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ROB SCHRYER

Triangle Antal 40th Anniversary Edition

LOUDSPEAKER

Has it ever crossed your mind that the reason you like your system more than your friend's or the store's is not because yours is better, even if you think it is, but because you're used to the sound of yours and not of theirs? Welcome to *product habituation*.

Some people, including some audiophiles, believe that product habituation is what's *really* behind what some people refer to as *product break-in*. It's not a mechanical or electronic phenomenon, they contend, but a mental one. Assuming the sound of the new gear is of adequate quality, it's the listener that breaks in to the product, as the product's sound, which was initially strange, grows more familiar and, so, *right*.

Those who believe in break-in view the process as a period during which a component's signal-carrying parts are "settling," the concomitant effect of which is a gradual improvement in sound quality, until whammy! Everything has seemingly, finally, coalesced into a relaxed, cohesive, enjoyable presentation.

Except that's not what really happens, according to the habituation theory. That whammy? That wasn't the sound blossoming into a beautiful swan (song?), it was, rather, the moment your brain completely bought the illusion—an illusion that had been there all along.

I'm a compromiser. I'll venture that both things are happening—that habituation accounts for about half the break-in story. While humans may be the most adaptive species on Earth, it's jarring when something new replaces something we're used to. It knocks us out of familiar territory, forcing us to question what we thought we knew and what this new, intrusive thing is all about.

If the sound of the unfamiliar gear is fundamentally good—if there's nothing in it that's intrinsically objectionable—our brain adapts. It connects the new dots with the old ones, reorganizes the data, fills in the landscape. If it's *very* good, it will become a new frame of reference for us, another example of what audiophile sound can be. *This* audiophile sound may not be quite the same as the last audiophile sound, but in time it turns out just as valid.

Beyond anything to do with notions of neutrality or flatness or absolutes, our hobby has always been about capturing lightning in a bottle, over and over. It's about hitting those high-water–mark daydream states when the (reproduced) musical performance embodies the music's essence to such a degree that we forget that what we're listening to is an electromechanical simulation. Not every product capable of doing this does it in the same way. Think how fundamentally different Magicos and Zu Omens sound from each other. Yet, both have been reported to convey enough of music's essence as to lift listeners to those high-water–mark, daydreamy states. I'm sure you have your own examples of very different sounds that both work.

When I reviewed the Monitor Audio Silver 500 7G speakers,[1] I went through the habituation process. When I substituted the Monitor Audios for my Focals, I found the sound destabilizing. It was incongruous with my frame of reference, which I had constructed around the Focals.

I went through the habituation process again with the subject of this review, Triangle's Antal 40th Anniversary Edition. I'd been told by the importer that the speakers were broken in, but still, after I installed them and let them play for a few days, among my first thoughts when I settled in to listen was how, relative to the Focals, the Antals seemed to produce less bass energy and had a more detailed and perhaps brighter upper midrange. I couldn't be sure. I was still fresh into the habituation process, and who knew if the speakers were fully broken in?

The difference I heard going from my Focals to the Triangles was less pronounced than that going from my Focals to the Monitor Audio speakers. Could it be because both are French products while the Monitor Audios are English? Does French hi-fi have its own sound?[2]

SPECIFICATIONS

Description Three-way, four-driver, bass-reflex floorstanding loudspeaker. Drive units: one 1" (25.4mm) horn-loaded anodized magnesium-dome tweeter; one 6.5" (135mm) cellulose pulp-membrane midrange driver; two 6.5" (135mm) wood pulp, flax, and carbon fiber-membrane bass drivers. Crossover frequencies: 185Hz, 3.9kHz. Frequency range: 37Hz–22kHz. Sensitivity: 92dB/2.83V/m. Impedance: 8 ohms nominal, 3 ohms minimum. Power handling: 140W RMS. Recommended amplification: 80–250W.
Dimensions 42.9" (1090mm) H × 7.8" (200mm) W × 13.6" (345mm) D. Weight: 59lb (26.8kg) each.
Finishes Santos Rosewood, Blond Sycamore.
Serial numbers of units reviewed 20_TEC71_AN_V1_0283 (both). Made in France.
Price $4700/pair. Approximate number of US dealers: 33. Warranty: 3 years, nontransferable.
Manufacturer Triangle Hi-Fi, 475 Avenue Flandres Dunkerque, Z.I. Les Etomelles, 02200 Villeneuve Saint-Germain, France
Tel: +33 (0)3 23 75 38 20.
Email: info@triangle.tm.fr.
Web: trianglehifi.com.
US distributor: Antal Audio Group, 32 DIX Ave., Glens Falls, NY 12801.
Tel: (503) 970-8531
Web: antalaudio.com.

