

IPHONE HEADPHONES

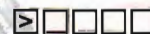
The iPhone's bog-standard headphones, microphone and click-switch is ropey at best, so we've tested six replacement sets



1 BOSE MOBILE ON EAR HEADSET

Price £146.76 inc VAT
Supplier <http://store.apple.com/uk>
Manufacturer www.bose.co.uk

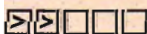
This is one of the few iPhone-specific headsets to eschew an in-ear design. The microphone is large and positioned high on the cable, so it worked well. Annoyingly, there's no button on the microphone housing, so you can't skip tracks or accept calls without reaching for the phone, which is a massive omission. The Bose headset weighs just over 130g, and the earphones are fairly comfortable. They don't block external noise well, so they're best used at a high volume, although this means some sounds are rendered sharp and scratchy. Tracks with bass and treble sounded flat and tinny. With a price of £146, the Bose is a terrible upgrade. **aw**



2 APPLE IN-EAR HEADPHONES

Price £54 inc VAT
Supplier <http://store.apple.com/uk>
Manufacturer www.apple.com/uk

As you'd expect, these Apple headphones are attractively packaged. However, the supplied tips felt noticeably tougher and less comfortable than those of the other sets on test. The remote and microphone assembly allows you to change volume as well as skip tracks and answer calls. Compared with the other earphones on test, these headphones offer poor bass, so music lacks depth and sounds unbalanced and listless. The cheaper Sennheiser MM50 set is far better. **aw**



3 SENNHEISER MM50 IPHONE BLACK

Price £29.99 inc VAT
Supplier www.amazon.co.uk
Manufacturer www.sennheiser.com/uk

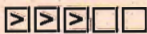
This is the cheapest set on test, and it sounds rather good too. The comfortable small, medium or large tips are made from soft, flexible plastic, and the set is light and easy to wear. The combined microphone and remote is placed 16.5cm away from the earphone, which caused callers to judge the microphone quality as average. Noise was blocked reasonably well, letting us appreciate the detailed effects and mid-range audio; bass in particular is delivered with punch. The click-switch can be hard for your fingers to find, but for £30, this set is simply excellent value for money. **aw**



4 SHURE SE210 & MPA

Price £64.99 inc VAT (SE 210), £28.99 inc VAT (MPA)
Manufacturer www.shure.co.uk
Supplier www.amazon.co.uk

Shure's Music Phone Adaptor (MPA) incorporates a microphone and switch, and gives any set of earphones iPhone-specific abilities. To use the MPA's microphone, you have to stow the cable of the headphones, but as Shure's headphones include a short main cable, this isn't a problem. The SE210 produced its best sound quality when worn over the earlobe, which makes it fussy to fit. The SE210 was second only to the Etymotic EF2 when blocking noise. However, while this level of seclusion results in very detailed audio, it sounded slightly too sharp and cold. **aw**



5 ETYMOTIC HF2

Price £97.82 inc VAT
Supplier <http://store.apple.com/uk>
Manufacturer www.etymotic.com

Etymotic's hF2 is fantastic at blocking noise; even the noise of Central London and its crowded streets was cancelled out. We found the mini-Christmas tree tips incredibly invasive, so we opted for the foam tips. These are fiddly to insert, but they form a tight seal that's comfortable for hours. The sound is beautiful, with a captivating directness and subtlety. We heard previously unheard elements in familiar music tracks. Bass-hunters might want to look elsewhere, but for most people, this set will be aural nirvana. **aw**



6 V-MODA VIBE II

Price \$119.99 ex tax
Supplier <http://store.apple.com/uk>
Manufacturer www.v-moda.com

If the bass of the Etymotic hF2 is suggestive of a wistful twinge of regret – powerful yet specific enough to pierce your heart – then the bass of the Vibe II is the Jack Bauer of bass. There's an amazing sense of listening to real drums, but still plenty of detail in the other frequencies. The separate click-switch places the microphone close to your mouth. All of the comfortable supplied tips block noise reasonably well. The Vibe II has the power to fill you with the urge to listen to your favourite songs. **aw**

