



Real People Reviews

by Daniel M. East

Headset solutions for your portable phone

While any electronics superstore or even interstate rest area now sells hands-free products, if you want to be heard and hear well, there are a few products that do a better job than most so that you can talk in comfort without the "muted shout" that most people use on their portable phones. **Safety first, folks.** If you are going to talk while you drive, ride or even walk, be sure you make smart choices and avoid distractions. For syncing your phone, see the end of this article as well.

Remember that, unlike a home phone, you won't hear your own voice come back to you via the earpiece. Talk in a normal voice and you'll be heard better and be able to talk longer without as much vocal fatigue (within reason). Using an in-ear headphone makes the wearer more self-aware, much the way singers might hold their ears closed to hear themselves, so that little shout is less necessary. Now that most phone accessories are becoming standardized and more universal (check your particular manufacturer's specs for your particular phone), many more products are becoming available.

Beware of the dangling microphones. We've all seen it. The person who lifts the wire up when talking so that they can be heard. I understand that some people don't like a long extension distracting them, but you will simply sound better if you use the right product. So will they. You shouldn't have to be a **loud talker** (sounds like a Seinfeld term, doesn't it?) to be heard on your cell and, as people use their portable phones more and more, you'll find that it is much easier when you get it right.

You might want to look for:

- a mini-gooseneck boom or longer mic that reaches nearly in front of your mouth so YOU sound good
- either over-the-ear or in-ear earphone so THEY sound good to you
- light weight
- a nice option is also a "turbo" button so that you can answer the phone and call out from a switch on the cable (anything the send button does)

continues on page 2



Etymotic Research "Ety-Com" ER-22

This is a great choice if you don't mind the \$65.00 price tag. The sound is good and it is very light; however, it isn't the most comfortable for long drives. I added a custom snap-on earpiece from Future Sonics (yep, our earphone friends and they have them for a variety of headsets) after getting ear impressions taken by my local audiologist.

<http://www.etymotic.com/ephp/etycom.asp>



Shure Quiet Spot

In terms of the audio quality, this earpiece sounds "flat." This might be good for studio monitors, but not a great thing in a headset for a phone, believe it or not, since your own head plays a part in the overall sound when listening to the in-ear type products. The noise canceling works great by limiting the area that picks up your voice to a very tight zone, but you may sound like you are in a tin can to those with whom you are talking. Retail is around \$50.00.

<http://www.shure.com/quietspot/>



Belkin ActiFlex Boom

A great sounding headset on both ends; however, it isn't the sturdiest product I've used of the pack. Noise canceling mic still sounds clear and full without sounding like your head is in a bottle. For 29.00, this is a good option for those who take better care of their gear. The ActiFlex will also work very well with the Future Sonics custom fit option.



Belkin also offer Bluetooth headsets, but I find them unreliable and too bulky feeling at this stage of the technology. There are also security issues in BT, so buyer beware...for now.

<http://www.belkin.com/>



Plantronics M220/M135

Just too clumsy to get it to fit well for me, but the price is right at around 40 bucks. The sound is decent, but the cabling is not what you might be used to from Plantronics' office products. I'm not a fan of their headsets in the car, but they DO have a cool headset amplifier (should you need one...I do not) called the MHA100 for about 55 bucks. While it works well and is auto-sensing, it can distort and pop in and out if you like your window open on the road.

<http://www.plantronics.com/>

Clearly, I'm only able to scratch the surface of the mountains of brands and styles out there. These are a few of my picks and I'm always interested in finding new gear. You can find these products in most better electronics stores or online.

For what it's worth, I am **not a fan** of the FM retransmitter type hands-free systems. While your caller may sound wonderful through your cars stereo system, there is a great amount of reverberation, breaking in the audio and a less reliable way to communicate.

I also hear from a lot of people who want to find cables to "sync" their phones, PDAs and other devices. There are two that make the "mini-sync" and other fine cables that connect these devices to USB ports, car AC adapters and more.

<http://www.boxwave.com/> and <http://www.seidionline.com/>

Also, don't bother with products that may reduce your head's mobility or which may get in the way (like some over the head and/or behind the neck type products. Remember, safety first -- but, sound quality is a close second.

Daniel East is the founder and president of The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs) - a division of The Apple Groups Team; a member of The Apple Consultants Network (ACN); a member of The Apple Developer Connection (ACN); a panelist on "PC Talk Radio;" a live speaker/presenter and a columnist for several Mac publications including MacDesign, Graphic & Design Business, PrintMedia and others.

All trademarks are property of their respective owners. This review may be reproduced with proper attribution. Please notify author of placement and provide a copy/URL for reference.

©2004 Daniel M. East for The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs)
info@mamugs.com - www.mamugs.org