JULIEN FERNANDEZ

The speaker's 40th anniversary designation refers not to the Antal but to the company: Triangle was founded in 1980 and turned 40 at the peak of the pandemic. The speakers celebrating that anniversary weren't finished until earlier this year. The 40th Anniversary series, which also includes a standmount, the Comète, is third highest in the company's 6-series passive-speaker lineup.

The Antal, in one form or another, has been around since 1994, which means that we *could* be celebrating the Antal's 30th birthday, with about the same accuracy as the company's 40th. There have been eight versions since the Antal's introduction, including this one.

The differences between the Antal 40th and the standard Antal—called the Antal Ez and still in production—are substantial. In place of the Ez's titanium tweeter dome, the 40 uses a lighter, more rigid anodized-magnesium one that's said to provide higher efficiency, lower distortion, and better directivity than the standard dome. The two tweeters employ the same compression-horn technology.

The second major change can be found in the new bass drivers. The 40s are said to use a more elaborate and stiffer paper membrane in that driver, made of two types of wood pulp, flax, and carbon fiber, and a bigger, more powerful magnet assembly; the new driver is said to deliver tighter, better-defined bass. The 40th Anniversary Antal's is specified to extend to 40Hz, same as the regular Antal.

When it comes to the cones in the all-important midrange, at Triangle only one material will do: paper. In an email exchange, Hugo Decelle, Triangle's general manager, explained, "Triangle has always favored paper membranes because we believe it's the material that can most accurately reproduce the human voice. So, for 40 years, Triangle has conducted research on cellulose pulp. And recently, we've brought another innovation to our paper material. We now use a natural cellulose pulp—an untreated paper—so it's lighter and produces more realistic timbres than its predecessor." Get the vocals right, goes the theory, and you'll have a midrange to live for, timbres possessing authenticity that synthetic materials such as polypropylene, aramid fiber, and various metals can't match.

Triangle believes so much in the superiority of paper as a cone material that even its $60,000/pair flagship Magellan Grand Concert speakers use it.

"There will always be new ways, as technology permits, to

1 See stereophile.com/content/monitor-audio-silver-500-7g-loudspeaker.

2 In a sidebar to a review of a JMLab speaker—JMLab is a Focal marque—Jonathan Scull and Focal founder Jacques Mahul have an interesting discussion about national hi-fi sound character. See stereophile.com/content/jmlab-micron-micron-carat-loudspeaker-jacques-mahul-interview.

perfect the material and shape of the paper," Decelle continued. "We do a lot of very precise optimization work on the pleats and profile of our cones. Each new generation of loudspeaker sees the shape of its midrange cone slightly modified to improve certain frequencies. The Antal 40th has the most optimized midrange cone ever developed at Triangle."

Other improvements over the standard Antal include better internal wiring (borrowed from the company's one-step-up Signature series) and a more rigid cabinet, with higher density MDF panels used in both the Signature and the top-of-the-line Magellan series.

Every Triangle speaker, from the cheapest to the most expensive, is designed at the company's workshop in Soissons, France; most are built there. Why not Asia? "That's a loaded topic," Decelle said. "But we decided to continue to build our speakers in France. We even repatriated some of our other building projects. There are two reasons for that. Building locally gives us a level of quality we can't get offshore. In France, we have speaker builders that have been with us for over 30 years. It's their career choice. They know what the quality of every piece should be, and they have access to state-of-the-art quality-control facilities. It's they who determine if our speakers meet our standards acoustically and cosmetically before they leave the plant.

"The other reason we build in France is social. We want to grow our business locally and create local jobs. I consider it our duty as a society, and me, as a citizen of where I live, that company and country prosper in tandem. Plus, the COVID situation has changed things. International transportation costs have become so costly that keeping our manufacturing in Europe has given us back an economic edge."

La préparation

I put even more importance on my first impression of a new piece of equipment than on my first impression of people, and that starts with the unboxing (of equipment, not people). Here, the Triangles broke new ground. They were the tightest-packed product I've ever tried to yank, shake, hand-bop, and slide out of a box. There was such an absence of wiggle room between each speaker and its armor that I had to use a letter opener to wedge it out surgically. Forget the speakers; the *packaging* was optimized.

I took that as a good first sign, followed by another. Each carton contained a user's manual (Yay! times two) and a gold-colored cleaning cloth embroidered with Triangle's snazzy 40th Anniversary logo. Too pretty and pristine to use, I thought. That same gilded logo was also emblazoned tastefully on the speaker's protective nylon shipping hood and on a gold plate on the front baffle. Even

MEASUREMENTS

I used DRA Labs' MLSSA system, a calibrated DPA 4006 microphone, and an Earthworks microphone preamplifier to measure the Triangle Antal 40th's behavior in the farfield. I used an Earthworks QTC-40 microphone for the nearfield responses. This mike has a 1/4"-diameter tip, so it will not obstruct the radiation from the driver diaphragms or port.

