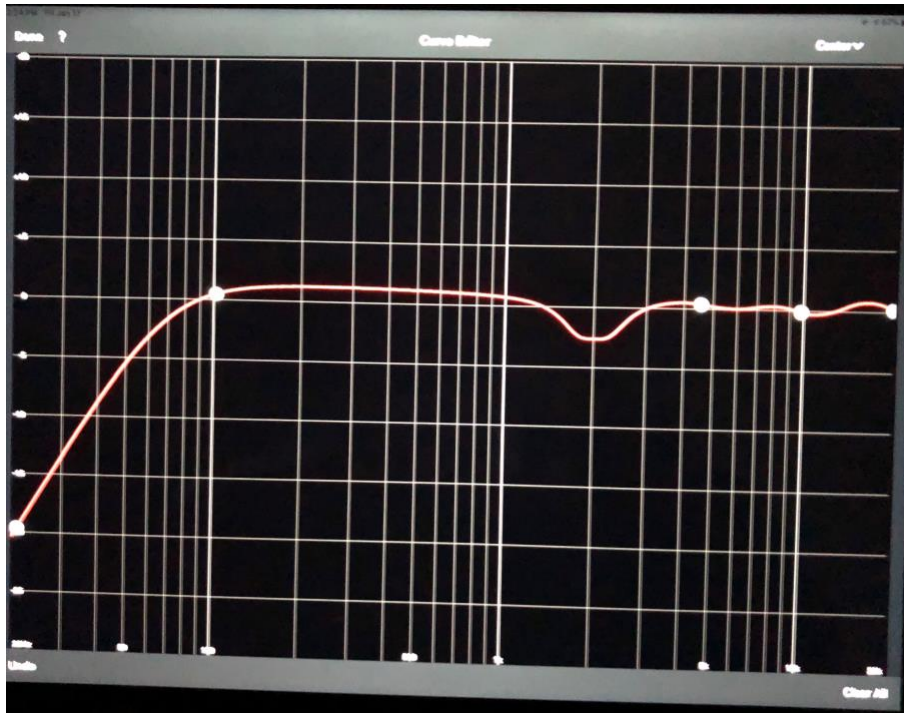
When he left I continued to tweak the sound using the Denon/Marantz Audyssey Curve Editor until it was just right for me.

For me that meant dropping the shelving bass boost on the low end slightly to around a 4db shelving boost and flattening the 5KHz bump just a little and moving the dip to center at 3.5KHz and flatten it to a 4db cut and adding a 3db rise at 3.5KHz for some additional air and finally restoring the high end roll off that the Audyssey wants to add and sent the changes to the Marantz.

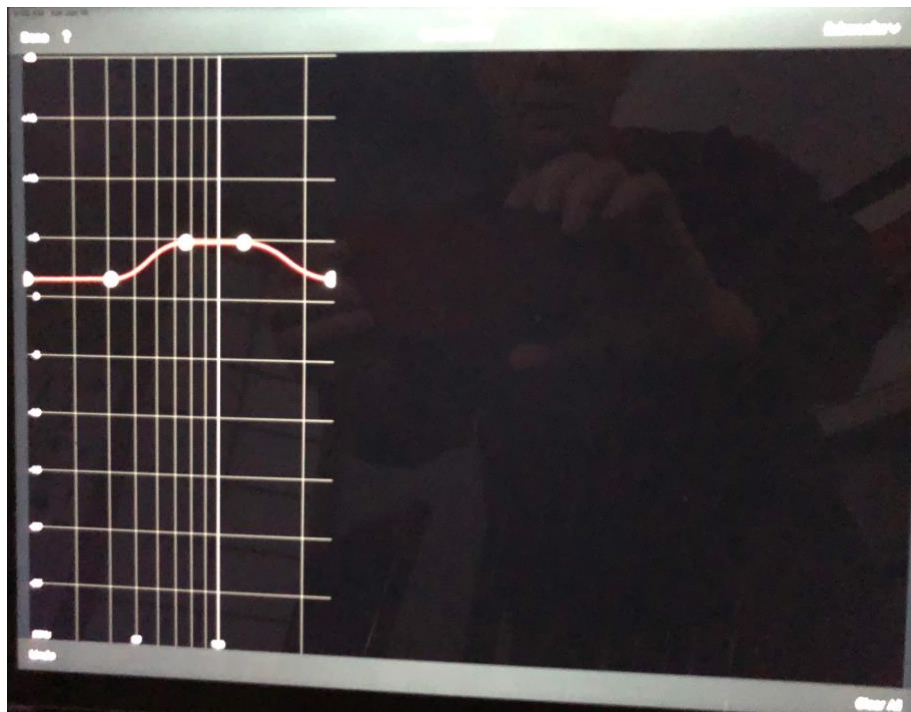
Using the Denon/Marantz Audyssey Curve Editor App I dialed in my changes.



