



HiFi World (UK) – ADL H128
June 2015

Head Candy

ADL looks to build on the success of its first headphone with a new up-market model. Jon Myles listens in.

Alpha Design Labs (ADL) new H128 features custom-made drivers actuated by 40mm high-flux neodymium magnets and a special ring structure between the diaphragms, to help keep high frequencies in phase.

All of the drivers metal parts are also cryogenically frozen before putting them through a demagnetisation treatment.

The padded earpieces are finished in leatherette and sculpted to provide a firm seal and improve bass response.

Two cables are included in the box – a 3m one with a gold-plated 6.3mm plug that unscrews to reveal a 3.5mm connector plus a special 1.3m Alpha Process-treated iHP35X lead said to offer superior sound. Both connect to a mini-XLR on the underside of the left earpiece.

Weight is a claimed 320g with cable, while headband pressure is put at approximately 4.5 Newton.

Comfort-wise the ADLs were easy to wear over even extended listening periods, although the 'cups are not the largest and people with larger ears than mine might find them too small.

SOUND QUALITY

Plugged into the Moon Neo 430HA headphone amplifier (see Hi-Fi World, May 2015) via the 1.3m lead it was apparent the H128s have a distinctively different sound to the earlier H118s. The bass has the same pleasing weight and balance but there's a more emphasis to the upper mids and treble, that gives a greater sense of snap to the sound.

Alison Krauss's voice on 'Raising Sand' is startlingly clear – so much so that I could easily make out her sharp intakes of breath between individual phrases.

Similarly Noel Gallagher's guitar work on 'Rock 'N' Roll' star had a distinct searing edge to it – not harsh

but just enough to bring out the excitement in the track.

Turning to the Leftfield's classic 'Leftism' dance collection, the ADLs kept the lower registers of 'Release The Pressure' in good check, maintaining good timing but never allowing the electronic bass to dominate what was going on higher up the musical scale.

The H128s were also extremely impressive at providing that 'out of head' experience. Unlike some rivals there was never sense of music being projected into the ears but more a feeling of it floating free of the earcups.

Playing The Orb's 'Towers Of Dub' and the effects shifted seamlessly from one side to the other while the music sounded as though it was floating around my head. Detail here was also good with the ADLs picking up those all-important subtle background sounds.

CONCLUSION

The H128s are an exciting listen with a firm bass but a slightly prominent midband and treble. Consequently they sound detailed and fast but sacrifice some of the smoothness of the company's original H118s. If you're

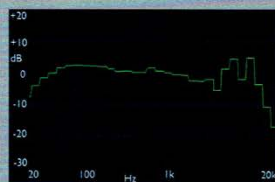


tempted by the ADLs I'd recommend hearing them both side-by-side before making your mind up.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The ADL H128s have a smooth response pattern, our analysis shows, with strong

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



bass down to 60Hz. There is a notable lift up at high frequencies, enough to give the H128s strong treble by current standards. Few headphones peak so strongly in the treble.

Impedance measured a high 80 Ohms. Sensitivity was fair at 91dB SPL (loud) from a small 1mW of input power, the weakest portable can deliver.

The H128s will sound smooth with clean bass, strong midrange insight but very strong treble. **NK**

ADL H128 £295



EXCELLENT - extremely capable.

VERDICT

Another excellent set of headphones from ADL with firm, controlled bass but prominent treble.

FOR

- comfort
- bass response
- detail
- accessories

AGAINST

- prominent mid and treble

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