beyerdynamic DT 1770 PRO

Taking a world-class tradition to new heights

It’s been a long while since we’ve reviewed a beyerdynamic product in our pages, and I was thrilled to get my hands on the firm’s newest studio headphone, the DT 1770 PRO. It separates itself from the pack in a number of ways, and provides a listening experience that’s... well, read the review.

Everything but...

The DT 1770 PRO is a closed circumaural dynamic headphone with 45 mm drivers. These drivers are the first to use beyerdynamic’s Tesla 2.0 technology, and they form the basis for the headphone’s impressive performance. Let’s check a few specs.

First of all, the headphone’s frequency response is rated at 5 Hz to 40 kHz; these phones are absolutely ready for work with high-resolution audio formats. They’re rated to a nominal SPL of 102 dB (1 mW at 500 Hz) and a maximum of 125 dB (200 mW at 500 Hz); fortunately you’ll find that they deliver great audio at far safer levels! With a 250Ω impedance, the DT 1770 PRO doesn’t get loud quite as quickly as other designs, but I had no issues driving it to good listening levels with any of my interfaces; it paired very well with my H2 Designs MIYO.

The DT 1770 PRO comes in a zippered hard case which contains the headphones, a second set of earpads, and a cable storage pocket. The two supplied cables, one straight (3 meters) and one straight/coiled (roughly 2 meters out to 5 meters if you stretch it), each end in a locking mini-XLR plug that clips into the left earcup, and have a gold-plated miniplug on the other end. Each cable has its own screw-on ¼" TRS adaptor.

Note that the second set of earpads isn’t just a spare pair; the headphones come with two different styles of earpad that can be switched out to taste. The set that’s on the phones as they come out of the box is foam-padded and covered with velour. These pads attenuate 18 dB of outside sound, according to beyerdynamic, and I can confirm that their isolation is exceptional. The other pads have leatherette covers and claim 21 dB of isolation, and I used those for most of my listening.

Note that the process of changing pads is non-trivial. They’re held securely in place by a very thin stretchy plastic lip that sits between two flanges around the circumference of the earcup. Removing them is as easy as a gentle pull, but putting them back on in the manner taught by the user manual doesn’t always work, and when it doesn’t, the process becomes fiddly and a bit frustrating, definitely not for the clumsy. Also, it’s unclear how much stretching the lip can take before it permanently deforms and doesn’t hold the earpad securely in place. I recommend trying the phones with each set of earpads for an extended period, picking the one you like best, and sticking with it.

The spring-steel headband is generously padded (that padding is also replaceable but a spare pad doesn’t come in the package) and holds the phones in place comfortably and without pinching. The DT 1770 PRO isn’t a remarkably light headphone at 388 grams (just under 14 ounces), but the headband design distributes the weight perfectly, making for little or no wearer fatigue.

As soon as I put on the DT 1770 PRO, I was impressed by its combination of comfort and isolation. I couldn’t readily discern a huge difference between the isolation provided by the velour pads and what was audible with the leatherette pads, so I stuck with the latter once they were installed. The large circular earcups surround the ears with plenty of breathing room, in contrast to other designs that fit more closely or even touch the ears. This isn’t good or bad, but merely a matter of taste.

...the sound

I’ve spent so much time discussing everything there is to say about the DT 1770 PRO—other than its sound—because you should know all about it in advance of giving this headphone a listen. If your experience is anything like mine, you’ll stop caring about anything else the moment you hit Play.

As good as the other headphones in this issue’s slate of reviews can be—and many of them are quite, quite good—it only takes a few minutes of listening to hear why this headphone costs more than any of them, and that impression only grows stronger with extended listening. The DT 1770 PRO is amazing even by beyerdynamic’s high standards.
While other headphones may have solid, focused lows, the bass in the DT 1770 PRO is both powerful and detailed in a way one doesn’t hear very often. If a bass part sounds thumpy or woofy, you can be sure that it’s that way in the master, not because of the headphones. There’s an almost hyperspatial soundstage, with a sense of openness and fine placement that translates beautifully to reference monitors... a good mix sounds good, and a mix with problems sounds problematic. The balance of mids with the highs and lows is absolutely pristine—no forwardness, no tubbiness, no recessed elements. And the highs just go on and on, with perfect clarity that’s present without being overbearing.

My primary impression was that I could happily start doing serious work with the DT 1770 PRO right away, simply because it exposes everything with such perfect detail and focus while still sounding very musical. Most other headphones can be learned; while a fussy engineer might take a long while before being able to work with confidence on a particularly difficult set, it’s rare to find a pro audio headphone that simply refuses to even hint at what’s really going on. With the DT 1770 PRO, the listener is immersed in a far more rare experience: everything instantly sounds as it really is, only more so.

Listening to reference tracks that you know extremely well, you immediately hear the good and bad points of every mix as you remember them, presented impeccably. A de-esser that wasn’t set properly, a bass synth that was mixed a little too heavy for the musical style, a tiny crackle of overload beneath a guitar recording, a digital artifact on a transient... it’s right there.

It’s great when a headphone lets you hear things that go missing in other phones. It’s even better when you hear things you didn’t know were there, in a recording you thought you knew backwards and forwards. Both experiences were there aplenty as I worked with reference tracks and my own mixes on the DT 1770 PRO.

Conclusions

These headphones cost what they cost for a reason, and beyerdynamic has the reputation it has for a reason. It’s not hard to find out why; that’s as simple as putting on the DT 1770 PRO and listening. This headphone isn’t just an impeccable studio tool... it’s an education in how exacting good audio can—and must—be.

Price: $599