

# Review: Plantronics BackBeat 500 Series wireless headphones

## Terms:

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## Published Date and Time:

3/21/17

Network World

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Plantronics has been in the headphone/headset market for more than 55 years now (moon landing!), but most of their Bluetooth gear (aimed at entertainment, not the smartphone headsets) have been in the premium market. The BackBeat line of headphones include the Pro series (about \$200 for the Pro 2), Fit series (about \$130) and Go series (\$129 for the Go 3).

With companies like Apple forgoing the headphone jack on their new smartphones, the market for wireless headphones is now poised to surpass wired headphones in terms of sales. With these trends in mind, Plantronics has now entered the entry-level space (under \$100) with its BackBeat 500 Series headphones (\$79.99, now available). Aimed at first-time wireless headphone buyers, the BackBeat 500 still offers users features like 40mm-bass drivers, an over-the-head, on-ear fit and an up to 18 hour battery life. With multipoint Bluetooth supported, you can connect to multiple devices (such as a smartphone and laptop or tablet), and even switch between them automatically. For example, if you're listening to music on the laptop and a phone call comes in, the headphones connect to the phone. Speaking of phones, there's a microphone on the left earcup that lets you talk on the phone without needing a microphone boom or having to yell into the phone's microphone. A button on the right side lets you answer any incoming calls on any connected phone.

The package also comes with a carrying bag (not as fancy as their other bags, but still pretty cool), and a 3.5mm cable in case users still want to plug in to an older device (or if they don't want to bother with Bluetooth wireless setup). A USB charging cable is included once the battery life runs out.

Sound quality on the headphones was very good - especially for songs that include bass - I was expecting lower quality on the sound based on the entry-level price tag, but it doesn't appear to be the case here. When the headphones were in multipoint mode (connected to both my iPhone and MacBook), I got the occasional "pop" when trying to listen to music from one source. On the comfort scale, the on-ear mode (as opposed to over-the-ear) was good, but not one where I'd wear this for hours at a time.

Bottom line: If price has always been an issue for you when considering wireless headphones, this under \$100 model should make it easier to consider without worrying that you're getting "a cheap pair of headphones."

Grade: 4 / 5 stars

## Language:

English

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