

Clear sound quality worthy of the best loudspeakers with these reference headphones

Focal is confirming its position as an innovative manufacturer of high-end headphones with the launch of Clear. Benefiting from the research and development that went into developing Elear and Utopia headphones, the ambition is to establish Clear as the reference open-back headphones under €2,000/\$2,000.

FOCAL: CONSTANT INNOVATION

In 2016, Focal launched our Elear and Utopia headphones, featuring a major innovation with the full-range, completely open-back, electrodynamic transducer. This technological feat freed the headphones from any distortion generated by the ports, while ensuring the absence of any subsequent dynamic compression. One year later, Focal is revealing Clear. These circum-aural open-back headphones feature a further enhanced speaker driver in addition to a more advanced open back design than Elear. The user will completely forget they're even wearing Clear, and will be overcome by the feeling of listening to the best loudspeakers on the market.

Clear is equipped with a new generation full-range speaker driver developed by Focal. A frameless copper voice coil with a diameter of 25.5mm, and a height of 5.5mm was also developed. The use of copper gives the voice coil an extremely strong magnetic field, resulting in sound which fully respects the dynamics of the audio signal. The moving part is always under control, even when at full excursion, and the proprietary 75-micron-thick suspension capable of high elongation provides exceptional impulse response, with a break-up level increased to 24kHz. The high frequencies are extremely linear and the transients are totally respected, so Clear is capable of revealing the smallest details of the recording with great precision, providing the listener with ultra-realistic sound. Finally, the 55 Ohms impedance means you can use the device without compromise with portable high-resolution audio players.

35 YEARS OF EXPERTISE IN THE SERVICE OF ABSOLUTE ACOUSTICS

Headphones generally sound different to loudspeakers due to the shape of the soundwave created by the speaker driver, and to the listening distance. Whether it's an inverted dome or a positive dome, a listening distance of barely an inch requires that the shape of the dome be completely redesigned in order to achieve a plane wave in ultra-near-field listening.

Drawing on its 35 years of expertise, Focal has been able to develop a new generation dome launched on Elear and Utopia headphones: the 'M'-shape inverted dome. Composed of an Aluminum/Magnesium alloy, it offers an ideal combination of lightness, high rigidity and excellent damping. When listening to these headphones, the choice to use the 'M'-shape dome makes perfect sense; the power and dynamics are worthy of the best high-fidelity loudspeakers on the market. Focal also wanted to go one step further in this philosophy, by developing headphones with an even better open-back design, so the listener completely forgets they're wearing them.



MAKING THE HEADPHONES DISAPPEAR IN FAVOUR OF MUSICAL EMOTION

A key factor for realistic sound through headphones is acoustic impedance. Apart from their weight, users sense the headphones, even open-back models, as a change of space, which translates into a sensation of going from one room to a smaller room.

To solve this problem, Clear have been designed with new microfibre ear cushions. Ear pads are as important for headphones as a listening room is for loudspeakers. The 1mm diameter micro-perforations on the outer edge of the ear cushions offer unrivalled openness in this price range. This enhances the feeling of being in a listening room and not listening to headphones. The other advantage of the design is the extreme tolerance to ear cup position, regardless of the user's head size or shape. This provides sound with unprecedented uniformity, guaranteeing higher levels of performance for everyone.

In terms of design, the finish of the ear cushions has been mirrored under the headband, with a blend of grey leather on top and grey microfibre fabric underneath.

A UNIQUE DESIGN, COMBINING COMFORT AND HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS

Focal developed a headband in which the bend remains constant, regardless of the size of the head. This spreads the weight of the headphones evenly over the head, to prevent pressure on the head or ears, which is often the case with other products.

The solid Aluminum yoke developed is also impressive, both in terms of the purity of the design and in terms of comfort. The yoke doesn't have traditional vertically rotating mechanics, as this has been integrated into the headband. In addition to this, the asymmetry of the attachment points connecting the yoke to the ear cup improves the distribution of pressure, ensuring excellent sealing and optimum comfort.

SPECIFIC CONNECTORS FOR EACH DEVICE

Focal also offers a full range of connectors. Clear comes with three types of cable to ensure that users always have the best solution depending on the device used.

The 24 AWG oxygen free copper cables offer very low resistance to deliver sound with utmost transparency. The first cable measures 4ft (1.2m) and is finished with a 3.5mm stereo jack plug. This cable is generally used for connecting the headphones to portable high-resolution audio players. A 3.5mm jack socket to a 6.35mm jack plug adapter is also supplied so you can use this cable when listening to the headphones at home with your electronics nearby. The second cable measures 10ft (3m) and is finished with a 6.35mm stereo jack plug. The third cable, resolutely audiophile, enables users to take advantage of a balanced connection with a 4-point XLR connector.

These three items are covered with a braided-cotton sleeving to prevent any electrostatic charge. As for the headphones, they are equipped with two 3.5mm mono jack sockets which are lockable to secure the connection of the cable to the headphones.

The final accessory supplied with Clear is the rigid carrying case. The thermoformed shell is shaped like the headphones, and protects them from impacts and travel-related hazards. It is big enough to fit a 10ft (3m) cable, while still being compact, making it easy to store in a backpack.



FOCAL, MASTERING THE INDUSTRIAL PROCESS IN SERVICE OF ACOUSTIC PERFORMANCE

The innovation initiated with the speaker drivers for Elear and Utopia headphones is gaining momentum with the launch of Clear. The very light weight of the mobile parts in each of these products has resulted in the creation of a specific production line at the site in Saint-Étienne (France), making it possible to achieve exceptional levels of precision. Once the five steps of the speaker driver manufacturing phase have been completed, all the transducers are tested and measured, before being paired. Thus, each pair of headphones benefits from speaker drivers offering an identical frequency response curve at +/- 0.5dB!

Focal continues its quest for absolute acoustics with a new reference in the headphones market. Capable of reproducing the slightest details, offering tonal neutrality, remarkable dynamics and transients worthy of the best loudspeakers, Clear will be sure to meet the expectations of the most demanding music lovers.

Key features:

- High-performance acoustics
- A listening experience very close to that provided by high-fidelity loudspeakers
- Comfortable and ergonomic
- High-quality design and materials
- Excellent performance when connected to portable high-resolution audio players
- Supplied with 3 cables to suit all uses
- Supplied with a hard-shell carrying case

Recommended retail price (including tax): €1,500/\$1,500

Available: October 2017



ABOUT FOCAL

For more than 35 years, Focal has been recognised as a leader on the global stage for its high fidelity products. This French company based in Saint-Étienne (Loire department) manufactures speaker drivers, home audio and multimedia loudspeakers, car audio systems, monitoring loudspeakers and audiophile headphones. Some of our loudspeakers and technologies have become world-renowned references in the Hi-Fi industry.

All Focal products are designed and developed in France: they benefit from 35 years of innovation in exclusive and patented acoustic technologies. We have chosen to continue manufacturing products 'Made in France', where the quality and high standards of French workmanship place the brand above its competitors. A market leader in France, Focal exports more than 80% of its production, mainly to Europe, North America and Southeast Asia.

In 2011, Focal merged with Naim Audio Limited, the leader of high-end electronics in the U.K. Vervent Audio Group, the resulting holding company, has a turnover of over €85 millions.



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