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Subject: What Are Your Top 5 Favorite Headphone Brands?

Posted by [woodfree](#) on Thu, 16 Dec 2010 04:41:25 GMT

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What are the top 5 headphone manufacturers in the business, in your own opinion? To me, it's more important to get a really good set of headphones than to get great speakers because I tend to listen to music by myself. So a good set of headphones is a must for me to enjoy the musical experience at the highest level. Hope you guys can share your experience.

I also tend to listen to my music on a laptop.

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Subject: Re: What Are Your Top 5 Favorite Headphone Brands?

Posted by [Shane](#) on Fri, 17 Dec 2010 05:05:37 GMT

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Depends, what style do you want? Open, closed, in-ear? Price?

The usual suspects for headphones are Grado, Sennheiser, BeyerDynamic, Shure, Ultrasone, Etymotic, JH Audio.

If you are using your PC as a source and are dedicated to headphones, I would invest in a good DAC and dedicated headphone amp. The differences are like night and day.

If you ever have a chance to go to a CanJam meet I suggest you do. There you can listen to many different setups. Just google it for info.

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Subject: Re: What Are Your Top 5 Favorite Headphone Brands?

Posted by [Adveser](#) on Fri, 17 Dec 2010 15:22:10 GMT

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Quote:I would invest in a good DAC and dedicated headphone amp.

That is exactly why I use Sony's. Their 32 Ohm impedance makes the whole thing unnecessary. They were build to work with common outputs of headphones jacks.

In any event, I bus everything into a Amplifier anyway with the pre-amp gutted out of it and the analogue silicon seems to tame a little bit of the harshness and slightly fattens the signal. It has the perfect amount of "tube" like saturation for my tastes.

Is that what you mean?

The stock sound card in my Sony laptop sounds incredibly good at any rate. It operates up to 192Khz and 24-Bit (there is no such thing as real 32-bit audio yet, regardless what any program tells you.)

Naturally, being Sony, the drivers are customized, so I don't think you can compare the same chipset in a different brand. It's a Realtek HD chipset.

I think upgraded Converters is a red herring. It's a clock and not much more. And upgraded Op-amps are just going to change the timbre character of the sound. One is not better than the other after you establish you aren't using junk.

Shane is right. Having the right equipment makes the difference, but at times I think people ending up spending money for something they already have, but in a bigger chassis.

For the record. I'm using XP on a computer designed to work with Vista. Sony did us the favor of writing drivers for it anyway, which is an advantage. The old drivers system XP used was vastly superior because it was totally non-standardized. Vendors had to program their machines. Windows demands compatibility these days. The bells and whistles, which is basically garbage software will not work. Basically it's the same functionality Windows has had since windows 98se, but at 24-bits, a frequency range of 10-96Khz, with 32 channel directsound hardware. That kind of setup was hard to come by back in those days and cost a pretty penny. Now it can be had cheap if you don't care about downgrading to XP. It was good enough to record every DAW album from around 98-2007, so it's good enough for me.

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Subject: Re: What Are Your Top 5 Favorite Headphone Brands?

Posted by [Shane](#) on Fri, 17 Dec 2010 16:01:41 GMT

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I agree no need for a DAC if your soundcard is up to the challenge, but the majority are not, especially in a laptop, otherwise everyone would be running them direct to their speaker systems. Most sound like crap and are noisy.

When I think of headamps, I think of dedicated amps just for headphones. Commercial stuff like Ray Samuels or DIY from Cavalli Audio and AMB. This stuff will outperform anything your getting directly from your PC or old receiver. There are a few preamps out there that have very good headphone outs, like Pinnacle, but they are few and far between.

I was into DIY headamps and have been through several, including the SOHA, Millett variations, and a Stacker II prototype. All sound better than anything else I've tried. These are all tube amps, but there are many SS ones out there and the ones from AMB are notoriously excellent.

If you are seriously interested in headphones I would go on over to Headfi.com and check it out. In my opinion they are more passionate about the art of music reproduction than the speaker crowd.

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