



Audeze iSine10

The evolution of headphones has been relatively slow in comparison to other consumer technologies. So when something happens in this neck of the woods, it's hard not to get excited.

I'm quite new to Audeze but, from what I can tell, the company definitely marches to the beat of its own drum. Thus, the boutique electronics manufacturer's announced intention to change the in-ear headphone game didn't come as a surprise.

Last year, when Apple decided to remove all headphone jacks from its latest devices, Audeze was quick to reply with its Cipher cable, equipped with an in-line amplifier, DAC, DSP and (of course), a Lightning connector at the end. It took a huge weight off the shoulders of an Apple guy like me, and left a sweet taste of the good things to come.

The iSine range is being labelled as the "world's first in-ear planar magnetic headphones" and, while there is some debate in the headphone community about that claim, they do appear to be the only in-ears of their kind in production today.

Up until now, in-ear headphone designs have been limited to either the balanced armature or dynamic driver variety.

Of course, you probably know this, being the audiophile you are, just as I'm sure you also know the benefits of planar magnetic design. In short, planars are capable of handling higher power loads with less stress or heat.

They're also easier to drive, which is perfect for the smaller devices we tend to use these days. But, throw in the Cipher cable, blend with an iPhone, and the iSine10s are the most complete and capable in-ears I've ever experienced.

At this price tag, I was definitely expecting to be impressed and the packaging was first to do it: a magnetized plastic box, with snug foam partitions for both the earpieces and the ballistic nylon accessories/carry case.

Nicely compartmentalised for keeping everything together, the case is also magnetized, adding a sleek factor to an overall design concept that essentially

(and this is the *Star Wars* Fanboy who recently watched *Rogue One* in me) look like the wings of a Tie Fighter.

The earpieces genuinely seem like something from George Lucas' fictional world, which makes me feel like I have *Star Wars* on my ears when I'm wearing them. And I love that!

They are the largest in-ear earpieces I've come across and, to keep them in place, Audeze has included three

different sizes of wide-bore silicon tips, two sets of over-ear-styled ear guides and two sets of rubberised 'Earlocks', which were developed in partnership with Sure-fire, a tactical gear company.

Also included are the two un-sleeved, flat cables (one standard, one Cipher), a memory stick with user manual, a small croc clip and a little cleaning brush. The over-ear guides worked best for me to keep the earpieces snug, especially under



the added weight of the Cipher cable.

The sound experience is unlike any other IEM I've heard. The semi-open-back design leaks sound out of the back and lets ambient sound in, so it's not an isolated experience. But it does make for a much richer and wider soundstage with incredible imaging and presence.

On an iPhone, the difference between the traditional cable and the Cipher is immediately noticeable. The Cipher cable brings the sound to life much quicker and easier, and I can hear the whole sound spectrum engage with just a few clicks of the volume button.

It's a very eager and engaging sound signature, with plenty of bottom end and oodles of clarity from the bottom to the top of the volume range. 'Immersive' is a good adjective here.

The traditional analogue cable is no slouch and has nice warmth about it but, in comparison to the Cipher cable, sounds slightly choked and reserved. Perhaps a better choice for more relaxed, extended listening sessions.

A free downloadable app is available and is, quite simply, a 10-band equalizer with two different presets. The speed and precision of the iSine10s create that presence we're all looking for as part of the listening experience.



I really enjoyed my time with the iSine10 – in part because they're unique, in part because they're awesome, and in part because they remind me of *Star Wars*.

I don't think it's fair to compare the iSines to any other IEMs, though: right here and now, these innovative in-ears are one of a kind.

Justin Beachcroft-Shaw



VITAL STATS

Style In-ear, universal fit
 Type..Semi-open back, planar magnetic
 Transducer size 30 mm
 Maximum power handling3 watts
 Maximum SPL >120 dB
 Frequency response 10 Hz – 50 KHz
 THD <0,01% full spectrum @100 dB
 Impedance16 ohms
 Weight 20g

Verdict

Whether the claim of “the world's first in-ear planar magnetic headphones” is true or not, the performance of the iSine10s is simply awesome!

Price R5 995

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OUR RATING: 92/100

