

Head-Phones

MF sounds off on ear gear
ERIC BUTTERMAN

Just in time for the glut of fall music releases and cooler weather (a couple of these *could* double as earmuffs), our audio maven gets an earful from the latest headphones.

SONY MDR-G54LP, \$20

For their size, these cheap phones are pretty powerful — they're very efficient at absorbing the juice from the audio source, though they still sound — well, cheap. Design-wise, the neckband pinches your ears a bit, while the cord's long enough so your MP3 player can reach the pocket of your pants (but not so long that you'll trip over it).

Rating: 

ETYMOTIC ER-6, \$139

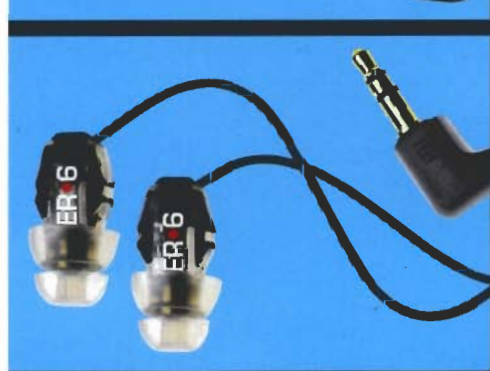
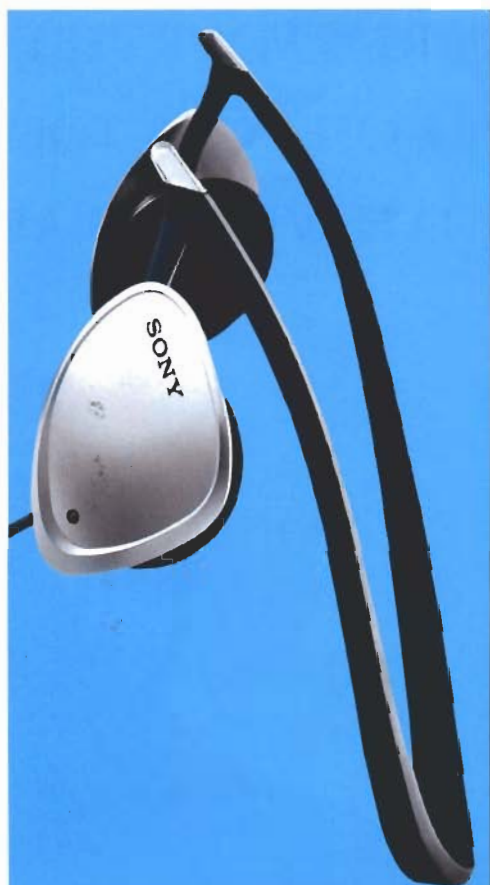
These phones are no phonies: They pump out the tunes loud and clear and deliver on their promise to cancel background noise, enabling you to home in on the music. ("What jackhammer outside my apartment?") If only these in-ear phones didn't feel so invasive to the Dumbos. Although it's performance that counts, this model's uglier than that cousin you took to the prom.

Rating: 

(*considering the price)

GRADO PRESTIGE SERIES MODEL SR225, \$200

Retro-styled with a leather-bound head strap, you hope they sound half as good as they look — and they do. The Grados do offer high performance for the price, plus you



EAR GOGGLES: Tune in, strap on, rock out.

can call the owner of this family-owned company personally if you have a problem. (At least that's what he told us.)

Rating: 

SENNHEISER HD497, \$70

Aural pleasures await. The Senns reproduce bass very well, and the audio controls work more smoothly and consistently than others in this price range. It will score with your other senses, too: The

ear pads feel soft and fit comfortably, and the set's slick design is easy on the eyes. A Senn-sational value.

Rating: 





BOSE QUIETCOMFORT 2, \$299

These noise-canceling headphones really do hit the "mute" button on the outside world — which you'll leave behind once you hear Bose's rich, spacious sound. It's like hosting Wood-

stock in your head. The only sour notes: They require one AA battery. Plus, they're the heavy, old-style phones, so don't strap 'em on for a run.

Rating: 

RATINGS KEY

-  = Ear infection
-  = Heavy wax buildup
-  = Aural sex
-  = Eargasm