



FOLLOW-UP

BY ROBERT DEUTSCH

GOLDENEAR TRITON TWO+ LOUDSPEAKER

Six years. Has it really been that long? Yes, I was there at the Consumer Electronics Show in January 2011, making the rounds to collect material for my show report. That's when I first heard the Triton Two loudspeaker² from GoldenEar Technology.³ If the word gobsmacked were part of my normal vocabulary, I would have been tempted to use it. With sound quality way out of proportion to its price (\$2499.98/pair at launch, later increased to a still-very-reasonable \$2999.98/pair), the Triton Two went immediately to the top of the list of speakers I wanted to review.

A year later, when the opportunity to do so came about, that initial, highly positive impression was confirmed when I wrote my review.⁴ The Triton Two has been a great success in the marketplace, and was eventually joined by four other Tritons, including the flagship Triton One, which I reviewed in February 2015.⁵

The Triton Two review samples were returned to GoldenEar after I'd finished my listening tests. Since then my system has undergone a number of changes and improvements: new digital source, new record player, new amplifier, new cables, and upgraded preamp. During this process, I've often

wondered what these improvements might have done for Triton Two's sound. The introduction of the "+" version of the Triton Two, itself promising improvements, gave me an opportunity to renew my acquaintance. (The original Triton Two was not available for direct comparison. My comments about how the Triton Two+ compares with the original Two rely on memory and the notes I took for the initial review.) The Triton Two and the Two+ look identical, except that the LED on the rear panel of the Two+ glows blue, not green. I still find the speaker's curved, tapered shape, its black cloth wrap, and its shiny, piano-black plinth and top attractive in a form-follows-function way. The Triton Two+ may lack the fine furniture finish of some of its more expensive competitors, but it's attractive in its own way, and the savings on cabinet finish have no doubt been passed on to the consumer.

According to Sandy Gross, CEO of GoldenEar Technology, the aim of the upgrade was to voice the Triton Two to sound more like the Triton One. To this effect, the Two+ has new midrange/upper-bass drivers with new cones, surrounds, spiders, and voice-coils. The other drivers, including the tweeter, remain the same. However, I'm told that the cabinet bracing has been improved, and that the

positioning of the stuffing inside the cabinet is slightly different. The Two+ has new balanced crossovers (like those of the Triton One) from the mid/woofers to both the tweeter and the powered bass section. Reportedly, considerable time was spent fine-tuning the DSP of the low-level crossover, using the methodology developed for the Triton One. The price is \$3499.98/pair, up from the Two's \$2999.98/pair but still well south of the \$4999.98/pair Triton One.

The Triton Two+ was delivered by staff from a local GoldenEar dealer, Bay Bloor Radio, of Toronto, and the next day Sandy Gross came by to help with setup. The speakers were placed in the positions that are more or less standard for me: along the long wall of my 16' by 14' by 7.5' listening room, close to where the Twos had sat. While the speakers sounded generally fine out of the box, the treble was a bit on the grainy side. After about 100 hours of break-in—including three days when my wife and I took a little vacation, leaving the system playing a CD containing a variety of music—the treble was much smoother.

The sound now had a clarity and transparency that exceeded what I remember of the Triton Two. (Of course, the extent to which this represents improvements in my system

rather than in the speaker is arguable. My guess? It was both.) In my review notes, I'd described the original Triton Two as having "truly full-range sound," and that certainly describes the Two+. To me, full-range means having bass extension/power that balances the speaker's treble extension, and being able to do so at realistic levels with every kind of music, including symphony orchestras, operas, big bands, and rock. Treble extension is fairly easy to get—and tweeters that are variants of the Heil Air Motion Transformer, such as the one used by GoldenEar, are a popular choice. Full-range bass is more difficult to achieve: It requires drivers that can move a lot of air, which normally means bigger drivers, heavier magnets, larger cabinets—and higher cost. GoldenEar's technically sophisticated approach to bass reproduction includes two 5" by 9" ultra-long-throw sub-bass drivers, two 5" by 10" passive radiators, and power supplied by a 1200W, class-D amplifier through a DSP-implemented crossover. The fact that the Triton Two+'s bass section has its own amplifier means that the workload of the system's main power amp is reduced, and that a less powerful amplifier(s), including tubed designs, can be used effectively.

Given GoldenEar's claim about extensive work having been done to optimize the Two+'s DSP crossover, I paid particular attention to the bass and its transition to the midrange. I hadn't thought of the Triton Two as being deficient in these areas, but I believe they've been improved in the Two+. In my review of the Two, I referred to an emphasis in the 50Hz region (heard and observed with Stereophile's Test CD 2

(Stereophile STPH004-2) and AudioTools' SPL-meter app for the iPhone 4) that I'd thought was likely a room mode. It was still there with the Two+, but its magnitude was reduced. (Of course, this could have been influenced even by slight changes in speaker positions.) I also tested GoldenEar's claim of bass extension to 16Hz, using the low-frequency test tones on Nordost's System Set-Up & Tuning Disc (Nordost CD NOR 101). The lowest frequency on this disc is 18Hz; I heard nothing from the speakers at this frequency, though 21Hz was faintly audible. Much stronger was 24Hz, which I would consider the Two+'s practical low-end extension. This bass extension, about the same as the Two's, actually represents better bass performance than all moderate-size speakers of my

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experience. In normal use, including such test discs as Mickey Hart's Planet Drum (CD, Rykodisc RCD 10206), the bass was firm, extended, powerful, and well blended with the midrange.

