

DIRECT SOUND

EX29 Headphones

'Extreme isolation' from ambient noise is the goal of this unique pair of cans. **Dan Goldstein** cuts himself off...



MUSIC TECH MAGAZINE
Recommended

EX29 HEADPHONES

Manufacturer
Direct Sound

Price **£125**

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For all their many benefits, project studios have a number of problems which are difficult or impossible to rectify. One of these is that, by definition, many such studios are one-room affairs: your vocal microphone is in the same acoustic space as your studio monitors, your computer and, quite possibly, guitar amplification of some kind. All these are sound sources and all contribute to an ambient noise floor which, if you're doing serious recording or mixing, can be unacceptably high.

In these circumstances, headphones play a key role. The problem is that not many cans (not even so-called 'closed' designs) offer enough rejection of ambient noise to be really useful in a one-room setup – which is why the EX29 headphones from Direct Sound merit a closer look...

hum, traffic rumble, intermittent birdsong – whatever you have) simply vanishes. Play a mix into the cans and the whole track seems to spring magically to life. It's not that these cans have better drivers than any phones you've previously used; it's simply that they do a better job of preventing the outside world from interfering with your mix.

One of the welcome side effects of using the EX29s is that, because they reject so much ambient noise, you can monitor mixes at lower sound levels. This reduces the risk of fatigue and, in the long run, of hearing damage.

By no stretch of the imagination are these headphones cheap. But then, neither is the time you spend working on your music. If your mixes are important to you, then they deserve to be heard above the sonic clutter of everyday life. **mtm**

As soon as you put the EX29s on, the whole low-level cacophony of a home studio simply vanishes.

The design is the brainchild of an LA-based session drummer who was frustrated with having to walk constantly between the main studio and control room during sessions just so that he could hear the latest take. He wanted a pair of headphones that rejected the sound of his kit sufficiently for him to hear each take properly in the main studio. When he couldn't find any, he invented his own.

The result is the EX29 headphones – so called because their specially designed earmuffs passively attenuate ambient sound levels by 29dB. While their design wouldn't win any awards for visual aesthetics – and their weight means they aren't the most comfortable headphones in the world – there is no question that they work.

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SUMMARY

KEY FEATURES

- Closed-back headphones with isolating earmuffs
- Anisotropic magnet drivers
- Gold-plated jack and mini-jack plugs

WHY BUY

- Matchless rejection of ambient noise
- Enables mixes to be monitored at lower levels
- Low impedance makes them easy to drive

WALK ON BY

- Can start to feel heavy on the head after a while
- Won't win awards for aesthetics
- Rather expensive

VERDICT

If high background noise is a problem in your studio, these cans should provide an effective monitoring solution.

