

Starting out, I've picked up a Mark Levinson 5805 all-in-one integrated. This is about \$10k MSRP, including DAC and phono. Maybe it's a bit above the Antal's price point, but not stratospheric. With the 5805, the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal had all the wonderful sounds that an audiophile quality solid state set up can provide. Imaging was marvelous and tight, bass had authority – within the limitations mentioned above– and they sounded great with both digital and vinyl. All vinyl duties fell to my Rega P3 with both a Hana SH and a Dynavector 10x5 cartridge. The Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal was up to the task of creating an immensely satisfying audiophile experience with a total system cost under \$20k, but a little outside the typical price point most folks would use for these speakers.

Going further up market, the Mark Levinson 5805 can be run in “amp-only” mode. It was then paired with a Backert Rhumba Extreme 1.3 preamplifier with the 1.4 upgrades, a Parasound JC 3 jr phono, and a LampizatOr Golden Tube Atlantic TRP DAC. The Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal responded well to the introduction of tubes into the system, taking that special sauce and passion to the next level. Imaging gained more 3D qualities and instrument placement became tighter. The speaker disappearing act was a slight improvement over the 5805, but very slight as the 5805 Houdini act was excellent.

If you haven't had a chance to hear a tube output DAC from LampizatOr, SW1x or similar converter, you really owe it to yourself to check one out. In this system digital was better than vinyl with the LampizatOr; with the 5805 phono stage driving the Rega digital and analog were pretty close, just a little different in character. With the LampizatOr, digital was cleaner, clearer, and imaged better than vinyl, though vinyl still had the analog “thing.” The engagement with the music was greater with digital.

The Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal did start to run into its upper limits of performance in this system. The Antal still sounded amazing, but diminishing returns had certainly set in. Coming back down from on high, I swapped out the 5805 with a First Watt J2. This 25 watt Class A amp from Nelson Pass is one of my favorite solid state amps at any price point. Coming in at \$4k and available on the used market for about half that if you look hard, the J2 is a bit light on the bass, but is magical in the midrange, and I mean magical.

With a extra big helping of special sauce, this amp was my favorite pairing with the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal. Yeah, the Backert and Lampizator are still above the typical price point, but the J2 is definitely a reasonable amp pairing and though the bass did get a little lighter compared to the immense power reserves from the 600VA Mark Levinson, the warmth, tone, and magic with the J2 is hard to find fault with and really highlighted what the Antal does so well. The midrange just sang in the system and I could listen for hours and hours with both vinyl and digital.

Finally, I wanted to try something lower on the totem pole. Enter the Schiit Ragnarok and Yggdrasil. I didn't play any vinyl on the system, though I do have a Schiit Mani available. This was more a reality check with an electronics rig in the \$3500 range, putting total system cost under \$10k. The Yggdrasil sounded great, not LampizatOr great of course, but that DAC is five times the price. The Yggdrasil was on par with the Mark Levinson 5805 DAC, in my opinion, and did all the things expected of a quality DAC in the \$2000+ price point. The Ragnarok just isn't as resolving as the other amps in the review, and to be fair I don't expect it to be. For it's \$1,500 price point it's darn good, but imaging became more 2D and the curtain was pulled back a bit on the Antal's disappearing act.

## TRIANGLE 40TH ANNIVERSARY ANTAL CONCLUSIONS

You know a meal is amazing when you ask for more bread to wipe up the last remnants of sauce on the plate, because licking the plate would be rude. For the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal loudspeakers I would prefer some bread, but I'd lick the plate if I had to – rudeness be damned. This speaker activates my musical palate like Pavlov's dog.

Drooling aside, this speaker balances audio qualities like honestly no other speaker I've had the pleasure to review. Is it the best speaker I've reviewed? That's a tough call as design choices between speakers create such different characters. I've had speakers with better bass, better imaging, better tweeters, etc. But I've not had any speakers, including those at twice this price point, with a better midrange. The balance of this speaker is simply stellar and I can't praise it enough.

If I wasn't on the hunt for a speaker at 3-4 times this price point I would buy this speaker – in a heartbeat. The value proposition for this speaker is stratospheric. If you are in the market for a speaker under \$5k, hell a speaker under \$10k, you need to check out the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal. I can't recommend this enough and it gets my vote for value product of the year.



