

# WHAT HI★FI?

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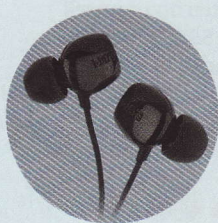
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**Shure SE535 £330**

★★★★☆

Shure is the musician's favourite for a reason, so the company's top-end model was always going to be good. The SE535s are as dynamic, detailed and rhythmic as the enclosures and cable are rugged and serious. Their only problem is the Grado GR10s, which sound even better, but if you fancy the pro feel, the Shures are a very worthy choice.

**Jays t-Jays Two £67**

★★★★☆

We like the 'any colour so long as it's black' approach that Jays takes to design. We're also rather partial to the weighty, punchy bass these t-Jays Twos produce, and the fact that their smooth delivery means any track is listenable and enjoyable. A little more detail and attack would be nice, but they remain a good choice for bass lovers.

**Jamo IN40i £90**

★★★★☆

Play something stripped-down, like Ben Howard's *Old Pine*, and the Jamos immediately please thanks to a luscious, rich bottom-end. The problem is that as tracks build, the bass feeds up to the mid-range and slightly drowns out the treble. They're still very chunky and enjoyable, though, and the remote/mic makes them handy for iPhone users.

**Beyerdynamic DTX 71 IE £54**

★★★★☆

We thought these Beyer 71s were brilliant when we first heard them last month, but while they're still great, the 101s on the previous page offer significant improvements in terms of punch and solidity for only a little extra cash. The 71s remain a detailed, tonally even and controlled option, though, if you can't spare the extra tenner.

**Sennheiser MM 70i £50 ★★★★★**

We've been told that the CX 280s on the previous page are the replacements for the excellent Award-winning CX 300 IIs, but this MM 70i pair seems much more like them. They're significantly more expensive than the 300s, but at least a portion of that extra cash can be put down to the three-button remote-and-mic unit, which is placed on the cable near your chin.

They sound good, too. There's impressive balance and detail, plus a weighty, but not overbearing bottom-end. The only problem is that they're not quite as thumping or dynamic as they might be, which leaves the usually rather primal drumming of The Jezabels' *Dark Storm* with a little less impact.

Still, they're never harsh and always clear, so those looking to upgrade from CX 300 IIs to a pair that's designed for smartphones won't be disappointed.

**Rating ★★★★★**

**VERDICT** Nice features for the money – with a little more sonic oomph, these headphones could have been a five-star product

**SoundMagic E10 £35 ★★★★★**

**Blimey, what a treat** these little in-ears are. For a start, they look like they're worth way more than £35, thanks to a metal casing that looks snazzy in any of the three finishes. They punch well above their weight in terms of sound quality, too. Play Seasick Steve's brilliantly raw *Happy (To Have a Job)* and the E10s reveal all the incidental noise of the room and the soft hiss of the unashamedly unpolished, acoustic recording.

When he breaks it down to the more raucous action, they keep pace brilliantly, producing solid, precise leading edges and marshalling the different beats with ease. The bass drum is weighty and insightful, the treble sparkles, and the vocals are clear and nuanced. In other words, these are exceptional for the money, and the new affordable choice for those looking to upgrade those bundled buds.

**Rating ★★★★★**

**VERDICT** The E10s look and sound like they're worth much more than £35, which makes them an absolute steal

**BEST FOR A budget buy**

A genuine no-compromise proposition, the E10s combine bass heft, insight and precision to amazingly engaging effect

**BEST FOR Comfort**

These earbuds don't need to be shoved right inside your head – so feel much nicer to wear for long periods than some rivals

**Bose MIE2i £119 ★★★★★**

**Bose has gone** for a fundamentally different approach to every other company here, by designing in-ears that sit outside the ear canal, rather than burrowing in. They don't isolate noise like most rivals do, but that can be a good thing for commuters who like to be aware of what's going on around them. Besides, the upside is a comfortable, unintrusive fit – and thanks to that soft gel flap, they stay in your ears far better than most.

The MIE2is have clearly been voiced to compensate for the extra distance between eardrum and earbud, so rather than a thin, washed-out delivery you get a chunky, full-bodied presentation. They sound pacy and detailed, too, and the soundstage is lovely and wide, with good separation on tracks that allow it. They might be less starkly detailed than something like the Etymotics, but they're no less valid as a result.

**Rating ★★★★★**

**VERDICT** A different approach to earbud design that also breeds a different sound – but one that's up there with the best