

Austrian Audio Hi-X65 £319

Critical listening on headphones can be a bit hit and miss. **Jon Musgrave** sizes up this new Austrian-made design

CONTACT WHO: Austrian Audio **WEB:** austrianaudio.com **KEY FEATURES** **FREQUENCY RESPONSE:** 5Hz to 28kHz, **SENSITIVITY:** 110 dBspl/V, **THD (@ 1kHz):** < 0.1%, **IMPEDANCE:** 25 **INPUT POWER:** 150mW, **DIMENSIONS:** 170 x 85 x 200 mm, **WEIGHT:** 0.31kg



Hi-X65 is a new critical listening headphone from Austrian Audio. One of three headphones in the Austrian Audio range, it's the only one that's open backed, and is designed for mixing and mastering rather than recording. The package includes the headphones, two detachable cables (3m and 1.2m), a ¼" plug adapter and carry bag. The rather stylish packaging also has a velcro strap round the outside of the box which is designed to be cut to length and used as a cable tie.

The Hi-X65 is made in Austria, and construction is excellent, with the metal headband and hinges complemented by plenty of memory foam padding. There's also enough flexibility in the hinging so you can fold them to put them away. Further nice features include twist to lock cable fittings and large, clear left/right labelling inside the earcups. Despite being open-back the earcups are still generously proportioned so they sit well over the ear. The overall clamping of the design is also not too tight. This makes them pretty comfy but also means that after a lengthy listening session you won't pick up some kind of injury.

On the technical side, the Hi-X65 incorporates quite large 44mm drivers with a copper clad aluminium voice coil. This lighter configuration is more responsive and coupled with an ultra stiff membrane achieves excellent excursion. What that means in practice is that the Hi-X65 drivers shift plenty of air. So you might conclude that they'd be unpleasantly punchy. But in actual fact the general balance is very good, with excellent depth and although they're not the most upfront sounding headphone I've used, the sound is certainly well suited to mixing, mastering and general listening. There's also no sign of the dreaded bass boost that spoils many designs. The high frequencies are detailed, smooth and clear and although I found the mid range a little subdued, the overall separation and imaging is excellent. In fact, for me, that separation is their most compelling feature and when I A/B'd them with a few other designs I found them to reveal plenty of additional detail.



Priced to compete with some pretty reliable open backed designs

So, are they reliable enough for critical listening? In this capacity for me they work best at moderate levels. That's not to say that they can't go loud and in fact they really hold their own at high levels. It's simply that for me it's easiest to make judgments at lower levels and in that way the Hi-X65 remains engaging and accurate at lower levels, which is ideal.

The Hi-X65 is priced to compete with some pretty reliable open backed designs such as the Sennheiser HD600, Audeze series and Audio Technica ATH-R70x. Nevertheless, headphones can sound surprisingly different, and frequency response charts, if available (which they aren't for the Hi-X65) are not particularly helpful. Given the considerable outlay it's important to try various designs and see what works for you. Nevertheless, I found

the Hi-X65 headphones easy to get used to, plus they're comfortable and very revealing. I've been very impressed by the Austrian Audio products I've tried so far and these excellent headphones add to that. Lovely design, quality construction and great sound. Brilliant stuff. **FM**

FM VERDICT

9.0

If you can afford a pair of headphones solely for mixing and critical listening then the Hi-X65 ticks a lot of boxes

THE PROS & CONS



Reasonably neutral sonic signature

Very comfortable fit

Excellent detail and separation

Detachable cable with locking plug



Mid range is a bit reserved

Quite pricey