The Antal 40th's anechoic sensitivity is specified as a high 92dB/W/m. My B-weighted estimate was 3dB lower, at 89dB(B)/2.83V/m, though this is still higher than average. Triangle specifies the Antal 40th's impedance as 8 ohms, with a minimum magnitude of 3 ohms. Using Dayton Audio's DATS V2 system, I measured an impedance magnitude (fig.1, solid trace) that reached a minimum value of 2.5 ohms at 132Hz. Compounding the need for current from the partnering amplifier, the electrical phase angle (dotted trace) is occasionally high. As a result, the effective resistance, or EPDR,[1] lies below 2 ohms between 66Hz and 145Hz and between 180Hz and 645Hz, and the minimum value is 1.11 ohms at 93Hz. While, to some extent, the drive difficulty will be ameliorated by the moderately high sensitivity, the Antal 40th will work best with amplifiers that don't have problems driving low impedances.

The traces in fig.1 are free from the slight discontinuities that would imply the presence of resonances of various kinds. However, when I investigated the enclosure's vibrational behavior with a plastic-tape accelerometer, I did find some resonant modes. Fig.2 is a waterfall plot calculated from the accelerometer's output when it was fastened to a sidewall level with the upper woofer. (This was the liveliest of the enclosure's panels when I rapped them with my knuckles.) Modes can be seen at 336Hz and 523Hz, both of which are relatively high in level. Their Q (Quality Factor) is high, which will work against audibility.

The saddle centered at 37Hz in the impedance magnitude trace indicates that this is the tuning frequency of the flared port at the bottom of the front baffle. The port's response, measured in the nearfield (fig.3, red trace), peaks at the tuning frequency. While the upper-frequency rolloff is disturbed by a small peak just below 200Hz, the rolloff is otherwise smooth and

1 EPDR is the resistive load that gives rise to the same peak dissipation in an amplifier's output devices as the loudspeaker. See "Audio Power Amplifiers for Loudspeaker Loads," *JAES*, Vol.42 No.9, September 1994, and stereophile.com/reference/707heavy/index.html.

Stereophile Triangle Antal 40th Impedance (ohms) & Phase (deg) vs Frequency (Hz)

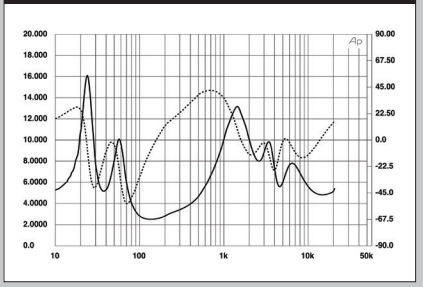


Fig.1 Triangle Antal 40th, electrical impedance (solid) and phase (dashed) (2 ohms/vertical div.).

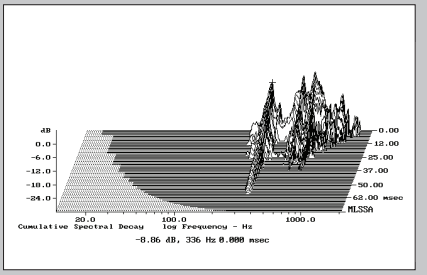


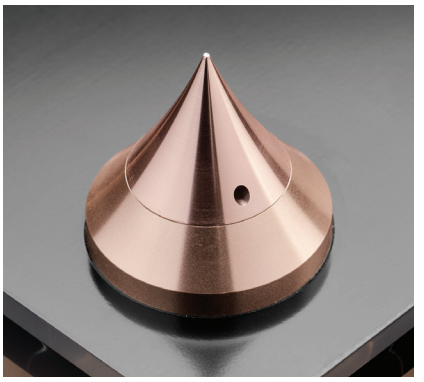
Fig.2 Triangle Antal 40th, cumulative spectral-decay plot calculated from output of accelerometer fastened to center of side panel level with upper woofer (MLS driving voltage to speaker, 7.55V; measurement bandwidth, 2kHz).

the tweeters looked fetching with their 40th anniversary rose-gold trim. With all this ornate celebratory symbolism, not to mention the speakers' immaculate, dark-lacquer Santos Rosewood finish, how could I *not* feel bowtie-and-tuxedo festive? That's how spiffy these speakers looked.

My son said the 40s had the nicest finish he'd ever seen on speakers in our house, at which point I could've sworn I saw my Focals' tweeters roll up in their sockets.

