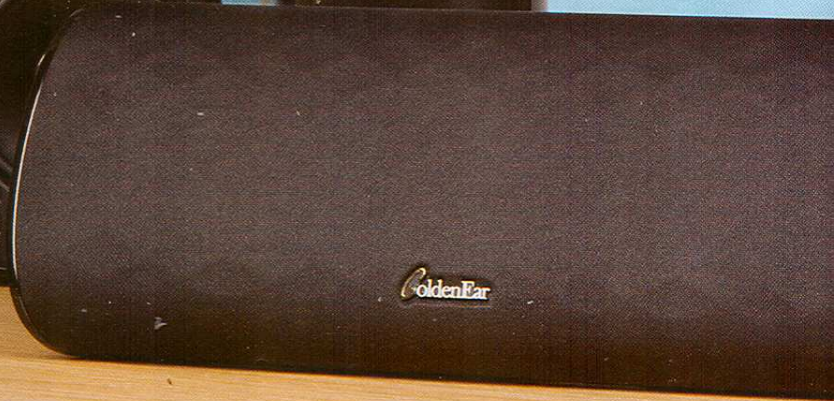
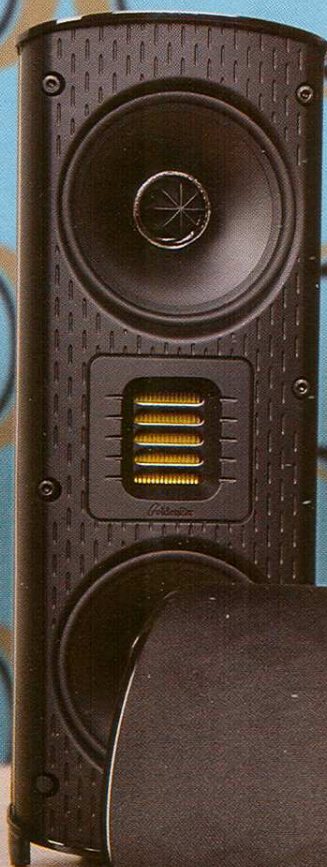
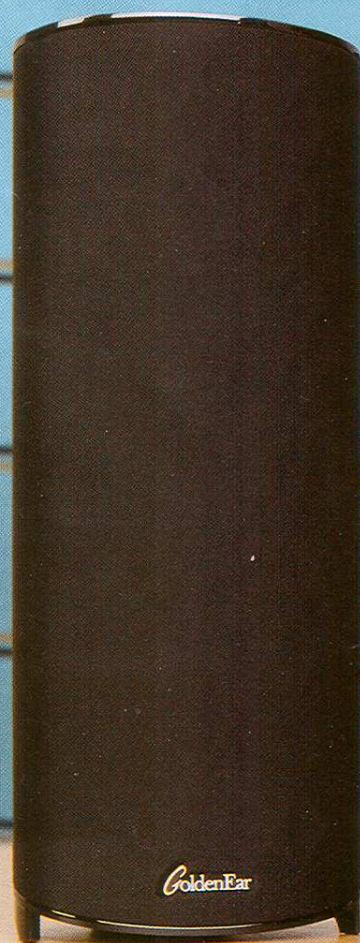


High priced Golden Wonders

The GoldenEar speaker brand is a new arrival in the UK from across the Atlantic – and has some interesting driver technology to flaunt. **Ed Selley** listens in

The SuperCinema 3 array faces stiff competition in the luxury sub/sat market



AV INFO

PRODUCT: High-end 5.1 sub/sat system

POSITION: Below the SuperSat 50 floorstanding range in GoldenEar's lineup

PEERS: SpeakerCraft Roots; Tannoy Arena Highline; Paradigm Millenia One/Sub

LAUNCHING A NEW speaker brand in the UK has never been an easy business. The competition from the domestic marques and more established arrivals is serious. If you are entering the bear pit it helps if you bring something new to the party.

GoldenEar is the brainchild of Sandy Gross and Don Givogue, both of whom were heavily involved in Definitive Technology (and in the case of Gross, Polk as well). These men are not debutantes and their wealth of experience is considerable. GoldenEar's mission statement is 'to use its combined experience to deliver more sonic superiority, with performance that is often unequalled in

speakers selling for three, four or five times as much.' Bold words, certainly, but can it make good on the promise?

The SuperCinema 3 is one of the smaller offerings from GoldenEar and comprises five SuperSat 3 satellites and a ForceField 3 subwoofer. The early signs are promising. Five identical satellites (one of which comes with a mount and grill suitable for use as a horizontally-placed centre) should mean that the handover from speaker to speaker is seamless, and this in turn should give a big, cohesive soundstage. The ForceField 3 subwoofer is not the largest design going but the presence of a 1kW amplifier suggests

that there should be enough power to underpin proceedings.

