

REVIEW: PLANTRONICS BACKBEAT PRO 2

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WIRED

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WIRED

HEADPHONES RARELY HAVE to leave your head. They make phone calls, let you query of Siri or Google Assistant, and they give you hours of bliss as you consume podcasts, books, and playlists en masse. Having a pair that can do it all well is crucial.

The [Plantronics BackBeat Pro 2](#) [4] is a very capable and pair of wireless Bluetooth headphones that will give you more than 20 hours of comfortable listening on a charge. For \$200, you get very good sound coupled with active noise-canceling—one of those premium features usually reserved for pricier headsets.

WIRED

The fit is comfortable, even for big-heads like me. (They fit small-heads too.) Bluetooth works as advertised, from pairing to phone calls to keeping a clean connection. The sound is clear and detailed. Even when playing highly compressed files, I heard new things in a few songs that I hadn't noticed before, or at least hadn't heard so clearly. The tone of the headphones is a little on the cooler side, but tracks with warmer acoustics still sound good. A lot of the credit for the sound quality goes to the fact that the headphones do an excellent job of blocking outside noise just with the seal of the leather ear pads against the skin. There is an active noise-canceling mode as well, but because the BackBeat Pro 2s are already good at isolating the listener, it's hard to judge specifically how much difference the noise canceling makes. It did slightly reduce the scant amount of ambient noise that was still reaching my ear without changing the mix or tone of the music.

The headphones also have a feature called "open listening." Since these are noise-canceling cans, they have microphones on the outsides of the ear cups in order to pick up exterior noise. Engage the open listening feature, and the sound picked up by those mics gets piped into the headphones. You can have full conversations or figure out if the ambulance siren you're hearing is real or recorded, all while keeping your headphones in place. (You still shouldn't wear these while driving a car though, kids.)

So you really never need to take these headphones off. But when you do slip them down from your ears to rest around your neck, your song will thoughtfully pause until you put them back on again.

TIRED

While the low end seemed to be appropriately tuned for bass-heavy songs, tracks that don't necessarily rely on a big low end had a little more bass than was necessary—to the point of distraction in a couple instances, unfortunately.

There are external controls on the ear cup, and they work fine, but there is a blind learning curve to using them. I found myself accidentally restarting songs rather than skipping to the next one, or turning the volume down rather than up, or tapping the wrong ear to answer the phone. But that would likely resolve itself with more use.

RATING

8/10 – Excellent, with room to kvetch.

Language:

English

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