

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3751/apple-in-ear-headphones-review>

Apple In-Ear Headphones

Can these improve your iPod listening experience?

by Stuart Miles published on 5 January 2009

In acknowledgement that the stock headphones that ship with the iPod aren't the best in the world, can Apple's £54 In-Ear Headphones improve the sound? We get listening to find out.

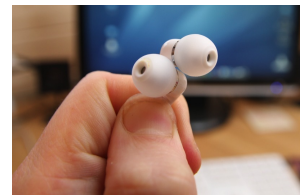
Coming in white, the In-Ear Headphones from Apple are designed to fit in your ear canal like an earplug rather than sit in your outer ear. To make sure you get a perfect fit you get three different sizes of white silicon bud that looks more like a suppository you'd find in a French chemist than something that should be sitting in the box with a pair of headphones.

The white colour scheme is carried through to the triangular case that keeps everything tangle free in your bag. It's all very simple and all very white, which is all well and good for the Apple branding machine (hey look at me I'm listening to my iPod), it's not so great for the dirt and grime of commuting.

If you've already got an iPod and the stock headphones you'll know how easy these things pick up dirt. Now cover that white silicon bit with earwax and even after a week it's not such a pretty story. And yes you do have dirty waxy ears.

Get past the colour scheme and the fitting arrangements and you'll quickly notice a small controller on the right hand cable. It's actually a remote control and mic for owners of the latest iPods. However before you get too excited it will only work with a select few models: the latest 4th gen iPod nano, the 120GB iPod classic, and the 2nd generation iPod touch, that's it. Anything else and it's just a dead clip on the cable. Frustratingly you can't buy it without at a reduced cost.

If you are lucky to have to have one of the latest iPod models then you get volume control,



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play/pause and skip backwards and forward. It all works as you would expect.

So what about the sound? Is it really an improvement over the stock headphones you get in the box? Well of course it is, what did you expect? The extra £35 will buy a richer more mellow sound mainly thanks to the fact that you've got it jammed in your ear that little bit further making for a tight seal that helps reduce other ambient sounds like the bloke next to you coughing and spluttering because he has had to run for the train.

Apple will say the improved sound is thanks to "Two drivers in each earpiece that results in a rich, detailed, and accurate sound reproduction and amazing bass response for all types of music".

In reality and while the sound is good it's not amazing. We tested them against Griffin's TuneBuds headphones and Shure's now slightly older SE420 earphones that will set you back five times the price (£250). Clearly at an unfair advantage the Shure's beat the Apple In-Ear Headphones in every department, but then you would expect them to. Interesting though the TuneBuds, around £7 online, sounded equally as good, suggesting you're paying a lot for those extra silicon plugs to fit your ear and the Apple brand name.

VERDICT

While the Apple In-Ear Headphones sound the part and perform well - it's a nice mellow sound that's a little weak on the bass for me - the problem is that there are other manufactures, like Griffin, doing a better job for a fraction of the cost.

Now you could say that about all Apple products, but when you buy an iPod over a Creative Zen for example you are doing so because of the features and interface rather than just because of the design. Unfortunately for Apple, that logic

At a glance

What is it?

In-ear headphones

Good

Sound, remote control if you are a new iPod owner

Bad

White design is likely to get dirty, white silicon really makes your earwax look orange, remote control only works with latest iPods

Verdict

Good, but you can get cheaper better performing headphones elsewhere

Price £54

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

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doesn't work here.

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