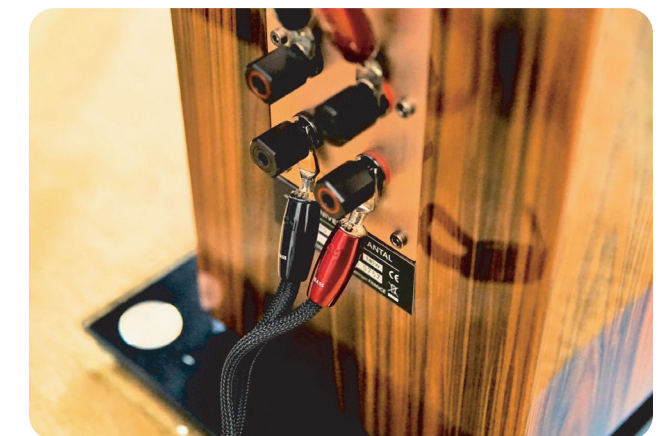
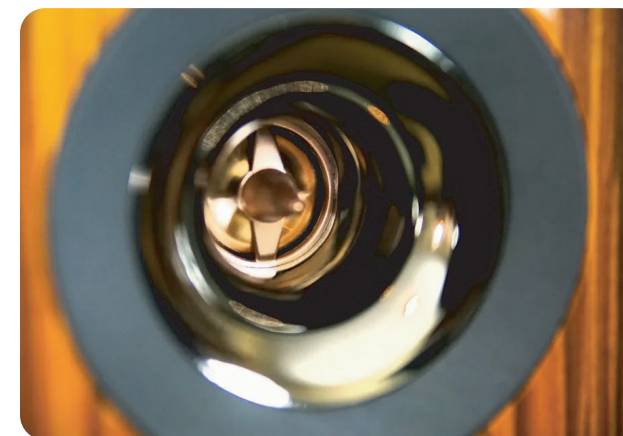
# TRIANGLE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANTAL



The French are people of passion – their food, wine, art, and cars...okay, maybe not their cars. But the rest of it points to a culture of passion and artistry. So, when I had the opportunity to review the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal Loudspeakers from France, I was excited to see how much of that passion would be on tap. *Words and Photos by Graig Neville*

Maybe it's just me not being as familiar with the European brands, but French names like Focal, Atohm, Atoll, and JMF have been making their way into my headspace lately. US distributor Frank Gazzo of the Antal Audio Group reached out to us here at Part-Time Audiophile; besides Triangle they also distribute Electrocompaniet and Soullines. But first he wanted us to check out Triangle and the 40th Anniversary Esprit line that includes the Antal and Cometé, the former being the floor-stander and the latter being a bookshelf monitor.

I've been reviewing a variety of gear lately, but I seem to be gravitating toward floorstanding speakers that retail for \$15k/pair and below. Coming in at \$4,700/pr, the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal loudspeakers cost just a little less than the loudspeakers I've been reviewing lately. Maybe this is a new trend, I don't know. But what I do know is that I was not pleasantly surprised—I was downright SHOCKED– at how great these speakers sounded right out of the box. This was before I had been informed of the pricing and I remember thinking, “How much do these cost? They sound fantastic!” I was honestly expecting something closer to \$7-8k. Here's why.



## INSIDE THE TRIANGLE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANTAL

The fit and finish of the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal loudspeakers has a lovely wood veneer with a high polish lacquer. The attention to detail on the construction is excellent, better than several speakers I've reviewed that cost \$10k or more. I know this doesn't affect the sonics, but if the attention to detail in the cabinet construction is this high, you would hope the attention to detail in the drivers, crossover, and sonics is similar.

Sonically, I'll dig deeper below, but the short version is that this is an astonishingly good medium-size floor-stander that has excellent midrange imaging, a smooth treble, and satisfying bass. The blend of design choices to achieve this sonic package is an impressive



piece of engineering. Folks get all woozy and weak in the knees at cost-no-object designs, and pushing the envelope of what's possible is important in an industry. But, engineering a great design on a budget is often much more challenging.

For example, when the Ford Pinto was in production the car was built as cheaply as possible. This doesn't sound sexy, but to put things in perspective, Rolls Royce had a water pump that cost \$40. That seems reasonable for a car at the pinnacle of the automotive industry, but it was a water pump. Ford engineers designed a water pump that cost \$1.40 that performed the same function. A water pump has zero effect on car performance, as long as it works. To me the Ford engineers were pretty impressive, and that's the kind of engineering that Triangle has seemed to stuff into the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal. The stuff that matters, at an excellent price point.

Back to Triangle. As manufacturers of their own drivers, they have an in-house scalability and efficiency that most other speaker designers can't enjoy. I'm sure this helps with their price points. What most impresses me about the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal are the sonic design choices and execution the design team made on this speaker, which has been in production in various forms since 1997. It's a speaker that does everything well with very few shortcomings.



## WHAT'S IN THE BOX

There's no denying that the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal loudspeaker is a well executed bass reflex 3-way box speaker. Top-mounted tweeter, phase plug paper midrange below that at about ear height, and two bass drivers with a forward firing port do not make for a sexy or compelling story, but the French are nothing short of passionate. French food isn't anything particularly special until you add the sauce.

