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12am Review – Ultrasono HFI-500DJ1

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Ultrasono – Listen up.

DJs in today's world are a passionate breed of music lovers and entertainers, but unfortunately, we are also probably the most untrained and crude of all musical performers, which can lead to long term damage to not only our kidneys from countless trips to the bar, but also to our ears and hearing to be more precise. Some of us learn about the basics of mixing and gear but very few of us truly delve deep into the science, technology of how we should monitor the music we want to mix live.



Over the past month, I have been investigating a German company dedicated to the sound we hear through headphones and as you are about to discover, quality sound is a topic we should all listen to.

The Ultrasono headphones will, to put it simply, change your perspective on the way you listen to sound. Headphones are the one DJ tool that all of us must purchase and use more than any other piece of gear in our setups. Why then do we take so little regard in the safety and quality produced by our headphones?

Ultrasono is a German company that has not only produced a series of headphones with safety aspects such as magnetic shielding and lower SPL but have also included a surround sound that you would not believe until you put them on.

Who is Ultrasono?

Born in 1990, Ultrasono was founded in Germany. Instantly positioning themselves as a high end audio company, they were focused on innovating new ideas and theories to how sound could be presented to their fastidious customers. Instead of a massive range of products, the first decade of Ultrasono saw them patent more than 60 innovations and concentrating on the health issues associated with wearing speakers on your face!

These technologies lead to the first Ultra Low Emission (ULE) headphone. This basically means that these headphones have up to 98% reduced magnetic field emissions. In 2000 the technology that has been named the Natural Surround System S-LOGIC™ was presented as the successor of the former FPS-System.

Ultrasone have reached our shores thanks to East Coast Audio and now the latest offering from Ultrasone – The HF1-500DJ1 have hit our shores giving professional DJs a quality headphone option with safety features and a sound quality well beyond its Australian RRP of \$249.

So, What makes these headphones so good?

You literally have to listen to a pair to totally understand but I shall try and put it into words. Surround sound is an invention that we are all adding more commonly with our home AV consoles. It is that experience that can best describe how spacious and how well placed noises sound in the 500 DJ1 headphones..

Ultrasone call it Natural Surround Sound and is almost frightening the first time you place them on your head. The sound of a normal headphone will sound direct and even on both sides, whereas the Natural Surround will literally push the sound out and appear as though you are listening to speakers meters away from your head. This is not only very cool and haunting with closed eyes, but serves a very important purpose as I found out when testing these headphones in a club environment. The spacious sound allows you to hear and listen to each and every individual sound so you will always be able to place your mix, even at very low levels.

I always play music too loud. Many DJs do, this is due to the adrenalin of the moment and due to the numbing of our ears during the course of a 4 hour shift. The DJ500 allow you to play music at up to 40% lower dB output, which in any language is great. Your ears at the end of your shift wont feel like you have just spent an hour on your mobile phone. Thanks guys, no need for an aspirin tonight!

What kind of headphone?

It is unbelievable how many companies have a pair of headphones on the market for DJ's. Technics, Sony, Sennheiser and Pioneer just to name a few, the choices are simply endless. Some DJ headphones such as the Technics are designed with an emphasis put on the low frequency range sound, but this is not exactly the best solution for DJs wanting more of the mid and high frequency ranges. This is because DJs either generally follow the beat or melody and other sounds. For those who want the doof, doof, bang, bang, woop, woop headphones, these will not suit as they are a clean and bright sound. This is not to say they do not have a strong sub frequency and in fact the DJ1 headphones will play as low as 10Hz. They are more comparable to the Sennheiser or Sony headphone sound but I can honestly say sound as good if not better in many situations as compared to my HD25s, which have been my work horse for the best part of a decade.

Features – As taken from Ultrasone website.

Natural Surround Sound

Through the S-Logic Natural Surround Sound the usual headphone sound will be moved out of the head into the room. The sound is no longer locked in, but seems to be broad and detached. Directions and distances can be heard and perceived – it's just like being in a live concert. For this new technology additional equipment is not required.

Safe-Hearing Protection

In addition to this, the HF1-500 DJ1 is easy on the ears: The S-Logic Natural Surround Sound System allows an up to 40% lower dB output (3-4dB) for the same loudness sensation, thereby reducing the risk of hearing problems.

Reduced Magnetics Field Emissions

As all the Ultrasone products, the DJ1 has a strongly reduced radiation. In Australia, we have the LE (Low Emission) version headphones that cut up to 50% of nasty magnetic emissions.



Testing

Over the course of the weekend, I played 4 DJ shifts totalling 14.5 hours over 4 days. I used the Ultrasone HF1-500DJ1 in both a bar and club environment using a Pioneer DJM600 mixer in both venues. The headphones comfortably sit over the ear and are described as a closed back headphone, blocking out all outside noise. This is important to experience the sensation of space with the 500DJ1 headphones as this will ensure you only hear the perfectly placed sound from the headphone Natural

Surround system. They don't feel like the strongest pair of headphones so I gave them a really good twist and bang around to ensure they were not going to fall apart like a \$29.95 pair of phones. They caught me out and really are not only comfortable and clear, but as strong as you could ever require in the extreme temperature and environment changes we are used to in various club set-ups. The sound from the DJM600 was a very precise and evenly balanced equalisation over low, mid and high frequencies and really does separate the sound. The worst thing about testing these headphones was taking them off and realising that patrons had to put up with the less than perfect in-house sound system in the small venue struggle while I stood in a seemingly huge chamber of perfectly spaced sound .

I call it the wide eye test.

Over the course of 2 weeks, I invited a range of clients, DJs and producers to take what I could only call the wide eye test. With the Ultrasono Demo CD in the cd player, I placed the headphones on the various peoples heads and waited for the reaction. Each one stated the same surprise at the placement of sound. Now, to be fair, the demo CD provided is one of the most beautifully recorded music in binaural format that is specifically designed for headphones, but when compared to other DJ headphones, I honestly was amazed at the presentation of sound. Fireworks sound, water falls, orchestras play and all around the sound and space consumes you.

Summary

I am convinced that every DJ on the planet needs to stop reading this and go and listen to a pair of Ultrasono HFI-500DJ1. I have been impressed time and time again and so has each of my test subjects. These headphones will suit the most fastidious of music lover, DJ and also sounds great playing Formula One Grand Prix on PS2! Just hear it.

Where can I buy a pair? <http://www.eastcoastaudio.com.au/stockist.html>

Ultrasono Promotion Link - <http://12am.com.au/ultrasono>

Who is 12am?

12am is an independent Australian business based around DJ and Studio gear marketing and promotions. For more information on how 12am can help your product or service, please contact us on the following details.

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