

Plantronics Backbeat Pro+ Bluetooth Headphones Review

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Last year Plantronics released a pair of over-ear bluetooth headphones that, to date, has been one of our favorites and easily our most recommended pair of headphones. It had every feature imaginable, sounded amazing, and had an affordable price tag. Plantronics just released a new version, the BackBeat Pro+, which sports even more features. The Plantronics BackBeat Pro+ are over-ear bluetooth headphones with active noise cancelling, smart sensors, intuitive controls, a 24 hour battery life, class 1 bluetooth, and even more. The BackBeat Pros take your listening experience to the next level.

The design is almost the same as the predecessor, they're large over-ear headphones. The round earcups are super soft and cushioned with memory foam that creates a perfect seal around your ears. The headband is wrapped in leather (faux leather?) and cushioned similarly. They're extremely comfortable and don't actually hurt with extended use (a rarity, I've found). The earcups swivel 90 degrees so you can fold the headphones flat. Since they don't collapse, they're not the most travel friendly, but they come with a travel pouch and the swivel flat design helps. They've had no problem surviving my backpack.

In addition to the travel case, the Pro+s come with a headphone cable, a Class 1 USB bluetooth adapter, and a micro-USB charger. The included headphone cable is a standard headphone cable complete with inline ControlTalk and microphone. With the cable, you can listen to the headphones passively, without any power. Or, you can turn them on and unlock a bunch of features.

There's a lot of controls and technology built into the BackBeat Pro+s; it's pretty incredible. They charge with a standard micro-USB cable, and as mentioned, they don't need any power to listen with the standard headphone cable. There's two hard switches, one turns the headphones on and off, the other turns noise cancelling on and off. The Pro+ standby feature is so amazing that you never really need to remember to shut them off. You wouldn't suspect it, but there's audio and phone controls discretely built into the outside of the earcups. Each earcup is a button, and the bezel around the earcups control volume and track controls. It's really clever and really comfortable to use.

Ditch the cable. Use the bluetooth. It can play up to 24 hours of continuous music streaming, or last most people a couple weeks on a single charge. Don't worry about shutting them or pausing your music. It goes into standby on its own, and it pauses your music for you when you take the headphones off. It even starts playing your music when you put them back on! There's two built-in microphones for taking phone calls. I found that the microphones built into the headphones worked even better than the microphone on the cable. Callers reported I sounded perfect, even talking outside on the busy streets of Manhattan. Bluetooth headsets is, after all, what Plantronics is all about.

There's a really neat feature included called OpenMic. You push a button under the earcup, and microphone amplifies the sounds going on around you. It's useful if you want to hear an announcement without taking your headphones off. Plantronics also turns this on subtly when you're on a phone call. I assume the reasoning is so you can hear yourself talk.

The BackBeat Pros and Pro+s have both rocked active noise cancelling (ANC), and I swear it's the best, but maybe not for everyone. It doesn't actually eliminate all background noise, instead it works a little more subtly. It drowns out a lot of background noise without creating a hissing sound or messing with your ear pressure. Admittedly, it will leave some users wanting more, but I'll argue it's the most practical noise cancelling out there. Most noise cancelling you'll only want to use on the plane or the train, but this noise cancelling you'll want on all the time.

Like the predecessor, the BackBeat Pro+s sound awesome. The audio is really lively. They're very well balanced, and have great bass you can feel. The mids are extremely clear and crisp. The awesome audio experience is complemented by the great earcup seal and the lightweight noise cancellation that doesn't add a hiss or suction cup effect. They sound fantastic regardless of the genre. The fact that they're Bluetooth and wireless has no effect whatsoever on the audio quality. They use Bluetooth 4.0 and AptX. The range is fantastic and there's almost no delay/latency. A lot of Bluetooth headphones will be delayed by a second, which makes videos painful to watch. Not these!

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