



REVIEW



Austrian Audio Hi-X15 & Hi-X25BT

*Affordable high-quality headphones
with optional Bluetooth*

REVIEW BY ALEX HAWLEY

Austrian Audio expands its Hi-X line of professional headphones with the Hi-X15 and Hi-X25BT. We covered the flagship Hi-X65 open-back headphones in the September 2021 issue. The Hi-X15 and Hi-X25BT enter the ranks on the other end of the spectrum as more affordable options while still featuring the acclaimed high excursion driver technology found in their more expensive siblings.

Hi-Xpectations

Keeping with the established Hi-X standard, both the Hi-X15 and Hi-X25BT are designed in Austria, but they are the first Austrian Audio headphones manufactured overseas to achieve their affordable price point. Both feature a closed-back, over-ear design intended to deliver an authentic listening experience. The Hi-X25BT is touted as an analog / digital pro-level hybrid; you can listen wirelessly on your commute via integrated Bluetooth 5.0, and then plug in with the traditional 3.5mm or 1/4" jack when you arrive at the session. You can also listen digitally via USB-C, and you can simultaneously listen wirelessly via Bluetooth while charging via USB-C. Both models are suitable for a wide range of applications including tracking, mixing, practicing, and enjoyment (the Hi-X25BT having the wireless edge!).

The Hi-X25BT has a 30-hour battery life. The analog connection will work with or without power, so no worries if you forget to charge before a studio session. It also features an integrated microphone for phone calls and a touch control system on the right ear for quick volume adjustments.

Like the rest of the Hi-X line, both models reviewed here feature the same 44mm driver and ring magnet system. I have gone into great detail about this system in previous Hi-X reviews; these are ultra-fast and responsive drivers with a high degree of precision for accurate reproduction across the board, including sub-bass frequencies. Both models have a listed frequency response of 12 Hz-24 kHz and an impedance of 25Ω, ensuring good performance even with consumer-level products. Both models come with a (relatively short) 4.5' detachable cable, while the Hi-X25BT adds

a USB-C cable. For studio use, or practicing for that matter, I'd recommend opting for a longer cable.

The previous Hi-X models are among the most rugged and comfortable headphones I have ever reviewed. The Hi-X15 and Hi-X25BT fall right in line, with the same super-soft low-retaining foam on the ear cups. The new arrivals have a slightly updated aesthetic with a flash of red on the metal hinge. They do feel less robust in the hands, with more plastic than their more expensive counterparts. However, I'm confident that they could withstand a fair share of road use thrown their way, given the metal hinges and foldable body. I'd still classify the build quality as well above average for its price range.

Sounds

The Hi-X15 and Hi-X25BT sound airy and modern. In this context, I would classify 'modern' as having a punchy low-end combined with stunning, sparkling clean highs, highlighting a nice airy sheen on the top of vocals and hi-hats. The low-end is robust, with plenty of energy extending to sub-bass frequencies. Much like their siblings, the high excursion driver design feels tight all the way across the spectrum. No over-emphasized 'bass for the sake of bass' here; rather, these cans provide an experience similar to mixing on nearfield monitors. The midrange feels slightly pulled back to my ears, not quite matching the level of detail in the lows or highs. The resulting sound is pleasing and full of life. While it doesn't quite match the immediate level of accuracy I perceived in the previous Hi-X models, again, those are a fair bit pricier.

The soundstage has tons of depth with superb imaging. The closed-back design lends itself beautifully for tracking sessions, where it provides excellent isolation to avoid headphone bleed.

Wrap up

I wouldn't be surprised to see the Hi-X15 and Hi-X25BT make their way to more and more studio settings, especially live rooms, as I expect the sonic signature would get musicians excited and inspired while tracking. Overall, I'm highly impressed by the quality, comfort, and sound of these latest Austrian Audio additions! ➡

Price: \$119 Hi-X15; \$179 Hi-X25BT
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