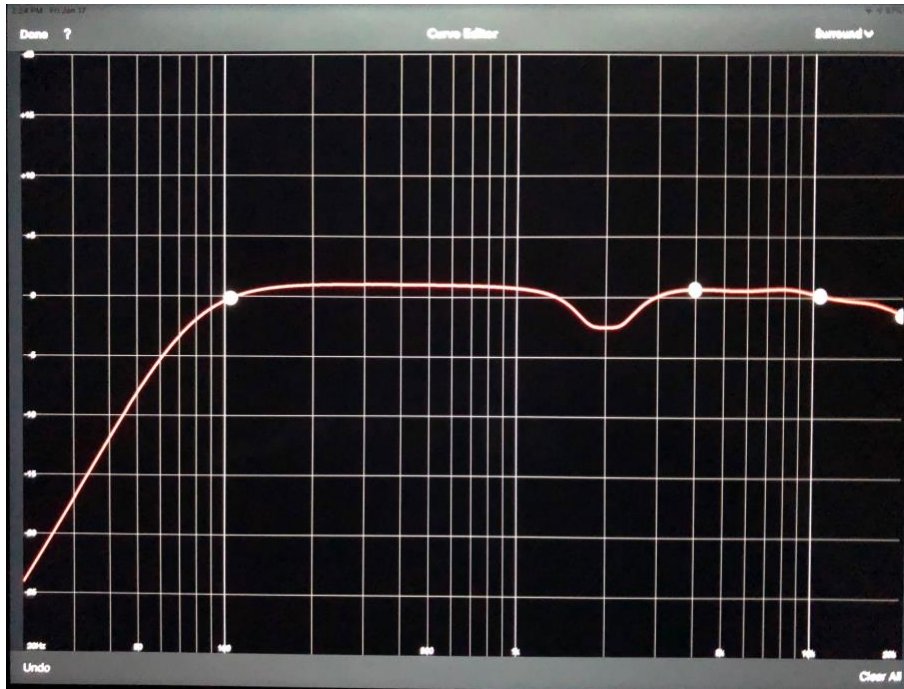
Front Right and Left Tweaks



Center Channel Tweaks



Subwoofer Tweaks

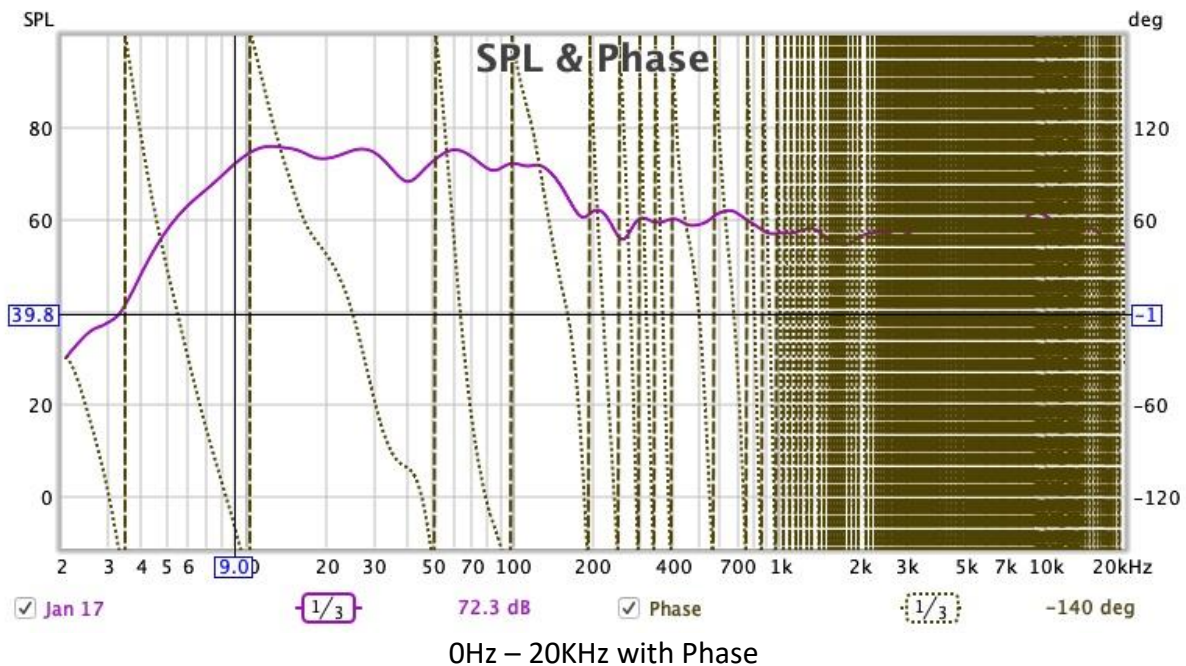


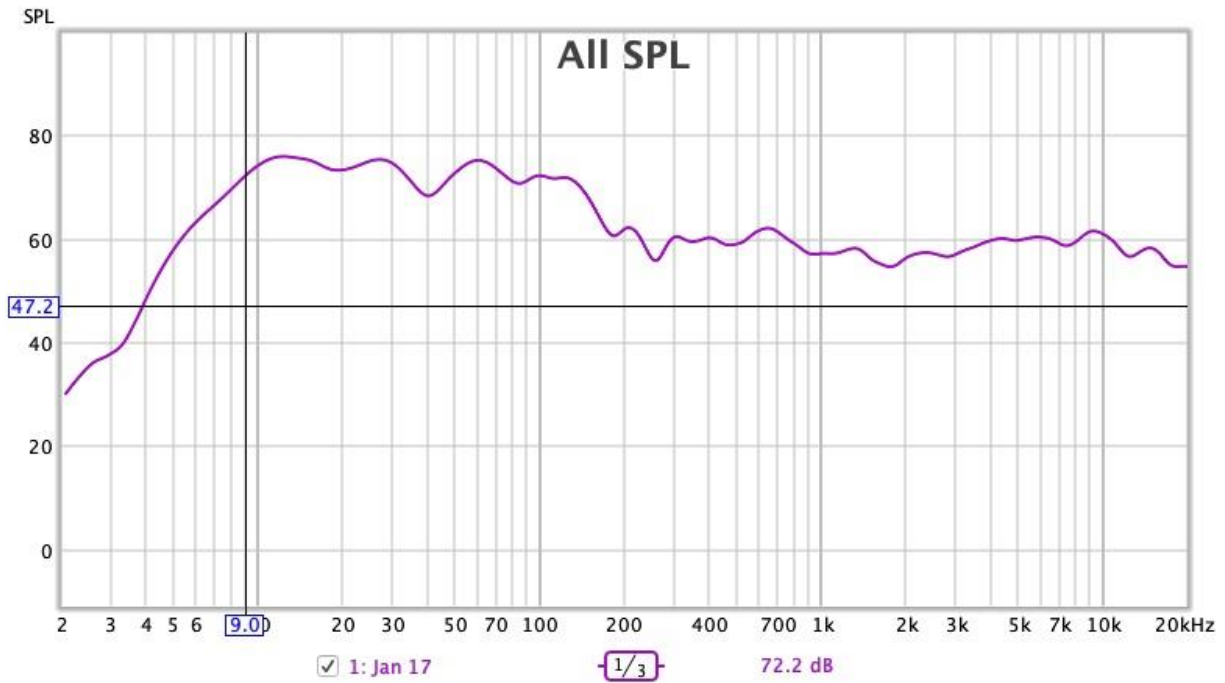
Surround Channels Tweaks

I changed the Marantz BASS setting to “Main + Subwoofers” and dialed back the bass volume on the Triton One.R’s by about two hash marks.

I ran REW calibrated at 75db with a full range White Noise signal. Microphone at the center listening position.

So here is the “real world” result of the tweaking and room interactions.





Full Range 0Hz to 20KHz Triton One.R's and Rythmik F18's – SPL Only

A bit of preliminary listening seemed promising so I sat down for some analytical sessions using my choices below.

I chose some music and a couple of movies in a few different formats.

Music was either stereo CD's, 5.1 SACD, stereo DVD Audio, Pandora or Amazon Music streamed by the Denon/Marantz HEOS configuration. I also tried a bit of Vinyl!

Movies were either iTunes streamed or Blu-Ray.

LP's

The Cars – The eponymous 1978 release of The Cars album was a masterpiece for the times. Well recorded and simple with a wonderful space between the instruments. I bought this in 1978 when released and it has been sitting there virtually unplayed since the advent of my CD collection.... What a crime!

I had listened to this album right after I had upgraded my turntable but just before I replaced the BG Radia speakers with the GoldenEar's.

