

Review: Backbeat Pro 2 shows just how good wireless headphones are getting

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So Apple has taken the lead and announced that wired headphones are headed toward extinction (not really), but if wireless headphones are the future, I like where things are headed.

I've been testing the Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2 wireless [headphones](#), and I'm totally impressed.

I've tried a dozen or so different wireless headphones, and there are three areas I judge - [sound quality](#), comfort and how far can you wander and still hear the [music](#).

The BackBeat Pro 2 (\$199.99) is a serious competitor to the Bose line of QuietComfort noise-cancelling headphones.

They come in a handsome box with a sturdy twill carrying case that's lined with a soft material.

There is also a Special Edition with a hard case available for \$249.99.

The headphones are not just shiny plastic. Almost every surface is textured, and the parts that touch your ears and the top of your head are soft.

The inside of each ear cup is covered with vinyl padding, and the 40mm drivers are covered with a thin material that has a big L or R printed on it so you know which side is which - very handy.

There are control switches on each ear cup.

The left side has a switch for the listening modes. You can listen to music naturally, or flip a switch to engage active noise canceling. There's also a mode that pauses the music and turns on the external microphone so you can have a conversation without removing the headphones.

The left cup also has a play-pause button and buttons to go forward or backward in your playlist. On the outside of the control buttons is a volume ring.

The right ear has the power button, a mute button for the microphone and a 3.5-millimeter jack so you can attach an included cable to use the BackBeat Pro 2s with sources that don't have Bluetooth.

I found the noise canceling to be effective, especially when cutting my grass, and it didn't degrade the sound quality of the music I was playing.

There are sensors in the ear cups that know if you take them off. When you remove the BackBeat Pro 2s, the music pauses. Put them back on and the music resumes.

You charge the headphones with an included microUSB cord. Battery level is shown on a series of small blue LEDs when you power them on. Plantronics says you can expect up to 24 hours of listening on a charge.

At startup, there is also a whispered voice in your ear telling you the battery level and connection status. You also receive a voice confirmation when you change listening modes or go into pairing mode.

SOUND QUALITY

I'll be the first to admit I'm no audiophile.

The BackBeat Pro 2s sound really good to me, but I realize there are

headphones that can reproduce sound better.

I'm not trying to tell anyone that wireless headphones with active noise canceling are going to be the best-sounding headphones they've ever used - but I was happy with the music I listened to with these in a variety of situations.

There isn't a ton of bass, but the midtones and highs were very crisp, which is how I like it.

These headphones also allow the wearer to take voice calls. Since Plantronics was a phone headset company for years before it made headphones, I expected good voice quality on phone calls, and I was not disappointed. A large button on the right ear cup is for answering and hanging up calls.

COMFORT

There is plenty of cushioning and soft materials wherever your skin comes into contact with the BackBeat Pro 2s. The earcups have two-way pivoting adjustment, and it was easy to find a comfortable position for extended listening.

The fit and finish are first-rate and on par with any other company's offerings.

Buttons and controls were big enough to find and use without trouble.

The ear cups fold flat for easy storage in the bag, which also has a pocket for the included cables.

WIRELESS DISTANCE

The BackBeat Pro 2s are a Class 1 Bluetooth device, which means they have a range of around 100 yards when paired with other Class 1 devices.

My iPhone 6S is a Class 1 Bluetooth device, and I tested the range outdoors with a straight line of sight. I was able to walk almost 120 yards away from my phone before the sound cut out.

At home, I was able to leave my phone on the back deck while I mowed my lawn. The music never cut out or even stuttered. The range outdoors is impressive.

Indoors, the range will shrink according to how much interference is between you and the source.

CONCLUSION

If I were in the market for a set of nice noise-canceling headphones, I'd certainly put the Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2 on my short list.

I think the combination of good, clear music reproduction and phone call quality coupled with active noise canceling at a price at least \$100 cheaper than the competition makes them a compelling choice.

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Plantronics [wireless headphones](#)

Pros: Comfortable, great range, stellar battery life, good call quality.

Cons: Bass is a bit light, especially if you're used to Beats.

Bottom line: These cans deliver the goods and cost less.

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