Another touch I appreciated was the option to install metal spikes or rubber feet—rigid metal for more bass, softer rubber for, presumably, more definition and perhaps a little bit less bass.[3] I started with the metal spikes and felt, first, that I didn't have too *much* bass—the speakers are placed far from walls—and second, that the definition was just fine. I kept the spikes.

Triangle recommends a listening positioning at least 2m (6.6') from the midpoint between the speakers, with about 1.5' of space between the speakers and walls. The manual also offers a tip that sounded to me like one of those basic rules we learn early on but need to be reminded of every so often: The closer the speakers are to the front wall, the better the bass output, but also the less wide and deep the soundstage will be. (Especially deep.) As always with a democratic hobby such as ours, it's up to the listener to choose a happy medium.



Immediately after I'd finished positioning the speakers, using Duke Ellington's monophonic *Masterpieces by Ellington* (CD, Columbia CK 87043) to lock in the central image, I noted two things. First, that the central image remained tight and focused even when I tilted my head off axis—a big sweet spot, then. Second, I noticed that the speakers' surfaces looked like the crime scene of a slam-dunk criminal case, coated in the glistening grease of fingerprints. I grabbed one of those dainty 40th Anniversary cleaning cloths—the ones I said were too pretty to use—and got straight to work rubbing out all evidence that I'd ever met those speakers. It wasn't me; I didn't do it.

The Antal 40th Anniversary Edition is a biwirable, front-ported, four-driver, three-way design. With a specified sensitivity of 92dB/m and a nominal 8 ohm impedance, I expected the Triangles to be easy to

3 It's also true of course that spikes are more necessary to penetrate carpets and rugs to make firm contact with the subfloor whereas rubber works just fine on solid floors, and does less damage than spikes.

measurements, continued

free from resonances in the midrange. The sum of the two woofers' nearfield outputs (blue trace; both woofers behave identically) has the expected minimum-motion notch at the port tuning frequency, which is when the back pressure from the port resonance holds the cones still. The woofers' response slopes down gently above 150Hz, with some overlap with the nearfield output of the midrange unit (green trace). The latter has a small peak at 200Hz.

The complex sum of the Antal 40th's midrange, woofer, and port responses is shown as the black trace below 300Hz in fig.4. The peak at 200Hz will be due to the midrange unit's output, and there is no sign of the boosted midbass region typically seen as a result of the nearfield measurement technique. The Triangle speaker's low-frequency alignment is therefore overdamped, favoring articulation over ultimate bass weight.

The black trace above 300Hz in fig.4 shows the Antal 40th's quasi-anechoic farfield response averaged across a 30° horizontal window centered on the tweeter axis. While the tonal balance is even from 300Hz to 10kHz, many small peaks and dips are present. The tweeter is 41" from the floor, which is 5" higher than what we have found to be the ear height of a typical listener. I queried RS about the height of his ears; he responded that sitting on his "somewhat saggy-cushioned sofa," his ears were level with the midrange unit. He noted that he didn't hear any change in tonal balance when he raised himself higher. I repeated the farfield response measurement on the midrange axis. It was identical to the tweeter-axis response in fig.4, confirming RS's observation.

Fig.5 shows the Antal 40th's horizontal

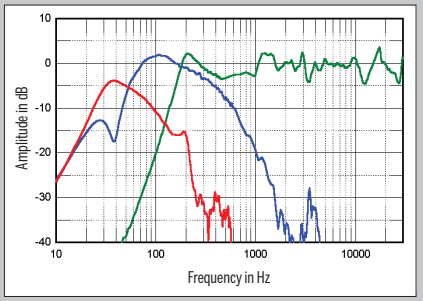


Fig.3 Triangle Antal 40th, acoustic crossover on tweeter axis at 50", corrected for microphone response, with the nearfield responses of midrange unit (green), woofers (blue), and port (red), respectively plotted below 450Hz, 350Hz, and 550Hz.

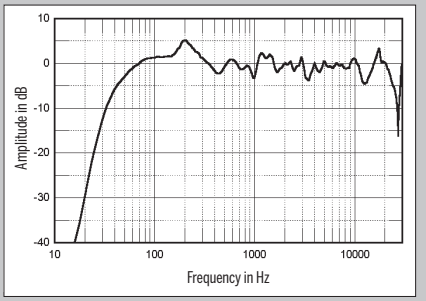


Fig.4 Triangle Antal 40th, anechoic response on tweeter axis (black) at 50", averaged across 30° horizontal window and corrected for microphone response, with the complex sum of the nearfield midrange, woofer, and port responses plotted below 300Hz.

