

Jaybird JB-200 Bluetooth headphones

Do big things come in small packages?

by Paul Lester published on 3 October 2008

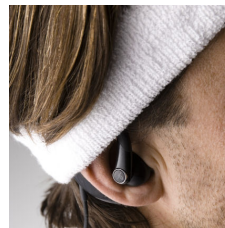
We're a year or so ahead of products that can claim to be the world's first in-ear Bluetooth headphones now, but not so far that companies can't make a big deal of being the "world's smallest". Jaybird is the latest to use this particular brand of advertising spiel and does so by adopting an over-ear approach to a bud design that tends to be popular with sporty types who appreciate the stability and support.

We're not going to get a ruler and a set of scales out so will give Jaybird the benefit of the doubt on this one and were actually quite impressed that they managed to fit Bluetooth connectivity and a battery in a couple of compact over-ear supports. Through the supplied docking cradle the JB-200s offer charge for about 5hrs 30mins of music playback and 6hrs 30mins of talk time.

Ah yes, they also double as a handsfree calling kit.

This particular addition is quite interesting since the omni-directional microphone for picking up your voice is tucked behind one of the earpieces. It still manages to pick up speech very well, at least in quieter environments, but if you're looking to chat while walking down a busy high-street you will find that there's a risk of being drowned out by background noise.

To get this or the music playback features working you'll need to pair the thing with a phone and luckily the process is quite straight-forward. Rubberised controls on the right earpiece help you to do this and offer playback controls to skip back and forth through tracks, play/pause and adjust volume. They are conveniently placed but unfortunately a bit awkward to operate and aren't particularly responsive, requiring a hefty press to activate which may nudge the earphones out of position.



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This could be a problem since the biggest issue we had with the Jaybirds is that to achieve optimum sound they really need to be fitted extremely snugly into position. There are a range of different sized buds to help but we still struggled to get a tight fit, though you do get used to the particular angle and amount of pressure required to do so. Because the process of achieving this is so precise we can see more impatient consumers, or those with peculiarly shaped lugholes, getting rather frustrated by the process. The reason this is so important is because if you do get things just right the sound quality from the ephones is probably the best we've heard from this type of device, but with a loose fit would only qualify as "passable".

In addition to mobile phones or other compatible Bluetooth AD2P devices you can also pick up a dedicated dongle for either an iPod or conventional MP3 player, though this costs extra. We tried out the iPod adaptor and sound quality was very good, offering noticeably more clarity than a straight Bluetooth connection.

VERDICT

In terms of potential the Jaybirds can claim to be the best quality wireless in-ear Bluetooth headphones on the market. This relies on you being able to fit them snugly enough though and some may be unwilling or unable to do so. Handsfree calling is very good in the right environment and considering the stylish design and unobtrusive nature of the ephones we'd have to consider them as up there with the best around.

Thanks to AdvancedMP3Players for the loan of this product.

At a glance

What is it?

Bluetooth in-ear headphones

Good

Impressive audio quality and hands-free operation in the right environment, stylish and compact design

Bad

Achieving the right fit can be a pain, controls a bit awkward to operate

Verdict

If you can get the Jaybirds working as intended they are probably the best of their type around. Otherwise this is a capable though perhaps frustrating solution in the wireless in-ear headphones market

Price 79.99 (£29.99 for iPod/MP3 adaptor)

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10