In my review, I criticized one aspect of the Triton Two's sound: a degree of "box" coloration that's present, to some degree, in the sound of all speakers—except those that don't have a box—but that I felt was something that could be improved. And indeed it has been: The Triton Two+ had less of a "speaker sound" than I remember from the Triton Two. This is likely the result of the change in cabinet bracing, and perhaps the change in the positioning of the stuffing.

I used three amplifiers with the Triton Two+: the Theta Digital Prometheus (solid-state, class-D output stage), the McIntosh Laboratories MC-275LE (tubed), and PrimaLuna's ProLogue Premium integrated (tubed). They all worked well with the GoldenEars, the speakers capitalizing on the strengths of each amp. The pairings with the tube amps were particularly felicitous, with a smooth, easy-on-the-ears quality. The PrimaLuna, at \$2399, represents the same sort of value as the Triton Two+. At a total of less than \$6000, the ProLogue Premium with Triton Two+ is a synergistic combination that's hard to beat.

This being a Follow-Up rather than a full review, I won't cite chapter and verse about every sonic characteristic of the GoldenEar Triton Two+. Suffice it to say that any aspect of the Triton Two's sound that I discussed in my February 2012 review but haven't commented on here can be assumed to be at

least as good in the Triton Two+. Not having a pair of Triton Ones for comparison, I can't say to what extent GoldenEar has achieved its aim of voicing the Triton Two+ to more closely approach the One's sound, but my observations are certainly consistent with that claim. The Triton One, *Stereophile's* 2015 Joint Loudspeaker of the Year, is one of my favorite speakers. At \$4999.98/pair, it represents a comparative bargain in its class, but the price may still be higher than many audiophiles are comfortable with. Those folks would likely be very happy with the \$3499.98/pair Triton Two+. And if you're one of those rare audiophiles who have yet to hear any of GoldenEar's Triton models, I suggest that you give the Triton Two+ a listen. You may find yourself gobsmacked.

—Robert Deutsch ■

2 See www.stereophile.com/content/goldenear-triton-two.

3 GoldenEar Technology, PO Box 141, Stevenson, MD 21153. Tel: (410) 998-9134. Fax: (410) 356-0808. Web: www.goldenear.com.

4 See www.stereophile.com/content/goldenear-technology-triton-two-loudspeaker.

5 See www.stereophile.com/content/goldenear-technology-triton-one-loudspeaker.

MANUFACTURERS' COMMENTS

GoldenEar Technology Triton Two+ Editor:

We are very grateful to Robert Deutsch for taking the time to evaluate our upgrade of our first Triton tower loudspeaker, the Triton Two, now Triton Two+. And, of course, we are thankful for his kind words regarding the achievement of our goals, which he so well describes. This project was begun after the Triton One was launched to exceptional response in the marketplace—from reviewers, but especially from listeners around the world. Hopefully, as a loudspeaker manufacturer with a strong focus on pure engineering as well as trying to deliver exceptional performance and value, we continue to learn how to do things better as we go along. I know, personally, that my trajectory from the early days at Polk to today, some 40 years later, has been a continuum of evolution rather than revolution.

When we developed the Triton One, we began with everything we'd started with when we introduced the Two, then added everything we had learned in the interim. This related not only to various technological improvements, but also to where we wanted to go in terms of the critical voicing of our loudspeakers. Many listeners don't realize just how important the voicing is to the sonic end result. Many focus on the basic hardware—the drivers, etc.—thinking that they are almost totally responsible for the sonic signature of a loudspeaker, and that if two loudspeakers are designed incorporating the same drivers, tweeters, etc., then they will sound the same. Nothing

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could be further from the truth. It is sort of like cooking: You can prepare two dishes using the same exact ingredients, and yet you can end up with dishes that taste totally different. And so it is with loudspeakers.

While the new Triton Two+ incorporates new upper-bass/midrange drivers, a new balanced crossover derived from a unique topology developed for the Triton One, as well as other specific parts upgrades, the real sonic differences and improvements that Robert heard are in large part the results both of a new voicing and of new DSP programming. We were guided to make these changes based on what we had achieved with the Triton One, and based on listeners' responses to this more sophisticated sonic presentation that resulted, partially, from our own maturation and understanding of what we were aiming for.

Robert understands, as do we, that although the Triton One, at \$4999/pair, delivers tremendous value, especially in the current high-end marketplace, for many listeners the difference in cost between the One and the Two+, at \$3499/pair, is still significant. We are pleased and proud to have developed and to be able to provide a less expensive and smaller alternative to *Stereophile's* 2015 Joint Loudspeaker of the Year.

Sandy Gross
GoldenEar Technology