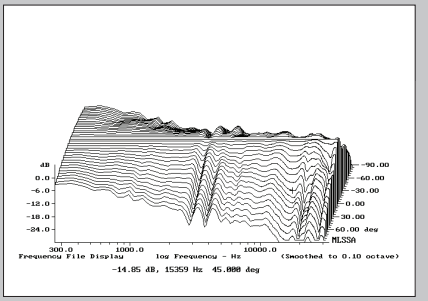
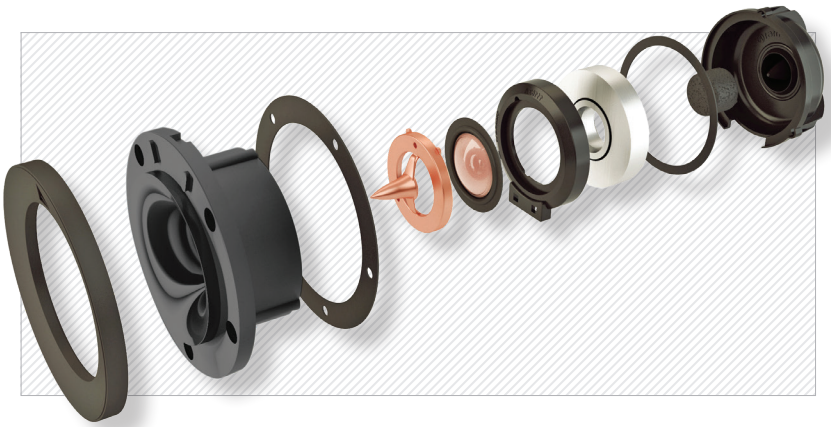


Fig.5 Triangle Antal 40th, lateral response family at 50", normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 90°–5° off axis, reference response, differences in response 5°–90° off axis.

drive, including with my 37Wpc Grandinote Shinai integrated. It was, at least at volumes below the pain threshold, where I prefer to listen.



L'écoute

By my third day of listening, my first impression of the Triangles—that they possibly lacked some bass bloom and had an expressive midrange—was replaced with a more nuanced, better-informed understanding of the speakers' character. Was this reassessment a case of product habituation? Final break-in? A squirt of this, a dash of that? You tell me. All I know is that the following comments reflect listening that began in earnest on day 3.

I relistened to Norwegian trumpetist Nils Petter Molvær's Middle East–infused album *Khmer*, a 1997 ECM recording whose fusion of jazz and electronica was unheard of at the time at ECM (CD, ECM 1560 537 798-2). Soundwise, it's an ECM recording: airy and spacious, uncompressed, with some added reverb but otherwise a bit dry, with realistic timbres, all traits the Triangles seemed to accentuate.

Well, yes and no. They did and they didn't accentuate those traits. The Antals didn't, I eventually concluded, *exaggerate* anything. Rather, they bared the midriff, so to speak, bringing midriff—midrange—sounds into focus. Even the smaller, secondary sounds, the hardly noticeable stuff, had a transiently tactile corporeality.

The repeated fragment of panned dulcimer at the beginning of the title track appeared to *pluck* the air in front of me. Molvær's trumpet sound was a morphing amalgam of air, metal, shape. It gesticulated. I could peer into its sinewy, shifting shapes, see the subtle sonic contours of its twisting-in-the-wind tones. The rushing breath exiting the trumpet's bell had sandpaper texture. What struck me most was the way the trumpet's sound spread like a spilled drink across the sky, flooding it.

The Antals imbued the midrange with a projector-like clarity against which images and musical lines appeared in physical, protuberant relief. The Triangles revealed gobs of detail but never threw them at me. They were also oh, so transparent. It was the first time I recalled being drawn to the sound of a percussive instrument beating softly from the left speaker at precisely the same time as a louder and previously overpowering one is beating from the right.

Hits from the bass drum were clean yet bold, with good impact and sustain. They may not have moved the air like my Focals but

measurements, continued

dispersion, normalized to the response on the tweeter axis, which thus appears as a straight line. Other than some irregularities in the mid-treble region, the contour lines in this graph are evenly spaced, suggesting a steady, well-controlled narrowing of the speaker's radiation pattern as the frequency increases. The Triangle's dispersion in the vertical plane, shown in fig.6, confirms that the tweeter-axis response is maintained 5° below that axis. A suckout at 4kHz develops above the tweeter axis, which implies that this is the crossover frequency between the midrange unit and the tweeter.

In the time domain, the Antal 40th's step response (fig.7) indicates that the tweeter and midrange unit are connected in negative polarity, the woofers in positive acoustic polarity. The tweeter's output arrives first at the microphone, followed by that of the midrange unit, then that of the woofers. The positive-going decay of the midrange unit's output smoothly blends with the positive-going start of the woofers' step, but the decay of the woofers' output is disturbed by some oscillations that correlate with ridges of delayed resonant energy in the speaker's cumulative spectral-decay plot (fig.8). The plot's decay is clean, however, in the region covered by the horn-loaded tweeter.

