

Editor's Choice: Plantronics BackBeat GO 2

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Buying an audio product requires balancing your priorities for sound quality and price. If you can spend a lot on a pair of [headphones](#) ^[3], they're probably going to sound great (with certain distinctions between the models). If you can't spend a lot, you're going to have to compromise certain aspects of sound quality. For less than \$100, you can't expect a Bluetooth headset with powerful bass. However, you can get a pair of comfortable in-ear earphones with very good mid- and high-end sound quality. The Plantronics BackBeat Go 2 are the follow-up to last year's Editors' Choice [BackBeat Go](#) ^[4] [\\$88.89 at Quickship.com](#) ^[5], and at \$79.99 without a charging pouch or \$99.99 with a charging pouch, they offer an even better value and an incremental upgrade over the previous model.

Design

The BackBeat Go 2 [\\$78.89 at Amazon](#) ^[5] is nearly physically identical to the original Backbeat Go with a few small changes. It's still a pair of earbuds on a short, flat, tangle-free cable with an in-line remote and microphone in a small rectangular box near the right ear. The in-line remote now has three buttons instead of one, and can adjust volume and change tracks in addition to answering calls. It's still available in black and white versions. It still has a micro USB connection for charging hidden behind a rubber door on the right earbud. It still comes with three pairs of rubber tips in different sizes and a pair of looped ear stabilizers that hook just behind the ear tips. The only other real visible difference besides the remote is that it comes with the ear stabilizers already mounted on the earbuds instead of sitting in the box. The headset is otherwise indistinguishable from its predecessor.

The headset can come with a battery charger and carrying pouch for an additional \$20, a new addition to the BackBeat Go. The pouch is a sturdy nylon bag just large enough to hold the earbuds and cable round in a small, loose loop. A short micro USB cable can plug into the headset while it's in the pouch to charge from the small battery built in. A micro USB port in the bottom of the pouch keeps it charged and can directly charge the headset before topping off its own battery. A small button and two LEDs indicate the pouch's charging level and if it's charging the headset. Plantronics claims the case can add an additional 10 hours to the BackBeat Go 2's 4.5 hours of listening or 5 hours of talk time, making the extra \$20 for the carrying case a very good deal. Together, the headset and case package retails for the same as the original BackBeat Go did at launch without a case, at \$99.99.

Plantronics kept almost all changes to the BackBeat Go 2 on the inside, or at least invisible. The headset has a P2i nano-coating to effectively waterproof it, protecting it from sweat and other moisture (but it still isn't built for diving or submersion), though this was introduced to the original BackBeat Go in later production runs. It can now pair with up to eight devices instead of just one, and has a DeepSleep hibernation mode that Plantronics says can let it stand by for up to six months. It still has a 6mm driver in each earbud, but Plantronics says they're third generation instead of first generation drivers, and feature enhanced bass. And, of course, there are the aforementioned extra buttons on the inline remote, which are very helpful.

Performance

For a set of \$80 Bluetooth headphones, the BackBeat Go 2 has very good sound quality, despite predictably weak bass. Both Powerman 5000's cover of "We're Not Gonna Take It" and Twisted Sister's original studio version sounded clear and crisp, with both the tweaked, beepy industrial sounds of Powerman 5000 and the classic, bombastic heavy metal sounds of Twisted Sister both sounding full and clear and not overshadowing Michael Cummings or Dee Snyder's vocals. The live Twisted Sister version of the song didn't fare quite so well, with the crowd sounding distant and indistinct even when they sang along, and the drums fading behind the guitars and vocals.

Like the previous BackBeat Go, the BackBeat Go 2 is weak on the bass. To its credit, it handled the deep synth notes of The Knife's "Silent Shout" without a hint of distortion, but they didn't really have much presence, either. They faded against the higher notes as the song went on. This doesn't mean bass is entirely indistinct, though. In jazz fusion tracks like the Beastie Boys' "Electric Worm" and "B For My Name," the bass notes lacked presence but could still be distinguished against the rolling cymbals, sharp snares, and jangly electric guitar.

For calls, the BackBeat Go 2 sounds decent indoors, but the microphone placement (just under the right ear, on a cable that runs behind the neck) makes it pick up a lot of street noise when walking around. It's not an ideal headset for calls, compared with headsets with better placed microphones like the [Plantronics Voyager Legend](#) ^[6] [\\$73.50 at Amazon](#) ^[5].

Conclusion

The Plantronics BackBeat Go 2 is a solid upgrade to the original BackBeat Go, with good sound quality and a slightly improved design. It only makes small changes and it still has weak bass, but considering it's \$20 less than the original BackBeat Go was at launch, or can come with a very handy portable charger and keeps all of the good points of the previous version for the same price, it's readily our new budget Editors' Choice stereo Bluetooth headset. If you want to pay more to emphasize audio quality with a Bluetooth headset, the [JayBird BlueBuds X](#) ^[7] [\\$169.95 at Microsoft Store](#) ^[5] are an excellent, albeit twice as expensive, choice.

Language:

English

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