



Audio-Technica ATH-MSR7

In a world so full of AV hardware, from gizmos to gadgets and all the whatchamacallits in between, headphones remain one of my most treasured inventions.

Slip on a pair and suddenly all the needs and wants and yammering on from the other 7 billion idiots around you fades away. For those few moments in life when you're wearing them, it's all about you!

Straight off the bat, the ATH-MSR7s are very good-looking headphones. The red and brown colour option I had on test really appealed to my sense of style. They're an interesting blend of industrial sophistication that, for my money, would look equally as good in a professional environment as they would on the high street.

Although they're mostly plastic, the outer ear cups boast an aluminium finish, which gives them a bit of weight as well as a high-end feel in your hands. The subtle red detailing against the three-toned brushed metal motif reminds me of the interior of a European supercar, while the brown leather on the headband and ear cups makes me think of the seats you might find in a private jet. Luxury mixed with some hardcore engineering.

They're a comfortable, albeit tight fit on my head, and the generous memory foam padding shapes itself wisely on the head with good pressure distribution. The somewhat tighter fit lends itself to their 'portable' nature by limiting their movement on your head when you're on the go, as well as providing good isolation from the various noises of the big city.

There were a few sharp creaks from the plastic that jolted me slightly out of my comfort zone, but the more I wore them, the more that settled down. To seal the portable deal, the ear cups swivel through 90 degrees, allowing for a flat, compact fit in their high-quality nylon carry-case.

Throw in three cabling options, one of which has the one-button remote and microphone for smartphone use, and the ATH-MSR7s seem ready to tackle all of your portable, as well as static, modern needs.

They come with an impressive list of engineering features that include phrases like "Dual-layer Air-control Technology" and "Triple-Vent System" to remind you of just how much research and development Audio-Technica has devoted to the way they reproduce sound.

The immediate sonic impression is that the ATH-MSR7s sound just as good as they look, which is a balance not too many





VITAL STATS

headphone manufacturers get right. Their overall character is one of clarity, with hints of ear candy-type fun for a somewhat sweet but altogether natural-sounding balance.

Their precision is evident throughout the sound spectrum, providing lots of nuance from both voices and instruments. So much so, in fact, that one could be forgiven for comparing them to reference headphones.

This kind of clarity brings with it a certain degree of unforgiving scrutiny that exposes the shortcomings of bad-quality compressions and older recordings. Indeed, the ATH-MSR7s definitely expose those – but like I said, they do have a fun side...

The lower-end, while punchy and controlled, has a definite but humble sub-bass rumble about it, providing a tickle of excitement, especially in big-budget action movie soundtracks, and bass-heavy music tracks.

The upper echelons of the treble are

slightly rolled off, making them sweet without losing any detail or crispness. The midrange sounds perfectly slotted in between the two, so that you never feel like the sound is biased towards any part of the frequency range.

The result is a natural, high-definition sound signature with all the right thrills in all the right places. I did try quite hard to find some sort of criticism about the way they sound, but in truth they deliver such a good combination of clarity and understated fun that there is nothing I found unappealing.

It's tough to find such high-quality headphones that you'd feel proud to wear out in public, but Audio-Technica seems to have cracked it with the ATH-MSR7s. That designation seems a bit clinical for such a pretty device – but hey, what's in a name?

All things considered, these are absolute winners and you'd be hard-pressed to find anything comparable at this price.

Justin Beachcroft-Shaw

Type..... Closed back, dynamic
Transducer size..... 45 mm
SPL 100 dB/mW
Frequency response..... 5 Hz – 40 kHz
Max input power 2 000 mW
Impedance..... 35 ohms
Weight..... 290 g

Verdict

One of the best sounding and best looking headphones at this price... ever!

Price R5 390

Distributed by Prosound

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OUR RATING: 87/100