The Triangle Antal 40th's frequency balance is flat and even,[2] its dispersion in both planes is well-managed, and the low frequencies are extended if overdamped. The presence of resonances in the region where hearing is most sensitive might be problematic, although their high Q will make them less audible. I could hear the effect of this behavior with the noiselike MLSSA signal, but it will be less audible with music, where it might be outweighed by the loudspeaker's positive attributes.

—John Atkinson

2 Though the Antal 40th's farfield frequency response has many small peaks and dips, my experience has been that these tend to balance each other when it comes to tonal-balance perception.

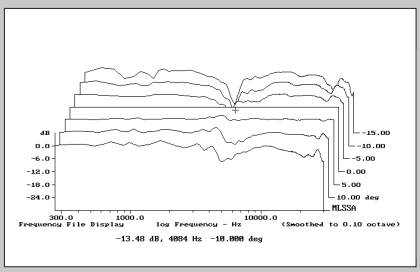


Fig.6 Triangle Antal 40th, vertical response family at 50", normalized to response on tweeter axis, from back to front: differences in response 15°–5° above axis, reference response, differences in response 5°–15° below axis.

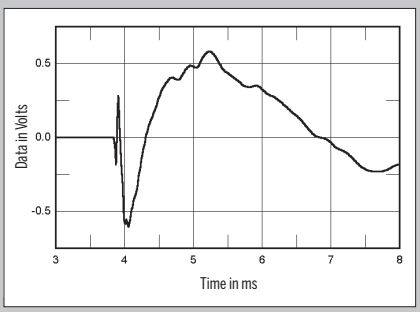


Fig.7 Triangle Antal 40th, step response on tweeter axis at 50" (5ms time window, 30kHz bandwidth).

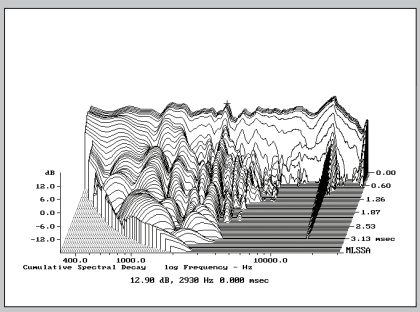


Fig.8 Triangle Antal 40th, cumulative spectral-decay plot on tweeter axis at 50" (0.15ms risetime).

nor did they have the slight bass overhang of said Focals powered by the Shinai. The double bass booms seemed lobbed from some unknown source, off screen. I heard no telltale vestiges tying them to the Triangles' cabinets. But the Focals' slight midbass warmth could also make the Triangles, fed by the same amp, sound a tad overdamped.

Across *Khmer*, I consistently heard solid imaging and natural timbres. The Antals delivered an expansive, spherelike soundstage, throughout which sounds suddenly popped in or slid along the circular periphery of a multilevel 3D environment. This was no simple wide and deep soundstage; this was *orbital*. But wide and deep it was, as well. I heard sounds, mostly studio effects, stretch out beyond the speakers' sides by as much as 4'.

The Antals' transparency was also notable on "Chubb Sub" from Medeski Martin & Wood's *Last Chance to Dance Trance (perhaps): Best of (1991-1996)* compilation (CD, Gramavision GCD 79520). This track is a bass-thrashing juggernaut of three enmeshed instruments—organ, double bass, and drum—that seem to have been recorded one on top of the other to give the music an unstoppable barreling-down momentum. In my mind the sound also had a cartoon corollary: the amorphous dust cloud surrounding Peanuts' Pig-Pen, only now there was less dust in that cloud and more light. The Triangles didn't *quite* replicate the image height or the bulging, air-chuffing beat of the Focals, but they did, in exchange, offer slightly clearer sightlines into the paths charted by each instrument. Musical storylines were abundant. Double bass notes wove dexterously through the melee. Organ notes beamed with color and kept their composure despite their manic pace. The hi-hat took its place amid the percussive jungle. There was a lot going on, but it wasn't messy. There was that midrange focus again, lit up and orderly.

The title track showed again how even small sounds stand their ground, jutting out from the background fully formed. Chris Wood's rapid finger plucks on his double bass had amplified flapping-hummingbird tactility, his fingertips visibly shaped by the soundwaves that shaped them, images bathed in harmonic structure. The notes in Medeski's spiraling romps were each distinct and accounted for.