Each SuperSat 3 uses a 30cm-tall slimline chassis with the option of desk-mounting (via supplied mounts), wallmounting via a thread in the rear or, finally, partnering with an optional floorstand. First impressions are mixed. Each speaker is smart enough but slightly underwhelming in appearance. GoldenEar says that they are made of a 'rigid, non-resonant marble-powder infused polymer'. While notionally impressive, it still means that this is a cabinet made of plastic (albeit a fairly clever one) in a field where many competitors are using metal and wood. >





Remove the grilles and the £2,050 system tag starts to make a little more sense. Each SuperSat 3 makes use of a pair of 4.5in MVPP (Multi Vaned Phase Plug) drivers with cast baskets for reduced resonance. These partner a 'High Velocity' folded metal ribbon tweeter, which should give the SuperSat 3 an impressive high-frequency performance and, thanks to its relatively large radiating area, a seamless handover to the other drivers.

The ForceField 3 is a trapezoidal design with a forward-firing 8in driver and a passive radiator on the underside, designed to extend the performance of the sub into the infrasonic region. To this end, GoldenEar quotes a frequency response of 18-250Hz (albeit with no accompanying roll-off figure).

Setup proved simple. The satellites are happy on top of a conventional speaker stand and, as they are sealed, don't seem too

The inclusion of ribbon tweeters on the satellites ensures superb detailing and clarity

to the mid-rangers is impressively seamless and with an identical compliment all round, the effect is a detailed wall of sound with effects carefully placed at the relevant points.

The ForceField 3 is not quite able to match this extraordinary finesse but it offers an altogether different party piece. I do not recall ever encountering a subwoofer at this price point (just £500) with such horsepower. During the opening sequence of *Avengers...* where the research facility collapses and is swallowed up, it felt like the ForceField 3 was trying to carry out a similar act on my own listening room. Bass is deep, clean and usually utterly devastating. For most of the time it was in place, I found that it barely required more than tickover to be entirely room-filling. I can only assume that the larger ForceField 4 is also marketed as a demolition tool.

The resulting partnership is a little curious but extremely likeable. This is a system that can reproduce a soundstage dripping with convincing detail and then just as convincingly reproduce the sound of it being blown to matchsticks. The crossover where these two talents collide is reasonably cohesive but even though the ForceField 3 is agile for a sub that hits as hard as it does, the speed of the satellites can leave it sounding a little leaden. For films this rarely becomes a problem but there are other systems – Tannoy's Arena Highline springs to mind – that can beat it for musicality. But with films and I unquestionably prefer the GoldenEar array.

There's no shortage of competition for the SuperCinema 3 in the premium sub/sat market, but this is a system that can legitimately claim to offer something different to the competition. The satellites make full use of their nifty drivers while the ForceField 3 is the nuclear option in a field of conventional weapons. I do have reservations about the looks, though. Many of its competitors are simply more elegant. In many ways, the quality of the drivers warrants better styling than this – so just listen to them, don't look ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SUPER SAT 3

DRIVE UNITS: 2x 4.5in MVPP drivers; 1x 1.6in folded ribbon tweeter
ENCLOSURE: Sealed
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 80Hz-35kHz
SENSITIVITY: 92dB
POWER HANDLING: 200W
DIMENSIONS: 304(h) x 120(w) x 69(d)mm
WEIGHT: 2.26kg

FORCEFIELD 3

DRIVE UNITS: 1x 8in long-throw high-output bass driver; 1x 9in x 11in 'Quadratic Planar Infrasonic' passive radiator
ENCLOSURE: Sealed
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 18Hz-250Hz
ON BOARD POWER: 1,000W
REMOTE CONTROL: No
DIMENSIONS: 292(h) x 289(w) x 400(d)mm
WEIGHT: 11.8kg
CONNECTIONS: Speaker-level inputs/outputs, phono LFE input

'This is a system that can craft a soundstage dripping with convincing detail – and then blow it to bits'

bothered by proximity to walls. Dispersion is fairly wide as well, allowing them to be slightly above or below optimal ear level and still work effectively. Placement of the sub is a little trickier as it has no phase control. Trial and error are your friends here.

Immediate impact

Connected to a Cambridge Audio 551R, the GoldenEar system made more of a case for itself in five minutes of listening than a day reading the specs ever will. The decision to spend big on the drivers has resulted in a package that is startlingly explicit and cohesive. Even during the most dynamic points that *Avengers Assemble* has to offer, it places dialogue perfectly and with a fantastic tonality. This is a ribbon tweeter trademark and the SuperSat 3 delivers in spades. The handover

HCC VERDICT



GoldenEar SuperCinema 3

→ £2,050 Approx → www.karma-av.co.uk
 → Tel: 01423 358846

HIGHS: Incredible detail and soundstage; seismic bass response; flexible placement
LOWS: Prosaic appearance; some limitations with music; no shortage of competition

Performance ★★★★★

Design ★★★★★

Features ★★★★★

Overall ★★★★★