Thru the GoldenEar Triton One.R's the vinyl was more impactful and much more extended on both the high end and in the lower registers.

Mids were clear and eminently more listenable. Solid Bass, crisply rendered highs with good "air", and beautifully rendered mid-range. An extended soundstage with a solid center image completed my notes.

Much more information was being presented by the Triton's to my ears than with the BG's. That also included much more surface noise from the extended high end of the One.R's!

King Crimson – Discipline – Released in 1981 - I chose the King Crimson Discipline LP because it is one I have duplicated in DVD Audio and wanted to see how the vinyl compared to the high resolution digital remix of the DVD audio release. This was one of the last LP's that I had purchased before making the move to CD's.

It compared very favorably actually.... I made basically the same notes as the Cars album. The sound of the King Crimson album was much more dense than the Cars album but well rendered with good separation of the instruments and a great balance between the mids and highs being offered up as well as a substantial, well defined bass. One of my favorite cuts of this album was Elephant Talk and it played well on the vinyl.

DVD Audio

King Crimson – Discipline – The remixed album by Stephen Wilson sounded even fuller and denser when listening to the stereo remix. By comparison the vinyl version sounded a bit thin and lacking on the low end.

Through the Triton One.R's the DVD Audio disk displayed tight, extended bottom end and smooth, silky extended highs with a nice crisply rendered mid-range. Overall extension, clarity and soundstage were better rendered than the BG Radia's.

CD's

Lee Ritenour and Dave Grusin – Harlequin – This all digital recording and mixed CD was the first Compact Disk that **REALLY** sparked my interest in that media. According to the font of all knowledge, Wikipedia, *Harlequin* was released in 1985 through GRP Records. The album reached No. 2 on *Billboard's* Contemporary Jazz chart, and earned a 1986 Grammy Award for Best Arrangement on an Instrumental for "Early A.M. Attitude". *Harlequin* also earned Grammy nominations for Best Engineered Recording, Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying Vocals, and Best Pop Instrumental Performance.

I utilize this CD when evaluating speakers because of it's crystal, liquid highs and immense soundstage and wonderful recording.

What notes I made mention immediate vocals yet surrounded by massive air, Mids were silky but with razor definition and the kick drum was solid and well defined.

Thomas Dolby – Alien's Ate My Buick – OK, if you have read any of my previously written stuff you know I have this perverse liking for this CD. I like it because it has a sense of humor, it's funky and is well recorded. That said, I think the combination of the electronic music and the late great Terry Jackson's bass playing and sound is a great test for any speaker system.

Listen to Airhead (track 2) and you'll see what I mean. The Triton One.R's shined throughout this disk with the funky bas punchy and well defined.

Steely Dan – Two Against Nature – Ok, once more, you knew it was coming :-). Steely Dan is one of my definite go-to's when evaluating anything. Always producing some of the best studio recordings out there this 2000 release marked a return of the band after a twenty year recording break! It garnered four Grammy's including "Best Engineered Recording"

My notes went something like this.... What a KICK! Bass and Kick Drum incredibly connected and percussive. Snare has a huge weight, impact and snap. Mid-range is detailed and rich. Highs are well presented with precision.

SACD

I wanted to play a few 5.1 tracks on SACD to see if my new right and left speakers would play well with my center and surround speakers. All of those speakers feature Planar Ribbon mids and tweeters with conventional woofers as did my replaced BG Radia FS-520i's. In short... the Triton's matched and played very well with the others both in tonality, timbre and speed. They sounded even better than the 520i's they replaced with those speakers.

Nora Jones – Come Away With Me – Here is my nod toward the "Audio Show" convention of playing simple female vocals, minimally accompanied, to demonstrate those \$300,000.00 plus mega speakers. I do like Nora Jones and consider her and the players around her as top notch.

And so I listened "Audiophile Style" and what I heard was clear, open female vocals with no hint of "chestiness" or muffled sound. The accompanying music was very nicely done with particularly good weight and authority, but still nicely rounded, double bass.

The upper and mid-ranges were better done than my BG's but not by much. Where the Triton's shined were in the presentation of the low end. That double bass sounded so much better.... With or without the Rythmik subs engaged!

I continued with **Another World by Hiromi** and found again that the extremes at either end of the frequency spectrum was where the Triton's definitely outstripped the BG's. In the track **Another Mind** the lowest registers of the piano are played by Hiromi with force and power and the Triton One.R's responded in kind.