When, later in the song, Medeski's organ has given way to a piano, the piano sounded nothing like the organ. It shouldn't, of course, and usually doesn't, but here the timbres that differentiate them sounded particularly pronounced. Was all this intense timbre and transparency effect—this heightened see- and hear-through quality—validation of Triangle's proprietary midrange paper membrane?

Which reminded me: Hugo had said how, for 40 years, Triangle has worked to improve its paper cones to get those vocals just right. I put on Patricia Barber's "Let It Rain" from her *Companion* CD (CD, Premonition/Blue Note 5 22963 2), which consists of a pianoless Barber singing alongside John McLean and his acoustic guitar.

First thing I noticed: air. Lots of it. Inside the venue, the crowd, Barber's mouth, around the instruments, there was a lot of breathing room, which consequently created more room for notes to travel, expand, mutate. Nothing sounded choked or stunted but rather fully harmonically developed. A note's initial attack produced a reverberant aftershock that fanned out in a broad arc from the sound's epicenter. Barber's voice was unusually intimate; I'd add *whispery* if its sultriness wasn't so uninhibited, so I'll add *hot* instead. But not only in the sense of sexy—I sensed cushions of heat emanating from her breath. And when she beseeches the Lord for rain and implores, "Can't you make those downtown hopping, grocery shopping, perky, plodding, cheerful folks go away," which launches the crowd into what sounds to me like self-conscious laughter, her Ps are potent, hitting that microphone diaphragm like Olivia Newton-John sparring on a punching bag. They were *physical*.

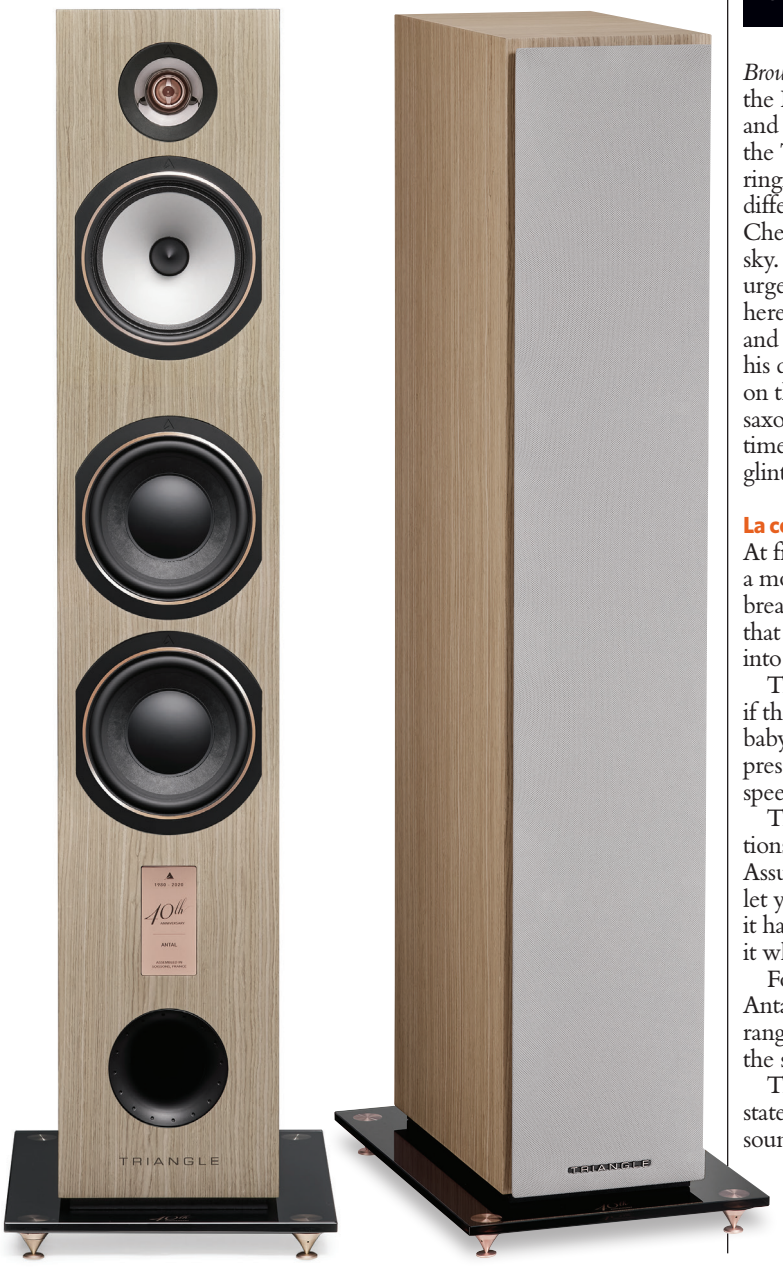
McLean's guitar plucks sounded alive and right in front of me, in full view. His breathing, the air encircling him, his body movements—there was no mistaking that I was in the presence of a person sitting with an acoustic guitar in his lap, even if I couldn't see him. When he hit his hand on the body of his instrument, the sound exploded in a flashbang of reverberation. Compared to my Focals, the hand booms were less viscerally boomy—there seemed to be less lower-midrange energy—but more harmonically layered.

