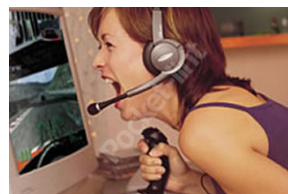


Plantronics DSP-500 USB

by Stuart Miles published on 6 April 2004

While Plantronics hopes to woo the lower end of the market with its Audio range of headsets, it also wants the top end to shortlist its more advanced units. The current top of the range unit is the DSP-500 that comes with its own built-in soundcard for easy installation. Like other units in the range the headset comes with a telescoping microphone boom ensuring the correct positioning in front of your mouth (ideal for speech recognition applications) and the lightweight design means that it won't become too heavy if you plan to wear it for long periods of time. Additionally because it's an all-in-one solution, the headset allows you to keep your hands free to use the computer at the same time. As mentioned above the headset comes with a built in soundcard meaning that you don't have to already have one installed to get this unit working (Laptop owners spring to mind should they require better than basic sound). The 40mm stereo speakers provide a reasonable bassy rumble through the headset although it's more neutral than the upfront bass attack of the Audio 90s featuring 3.5mm plugs. The USB1.0 connection makes for easy installation (all of about 10 seconds) and saves you the hassle of routing around the back of computer trying to find the headphone and mic sockets. Volume is handled by an in-line digital control and there's a mute button if what you are about to say shouldn't be heard. However, lacking from the control unit is a treble, bass and balance controller - although this can be found on the accompanying PC software. The microphone worked well in tests over instant messaging applications as well as recording directly to voice recognition software packages. Because of the adjustable boom mic we found any spurious noise was eradicated from the recording.



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VERDICT

While this isn't the cheapest unit on the block it does provide a simple one-stop solution off the shelf. The included soundcard and USB connection should appeal to businesses or users who don't own a soundcard and the overall unit is good enough for business or gaming applications. It's a shame then that Sennheiser have fought back on quality and price and for £10 less, provide the same type of solution with more expansive ability on the hi-fi side and perhaps inevitably, better looks. If comparative design and music playback is irrelevant though, the 500s will suit mobile business-only use admirably.

At a glance

What is it?

Headset with built in soundcard

Good

Good cans, bypassing the soundcard

Bad

Less bass than the Audio 90s; Sennheisers cheaper

Verdict

For £10 less you can now get the Sennheiser PC155s whose USB interface is optional not compulsory, and get superior headphones.

Price £100

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10