Pink Floyd – Wish You Were Here - Remastered into 5.1 surround - SACD

Welcome to the Machine – In-Freaking-Credible!! 'Nuff Said'

Movies

I sampled a few movies and never once found that the Triton One.R's made the other speakers stand out or exhibit a glaring "this is a different brand" sort of sign. They played extremely well with my older BG Radia speakers.

The three movies I sampled heavily were:

1. GI Joe – Chapter 2 - The battle in the forest....
2. John Carter – Chapters 12 The destruction of a world, and Chapter 13 The Arena....
3. The Dark Knight Rises – Chapter 1 – Bain takes a plane ride....

In each and every case the scenes were visceral, impactful and percussive with the speakers capable of supplying satisfying crunch but also working extremely well with the subwoofers to supply a seamless LFE that was nothing short of bone-crushing *when called for*.

Conclusion

Many reviewers continue to call the top tier GoldenEar Triton Reference and Triton One.R speakers “Giant Killers”. This is as a allusion to the speakers ability to perform *way* outside their price brackets while comparing them to speakers costing *many times* their price. While not cheap at \$6600.00 for the pair I truly believe they are a bargain in their **PERFORMANCE** category.

I can't really attest to their status as “Giant Killers” not having actually owned, or spent significant time with any of the mega-buck speakers that are out there . What I can say is they sound good to my ears! At least as good as many of those expensive speakers I have heard in the past. Now, given that I heard those speakers, very briefly, in the unnaturally crappy audio show surroundings (like Axpona and CEDIA) of hotel rooms and monstrous untreated and noisy spaces it might be an unfair assessment. But, that said, it is where I was first exposed to the Triton One.R and came away with a favorable impression... and in the same venue, *with very few exceptions*, those mega-buck speakers did not overly impress at the time.

While most dealer showrooms are still not ideal they are usually much better than the uncontrolled environments of the big shows. Even so, they are becoming fewer and farther between with limited selections available for comparison.

Nit-Picks and Final Thoughts!

I had only two little nit-picks with the speakers that were easily addressed;

1. The base is, to me at least, a bit too small. A big heavy, somewhat top-heavy, speaker like this could be easily toppled when moving or with a good push. *My* solution... well, no dogs, no cats, no kids :-)) They would be a bit more secure if on the spikes and placed directly on the floor. Hey! No rough-housing around these speakers!!
2. The LED's on the back of these things are bright! Bright enough to cast light on my screen that they flank. This, of course, should not be an issue in a music only system or in a system that is not projector based. While a dimmer might have been a nice touch the brightness was easily tamed with a bit of painter's tape.

Overall.... *me-likee!* The speakers have the characteristics that I desired. The lows are controlled and impactful, the mids are better rendered than any other speaker I have owned previously (maybe better than any I have ever heard!) and the highs are crisp without being overly so, silky and extended to beyond light-speed (well, certainly *way beyond* my aging hearing!) once the speaker was broken-in. Overall this speaker, to me, is the total package; full range, eminently listenable and emotionally connective. This is, for me, a *very satisfying* speaker on every level.

It is my opinion that while the built-in subs *might* eliminate the need for separate subwoofers in a modest size room you would be better served in running it as a full range speaker and using subs as the audio gods intended. And, having said that, I certainly felt that my subs added substantially to my enjoyment of both music and movies when dialed in correctly.

Where these speakers absolutely shine is their ability to operate as a full range speaker with a perfectly integrated low end section seamlessly coupled to the top-shelf mids and highs that are the hallmark of every well designed hi-end speaker.

And, best of all... This speaker is no “one trick pony” and sounds simply wonderful with all musical genres without favoring any particular one over the other.... And, importantly to me, it is an outstanding performer as the foundation of a home theater!

I am certainly satisfied with the Triton One.R and would highly recommend it to anyone in the market for a new speaker. Check it out!

Cheers!



Associated Equipment

Marantz AV7703

Parasound A21 Stereo Amplifier

Parasound Halo A52+ Amplifier

Parasound Zonemaster 450 Amplifier (ATMOS)

OPPO UDP-203

Pro-Ject Debut Carbon DC with Ortofon Red 2M Cartridge

Apple TV 4K

BG Corp – Radia CC-220 Center Channel Speaker (1)

BG Corp – Radia SA-320 Surrounds (4)

Polk - CS-6 Speakers ATMOS (4)

Rythmik – F18 Subwoofer (2)

Definitive Technology – PF 15 Subwoofer (2)

Other Sources – Pandora Premium – Amazon Music HD – Both streaming via Denon/Marantz HEOS