

## Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2 review

### Terms:

[Consumer](#) <sup>[1]</sup> [2016](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

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### OUR VERDICT

The Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2 offer insane battery life, great sound quality and good active noise cancellation for the price. It may not offer the best noise cancellation in the segment but they're an undeniably good value for what you're getting.

#### FOR

- Incredible 24 hour battery life
- Multi-point Bluetooth
- Amiable sound

#### AGAINST

- Bass overwhelming at times
- Styling not for everyone

The original [Plantronics BackBeat Pro](#) <sup>[4]</sup> headphones were loved for its variety of features, good sound and good active noise cancellation (ANC). They weren't perfect, but they offered a compelling package for travelers.

With the second generation BackBeat Pro 2, Plantronics went back to the drawing board to fix many of the issues owners complained about the original. The BackBeat Pro 2, therefore, manage to keep all the great things about the original and improved upon its shortcomings, like its bulk and weight. Everything considered, though, for \$200 (£230, AU\$250) it's hard to think of a better travel headphone for the price.

### Design

Because of its somewhat straightforward nature, you'll either love or hate the design of the Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2. The headphones feature a dark brown color palette, which we like quite a bit but is understandably a bit polarizing. Then there's the faux wood accent that looks more appropriate inside a Buick than on a pair of noise cancelling headphones. It looks a bit cheap and out of place, but they do help the headphones stand out from the even-more-generic-looking [Bose QuietComfort 35](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

The earcups feature glittery silver mesh rings on each ear cup, which is where the headphone's noise cancelling mics are located. The sparkling silver is an odd design choice against the muted browns and blacks on the headphone and stick out like a sore thumb. A black mesh would have been more appropriate, but hey, what's here works.

On the left ear cup, you'll find controls for playback, volume and a toggle for active noise cancellation. The right ear cup has a power/pairing slider as well as a big button for answering phone calls.

Volume is controlled via a textured ring that rocks back and forth. Rotate counter clockwise to turn up the volume and clockwise to turn it down. The volume control ring is a little harder to grip than the first generation, but that's a minor quibble and not a noteworthy issue.

Active noise cancellation can be toggled on or off on the left earcup. Turning off noise cancellation will stretch the battery life of the headphones even more. This toggle also features an open mic mode, which pauses your music and lets you hear what's going around you without having to take off your headphones.

We found the open mic feature pointless as we could simply take off the headphones, which automatically pauses the music, but since it's an option you'd find on much higher-end headphones like the [Sony MDR-1000X](#) <sup>[6]</sup> it's nice to have here, too.

The BackBeat Pro 2 are lined with leather around the earcups as well as on the headband, making them extremely comfortable and we had no issues wearing them throughout an eight-hour flight.

Compared to the original Plantronics BackBeat Pro headphones, the Pro 2 are much smaller and lighter (290 grams vs the original's 340 grams). This is great news for travelers who have limited space and don't want to be fatigued after long

listening sessions. They're also more compact and lay flatter when folded down for transport.

The headphones come with a soft zippered carrying pouch, which has a super soft lining to protect the headphones from scratches. The pouch features a second compartment to store your microUSB charging and 3.5mm headphone cables, which is a nice touch. A hard case would have been even better, but again, it's not a deal breaker. It should be noted, however, that a hardcase is available in the more expensive BackBeat Pro 2 Special Edition, which costs \$50 (about £40, AU\$67) more and comes in a gray color.

## Performance

The original BackBeat Pro headphones offered a fun, slightly bass heavy sound signature. Plantronics carried over this sound signature to the BackBeat Pro 2, which most users will probably find pleasing to the ears.

Audiophiles will quibble about the overbearing bass but will be happy to know that using the BackBeat Pro 2 in wired mode tames the bass quite a bit. We were pleasantly surprised to find ANC still works when playing music in wired mode, which means you can save a bit of battery when you don't mind going wired for awhile. A little added bass emphasis helps block out external noise so we can understand why Plantronics went for a bass-heavy sound signature.

Highs are a bit rolled off, making them sound a bit veiled but that's preferable for long listening sessions since the highs won't be fatiguing. Similarly, mids are good, but they can be muted by the heavy bass. Soundstage is average, so don't expect an out-of-head listening experience.

With active noise cancelling enabled, there's a slight hiss when no music is playing. The Bose QC35 still offer the best noise cancellation in the industry but the Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2 still do an admirable job of blocking out noise.

Putting them to the test, the BackBeat Pro 2 dulled the deafening roar of the 777 jet engines on a flight from San Francisco to New York, providing us some sanity as we attempted to get some sleep. The sound quality of the headphones wasn't impacted by the active noise cancellation, which wasn't always the case with ANC headphones in the past.

As for battery life, we were extremely impressed by the longevity of the BackBeat Pro 2. The original also offered incredible 24 hour battery life but the second generation sips even less power when idle, offering a claimed 6 months of DeepSleep, up from 180 hours.

Despite regular use, we struggled to completely drain the BackBeat Pro 2 on a week-long vacation in New York - it lasted through both flights, a couple of train rides and random listening sessions throughout the week with ANC enabled at all times. For frequent travelers, the BackBeat Pro 2's insane battery life is its killer feature.

## We liked

For \$200 (£230, AU\$250), it's hard to fault anything about the Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2. It's looks might not be for everyone and its bass heavy sound won't please audiophiles but the BackBeat Pro 2 does just about everything right for travel headphones.

The headphone's staggering 24 hour battery life delivers and is a killer feature for travelers who can't be tethered to an outlet, and while its active noise cancellation isn't the best in the industry, it's still very good at muffling the sound of the noisy, sleep-depriving outside world.

It's clear Plantronics was listening to user feedback when redesigning the BackBeat Pro 2. Just about every quibble we had about the original has been addressed - and, even more incredibly, despite all those changes Plantronics' latest pair of cans are even cheaper than the original.

## We disliked

Audiophiles won't like the bass heavy sound signature, though bass can be tamed by using them in wired mode.

Similarly, you'll either love or hate the styling of the BackBeat Pro 2. Its brown color palette, fake zebrawood and out of place silver mesh give the headphones an eclectic design language.

Final verdict

If you don't want to drop \$350 (£290, AU\$500) on the Bose QuietComfort 35 or \$400 (£330 or AU\$700) on Sony's flagship MDR-1000X, the Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2 should be on the top of your shopping list. Sure, the Bose still offers better noise cancellation and Sony offers a bit better sound but the Plantronics do just about everything else right.

In terms of value, the BackBeat Pro 2 are basically a steal. With the BackBeat Pro 2, you're getting a travel headphone with incredible battery life, supreme comfort, the ability to pair two device as once and, most importantly, good sound quality for the cost.

## Language:

English

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