Similarly, Diana Krall's piano notes in "Dreamsville," from Dave Grusin's *Two for the Road: The Music of Henry Mancini* (CD, GRP Records CGRD 9865), produced realistically rattling initial attacks then colorful strings of floating notes that wafted like weightless beads in front of me. Krall's voice was balanced so well between its throaty fundamentals and delicate, breathy harmonics that it effectively mapped out her whole head, giving it spectral depth

complete with facial sides. Background violin strings were laid out like silk curtains of cascading color.

Another voice well served by the Triangles was Nina Simone's, from the 2021-remastered version of her album *Little Girl Blue* (CD, BMG BMT867147). Her voice, now anchored between the left speaker and the midpoint between the speakers, was ceiling-high, big-mouthed, fleshy, and anatomically explicit. It was so up close and descriptively etched out that I felt I could see inside her mouth, past her uvula, right to her vocal cords. I couldn't recall Simone ever sounding this vulnerable, her music filled with this much pathos. When she segued into her phrase-ending vibratos, their last, quietest oscillation was as discernible as their first, louder one and more poignant. The tinkling right side of her piano was illuminated in its own self-reflecting halo.

Finally, more vocals, now Don Cherry's Tibet-inspired chants, which bookend the side-long track "Chenrezig" from his album *Brown Rice* (LP, Horizon SP-717). What the Triangles gave up to the Focals in image height, they gained in focus and detail. Again—and this must be a consequence of the translucence conferred by the Triangles' paper cones—the reverb from his voice, as well as the ringing of the song-opening chimes, paved the air in an array of differently angled echo-lanes, lifting the dark along their lengths. Cherry's trumpet blasts shot like beams of light that electrified the sky. Hakim Jamil's double bass notes rumbled with substance and urgency, while the frantic drum taps, recorded a little anemically here, so they sound more tippity-tap than boom-boom, had body and unrelenting purpose. I imagined Billy Higgins hunched over his drum set, sweat pouring down his face as he refused to let up on that crazy-fast beat for even one second. Frank Lowe's tenor saxophone sounded appropriately honky, husky, and brassy. At times, I got the impression of seeing glimpses of the sax's surface glint as it moved.



ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Analog sources Rega P5 turntable with RB700 tonearm and Audio MusiKraft Denon DL-103 cartridge.
Digital sources Simaudio Moon 260D CD transport, Cambridge Audio EVO 150 all-in-one player (used as DAC).
Preamplification Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Signature phono preamp.
Integrated amplifier Grandinote Shinai.
Loudspeakers Focal Aria K2 936.
Cables Digital: BIS Audio Maestro (RCA S/PDIF). Interconnect: Moon Audio Silver Dragon (RCA). Speaker: Audience Studio One. Power: Shunyata Research Black Mamba CX, LessLoss DFPC.
Accessories Shunyata Research Venom PS8 power conditioner; a component rack and wood plinth stand (under turntable) whose brand names are lost to time. —**Rob Schryer**

La conclusion

At first, the Triangle Antal 40s' presentation destabilized me. Then a moment came when I *got* them. How much of that was due to break-in or the habituation process, I still can't say. What I *can* say is that after a few days of listening, my mind has completely bought into the illusion they weave.

The Antal 40's sonic balance is akin to what might be expected if the Focal K2 936s and the Monitor Audio Silver 500 7Gs had a baby, and that baby's main features included a mix of the low-end presence and image corporeality of the Focals with the transient speed and midrange clarity of the Monitor Audios.

The Triangles reveal *so much* of a note—its tone, pathway, variations, and aftereffects—as to make one note sound like several. Assuming the rest of your system is up to snuff, the Antal 40s will let you hear an inordinate amount of what's on the record. I found it hard to imagine, as I listened, that I was missing anything. I love it when that happens.

For its high level of transparency and vivid timbral colors, the Antal 40s have the spirit of a coral reef. The Antal's paper midrange is a smashing success, well flanked by the performances of the speaker's high- and low-end drivers.

The Triangles lifted me to those high-water–mark, daydreaming states. They became a new frame of reference of what audiophile sound can be.

When I returned to the Focals after a long period of not listening to them, my first thought was that they sounded just a bit bloomy in the lower midrange and dark in the mids. But I knew that told only half the story. ■