

Headmaster



Beyerdynamic's latest T 70 headphone is all set for sales glory in the marketplace, thinks *Tim Jarman...*

Beyerdynamic has the distinction of producing the longest-lived product in audio history, the DT 48 headphone, which was introduced in 1937 and a variant of which is still in production today. A distant relative of the DT 48, the T 70 headphone reviewed here has the same high-quality feel that all the Beyerdynamic products which I have encountered possess, and even at £450 this alone makes it seem good value for money.

The T 70 is a closed-back design, meaning that as the listener you are effectively isolated from any external noises. The large and soft cloth ear pads make them reasonably comfortable to wear for something so large, and the headband is well padded, too, so long listening sessions are something that can be truly enjoyed rather than simply endured. They never quite 'disappear', but nevertheless after several albums' worth of music the Beyers were no less comfortable than when I first put them on.

The size and isolation properties of the T 70 makes it more suitable for home listening than for use with portables. The plug is of the 'unimatch' variety, a 3.5mm type with a screw-on outer to increase the size to ¼ inch, which covers most applications, but don't let this tempt you into thinking that these phones would be a good partner for an MP3 portable or a mobile 'phone. The 250 ohm impedance is too high for such devices and this, along with the now universal IEC output power limit, results in an annoying lack of available level. Even my Sony MZ-RH1 struggled to make itself heard through the T 70, although some older designs which I tried (WM-D6C Walkman Pro, early personal CD players, etc.) fared better since they provide much more signal.

If your existing amplifier has a headphone socket then you will

find that the high impedance of the T 70 has the opposite effect. Amplifiers with headphone sockets usually take the signal from the loudspeaker terminals, but pass it through a resistor first in order to limit the available power. The balance in values of this resistor and the headphone's own impedance determine the voltage available, and you get more the higher the impedance is, meaning that with most amplifiers it will go very loud.

Sound quality

To level the playing field, I used a Musical Fidelity M1 HPA headphone amplifier connected to a Cyrus CD8 SE 2 CD player for my listening tests, this amplifier has a well-designed output stage which seems to match most headphone types well. The T 70 has an explicit sound which is exceptionally dynamic and agile, although at first I thought it

DETAILS

PRODUCT: Beyerdynamic T 70
ORIGIN: Germany
TYPE: closed-back headphone
WEIGHT: 330g
FEATURES: • 3m single-sided cable with 3.5mm plug and adaptor
DISTRIBUTOR: Beyerdynamic
TELEPHONE: 01444 258258
WEBSITE: beyerdynamic.com

to be bass-light. After some more listening though I was able to resolve this as simply a lack of boom, in fact the T 70 has a fascinating low end which unlike many designs isn't disguised by excessive warmth in the band of frequencies just above it. For headphones this is an unconventional tonal balance, but it's a very good compromise for long term fatigue-free listening.

Speech programmes benefit, too; swapping the CD8 SE 2 for a Yamaha CT-7000 FM tuner showed that the T 70 was quite adept at turning BBC Radio 4 into a private pleasure. Again the voices sounded a little cold at first but once I tuned in (me, not the classic Yamaha), the level of detail present made the experience a very special one indeed.

All headphones produce an exaggerated sense of image and positioning (they are all 'binaural' rather than 'stereo'), but the tightly controlled low end of the T 70 did at least make this less disorientating than it can sometimes be.

Such is the quality of the T 70 that it is hard to find serious fault, although at £450 it is not at all unreasonable to expect perfection. Against this standard, the plastic cable is a bit stiff and sticky and the plug on the end could be nicer – it's perfectly functional and sensibly sized, but it does look a bit cheap compared to the headphones themselves. The supplied case is also a bit of a let down, it's little more than a block of foam inside a soft vinyl bag which adds greatly to the size of the T 70 without necessarily providing much in the way of protection.

Conclusion

If you're buying headphones at this level then the Beyer T 70 simply is a 'must hear'. Many potential purchasers will love the great strengths of this unusual design. ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Clear, explicit sound; taut and detailed bass; German build quality
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Cheap looking lead and plug; poor packaging at the price
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WESAY:** Expensive, but the build, comfort and clarity justifies the lofty price tag
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