Triangle has taken a strong design and added the sauce, and oh is that sauce special. At the top, both physically and figuratively, is the tweeter. It's not like anything I've seen in a speaker before. The rose gold magnesium dome tweeter is pseudo horn-loaded, which is a departure from Triangle's previous use of a titanium dome. Triangle claims the lightness and stiffness of the magnesium is an improvement. Triangle then added a phase plug to the tweeter, which their literature implies helps break up beaming, providing a more even dispersion. Rear-firing standing wave energy is broken up by the computer optimized shape behind the diagram. Triangle has put a lot of R&D into this tweeter design and the results are superb.

To my ears, this tweeter is smooth. Cymbals have a nice timbre and natural decay that allows you to listen for hours without fatigue. It's not the sharpest or most pinpoint tweeter I've heard, but that's actually a good thing. Too much treble energy beamed right at your ears sounds amazing and detailed and has this wow factor, and then it's too much. The Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal tweeter is something I can listen to all day.

Playing around with toe-in, the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal is relatively flexible. I settled on the tweeter crossing at a point somewhere well behind my listening position. Pointing straight forward didn't give as precise an image as I wanted and pointed straight at the listening position the treble energy increased, but it actually lost image resolution as the speakers failed to disappear and I could easily hear left and right speakers independently, aka it killed the stereo image for me. So slightly off-axis I think is the way to go.

Moving down to the midrange, Triangle developed a new cone profile for their natural cellulose pulp membrane. Triangle purports that natural cellulose preserves the natural timbre and vocal neutrality, and I concur. A phase plug has been added to help smooth frequency response and a fabric-pleated surround allows for fast response times and control. The midrange is what my immediate first impression queued in on – the midrange naturalness. The midrange is my favorite part of this speaker.

There's a smoothness to the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal that on the one hand reminds me of a quality two-way and on the other hand it reminds me of speakers more than double its price. This is the heart and soul of this speaker and Triangle has instilled the essence of French passion into a wonderful little white pulp driver.

Bass is the foundation of music, and I'm a bass head. The dual bass drivers and forward firing bass reflex port allow for easy placement of the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal. The users manual provides suggestions on placement which worked very well for my room. Set up of the Antal was a breeze, sure there was some tweaking of placement, but with the forward firing port you can put this relatively close to the back wall and still have clear bass and solid imaging. The woofer is a composite of wood pulp, flax, and carbon fiber. (The bass driver in the Comet  is different as it has to cover both the midrange and bass regions.)

Bass is well-controlled and satisfying. The Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal bass won't reach to subterranean levels with authority, but to be fair I would much rather have a tighter more controlled bass with the speaker than a farty one-note bass that many other bass reflex designs try to fake. In the user manual Triangle says that the Antal will play to satisfying levels, but do not expect concert levels of loudness. The bass is the first part of the speaker to give up when played really loud. Now this is not to say that bass isn't present. It is, and it's satisfying, but for you party bass-heads out there you will need a subwoofer. Most normal folks will be perfectly happy with the Antal's bass output – I was, and I'm a dyed in the wool bass head. Did I want more bass? Sure, but there's enough that I could live with the Antal and not feel wanting.

The cabinet for the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal is an interesting design. Triangle has attempted to anchor the bass drivers into the cabinet to reduce unwanted vibration and remove the "boxy" sound. Personally, with the narrow cabinet face and the internal bracing, the Antal is a surprisingly light but acoustically neutral cabinet to my ears. The base coupling to the floor is tempered glass with inserts for spikes or rubber for hard wood floors. The Antal is a fairly narrow speaker and the glass base greatly improves the stability of the speaker in my opinion, without it I would be nervous of it tipping if bumped (looking at you, kids and pets).

Crossover points for the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal are 185 Hz between the bass and midrange and 3.9kHz between the midrange and tweeter. The midrange and bass are 2nd order with the tweeter being 4th order high pass. This allows that sweet, sweet midrange to operate over the critical mid bass to upper vocal range. The rear 5-way binding terminals allowed for bi-wiring my AudioQuest Rocket 88 and Robin Hood cables and are easily tightened by hand, but can accommodate a wrench if necessary. Provisions for tightening to banana plugs are also provided. Finally, the speakers are supplied with magnetized grill cloths if you so choose, but I love the way the speakers look without them.



## THE SPECIAL SAUCE

French food isn't that special, until you add the sauce. Triangle has dolloped a big o' helping of special sauce into the Triangle 40th Anniversary Antal, and its won a special place in my heart. The design choices and the balance of this speaker is nothing short of euphoric. If I was in the market for a \$5k speaker I would buy this – in a heartbeat. It does so many things well and the midrange is simply stunning.

I used a variety of gear on this review, and it's worth making a few comments about that since it points to the character of this speaker. I've read reviews and I've been to shows where a modestly-priced speaker was driven by electronics well outside the speakers price point, and folks waxed lyrical on the greatness of the speaker. This is all fine and good I suppose, but my perspective, and I think many of yours, questions system building, as in how do you go about building a system around a \$4,700 speaker. You certainly don't put \$40k worth of electronics in front of it.