

Audio-Technica ATH-E70 £329

At the top of Audio-Technica's IEM pile is the ATH-E70, a multi-driver system for the pro. **Robbie Stamp** gets intra-aural

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KEY FEATURES Driver type: three balanced armature drivers, Frequency Response: 20Hz to 19kHz, Sensitivity: 109dB/mW, Impedance: 39, Weight (w/o cable): 9g, Cable: 1.6m detachable, Accessories: Carry case, 6.3mm adaptor, silicone eartips (XS/S/M/L), Comply foam eartips (M)





FutureMusic

Platinum
Award

THE PROS & CONS

+

Lightweight and comfortable, which means less fatigue than many headphones

Great sound quality for reliable production monitoring

High-quality construction for life on the road and off

Low impedance, so can be driven from a wide range of devices

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Quality costs money (worth considering the E40 and E50)

No amount of jumping dislodged them once I had the right eartips size fitted

The constraints of the IEM format have meant that fidelity has lagged behind that of traditional headphones. Audio-Technica have taken this as a challenge and with their flagship E70 model deliver a triple driver (low/mid/high) earpiece, weighing in at just 9g.

The E70s fit snugly in the outer ear, while the flexible 'memory' cables mould around the ear to hold them in place. Once acclimatised it's easy to forget you're wearing them. No amount of jumping about dislodged them once I'd gotten the right eartips size fitted. The silicone tips were preferable for comfort and sound, though the Comply foam eartips were more effective at isolating noise. The cable detaches from the housings with A2DC connectors, aiding cleaning as well as replacement of a damaged cable/driver.

It's hard to imagine IEMs delivering a sound you can rely on for production duties, be it tracking, sound design or mixing, but the E70s impress from top to bottom. They don't quite rival an equal price set of headphones, especially in the bass, a region in which physics throws up some serious constraints. Subs are audible and there's no low mid scooping to mask poor phase response; the bass is just less punchy than my studio headphones. The mids are clear and free from fatiguing peaks, so the meat of a mix can be

tackled with confidence. The high frequency range is slightly soft in comparison to my main cans, but my hearing quickly adjusted and I was happy using EQ in this region; subtle adjustments come through clearly.

I tested the E70s during tracking sessions with acoustic and electric guitars. The audio fidelity along with the lightness made it (too) easy to record for long periods without ear fatigue. The isolation meant that the headphone amp didn't need to be cranked when standing right next to a screaming guitar amp; I imagine these would fare just as well on stage. Talking of amps, the 39 impedance means the E70s can be driven by anything from dedicated headphone amps to tablets and phones.

The ATH-E70 is an impressive model with quality in build and sound for a range of monitoring needs, from studio to stage. The variability in bass response that plagues in-ear designs, a side-effect of blocking the ear canal, didn't seem to bother me here and it was easy to achieve a reliable balanced sound every time they were worn. I'd not considered using IEMs

off the stage before, but if this is what's on offer then I may reconsider.

Finally, the E40 and E50 (£80 and £160) work well, with the price difference apparent in fitting and sound. The E50 has a brighter sound compared to the E70 with a less meaty low-end, while the E40 appeared to convey a deeper bass, but with 'cheaper' mid/highs, which will reduce use before fatigue sets in. Neither fitted as well as the E70, but they were still easy to fit and stayed secure. Both good value models. **FM**

FM VERDICT

9.2

A premium IEM. The comfort and sound quality make the E70s a serious rival to headphones for many situations.