



Audeze LCD-GX Review

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Premium audio comes at a price, but is it worth it?

- Manufacturer: Audeze
- Model: LCD-GX
- Release date: Available now
- Supported Platforms: PC, Xbox One, PS4, Switch, Mobile (adapter may be required)
- Reviewed on: Windows PC, Xbox One X, PS4, Android Mobile
- Supplied by: Manufacturer



Audeze is a relative newcomer to the gaming headset market, but they have been making a strong impression with their first offerings. Specialising in high-end devices, Audeze's headphones utilise their patented Fluxor planar-magnetic driver technology, which provides superior quality audio. We recently reviewed the Audeze Mobius, an absolute powerhouse of a headset, and we gave it a 9.5 out of 10, praising its premium design, superb sound quality, and technological innovations. Next up we have the LCD-GX, the bigger brother to the Mobius. How will it compare to its technology-packed sibling?

Where the Audeze Mobius is all about the features and technology, the LCD-GX offers a much purer audio solution. There is no Bluetooth, wireless or USB option – the LCD-GX is an entirely analogue headset. It means you are reliant on external devices if you need surround sound processing, however, most consoles and PC's offer competent virtual surround sound processing, so this should not dissuade you from this headset. Indeed, this focus on pure sound quality means the LCD-GX is ultra-refined, with no reliance on technological frills to gain credibility.

While most higher-end headsets come with a soft case to store your headphones, the LCD-GX goes above and beyond, providing you with an admittedly large, but incredibly robust flight case. Packed out with thick, custom cut foam, it is secure and protected enough to survive even the most over-enthusiastic of airport baggage handlers.

Within this case, you will find the LCD-GX headphones, the boom mic cable with a 3.5mm TRRS connector, an OMTP to CTIA adaptor (reverses the ground and mic inputs for older devices), a 3.5mm TRRS to dual 3.5mm TRS splitter for devices with separate headphone and mic inputs, and a ¼" TRS cable without the boom mic for connecting to an amplifier or compatible system.



The LCD-GX is an offshoot of the LCD series from Audeze. What impresses is how with each iteration they continue to refine and develop their headphones, rather than complacently make minor changes, and the LCD-GX is an expression of this refinement. Audeze have created a beautiful looking headset here, which wouldn't look out of place in a professional studio (and as we discovered, it sounds good enough to use in a studio too).

Unlike the Mobius, which could easily pass as a pair of luxury headphones you might wear out and about, the LCD-GX has a more industrial feel. The headband has a wide, faux-leather suspension band, seated underneath a split magnesium frame, continuing down to the metal arms that hold the earcups. These earcups are again constructed within a magnesium frame, housing a metal grille with a subtle 'A' logo integrated it, with a contrasting red metal mesh underneath. In my humble opinion, the LCD-GX is arguably the best looking headset Audeze have created, and it's one of the best looking headsets available at this time.

The magnesium housing is incredibly robust, but despite the solid construction, the LCD-GX is very lightweight. They may look like they would weigh down heavily on your head, but they are actually remarkably comfortable. The angled arms that hold the earcups to the headband may look unusual, but in practical use, they really open out the suspension headband, giving a large surface area to place across your head, and it is satisfyingly comfortable during prolonged gaming sessions. The memory foam earpads themselves have luxuriously thick padding and they fit snugly around your ears, creating a solid seal.



Connectivity is excellent, with most devices offering the required 3.5mm input needed to connect your headset. During our testing, we connected to a range of smartphones, laptops and consoles, with the headset working admirably in all of them. Without an amp or DAC connected to your device, you may find the peak volume doesn't go as loud as you may want, as you really need a decent amp to power these drivers. It's not because they are quieter than anything else we've used, rather because most devices don't produce enough power to properly drive them. When hardware manufacturers make their devices, they rarely put in any more than the most basic / cheapest of DAC solutions, and while it's true that the LCD-GX sounds great even through a standard connection, it is when you connect to a good DAC or amp that they really come to life.

The headset doesn't suffer from any audible distortion even at maximum volume, so you are likely going to want to push them hard. The LCD-GX have an impedance of 20 ohms, with a minimum power requirement of >100mW and a recommended power output of >250mW. Most devices don't produce

this kind of power, and without enough power to really push them, you won't get the full experience so you should budget for a good amp. It's important to point out that we did, however, find the volume of the LCD-GX more than adequate for our usual gaming without external amplification. Without an amp, peak output is comparable to other headsets we have reviewed, and the sound quality is still superb, but it can be so, so much better.



The LCD-GX is designed with the audio purist in mind, a fact proven by their crafting of a solely analogue gaming headset, with no digital processing. With their open-back design, they have remarkably clean and accurate acoustics, capable of jaw-dropping width and depth.

We tested the LCD-GX with the Schiit Audio Hel, as recommended by Audeze, and it retails at around £200. There are other amps/DACs available, such as the excellent Cyrus SoundKey if you are on a budget, and many other high-end solutions are available, however, for the price and performance, the Schiit Audio Hel really is the Schiit.

Similar to the Mobius, the bass of the LCD-GX is very clean, but doesn't have the heavy reverb common in most gaming headsets. The deepest sounds, like explosions or the rumbling of vehicles, for example, are still clearly represented but don't drown out the space between the bass and mid-range. What the LCD-GX does manage, is to transform these low frequencies into a much more articulated and detailed sound. As a result of these cleaner low frequencies, the separation is excellent, and it makes listening at a louder volume much more enjoyable.

Mid-range audio is, as you would expect from Audeze, sublime. In-game music, vocals and ambient effects are rich and detailed, and there's a natural presence to the sound. This is complemented further as you reach the higher ranges. Treble is crisp without being sharp or piercing and it is beautifully balanced even with standard EQ settings. Clarity throughout is exceptional, and the dynamism and textures of the sound are captured really well. The

natural soundstage on these headphones is head and shoulders better than anything available in the gaming market.

The nature of planar magnetic drivers means they have a very rapid response rate, which translates into an instant representation of sharper, more violent sounds, such as gunfire, and it allows for an authentic imitation of real-world acoustics. The report of rifles carries a satisfying crack, and high RPM automatic fire carries a clear distinction between each round fired. Despite the lack of dedicated audio profiles to emphasise these sounds, when using virtual surround the clarity of the sound allows you to pinpoint directional audio clearly, which is very important in many multiplayer games.



Games with an orchestral score are really brought to life, too. The opening score from Halo 3 (*Halo 3 OST – Never Forget – by Martin O’Donnell and Michael Salvatori*) is transformed into an epic, spine-tingling experience. The swells of the strings resonate beautifully, whilst still allowing the piano to have the isolation it needs to shine and it’s a magical sensation. God of War is another game renowned for having an incredible score, and the LCD-GX allows the composer’s vision to really come to life. The deep bass is nuanced, allowing you to pick up on the details of the complex layering of elements, whilst the brass sections perfectly capture the slightly raspy nature of the instruments when played at volume, but with enough distinction to pick up on the strings and percussion.

Amplified and emphasised by a DAC and/or headphone amp, the sound is simply unbelievable. Even at deafeningly loud volumes, the sound is crystal clear and pin-sharp. There's really nothing comparable on the market for audiophile gamers. Even the Mobius, which is a phenomenal sounding headset, doesn't have as rich an audio experience as the LCD-GX. During testing, we used the headset both with and without the amp in equal measure.

When connected to an Xbox One X without the amp, the sound was still excellent, however, the controller port isn't powerful enough to reach the volume required to drive the headphones properly. It's comparable in volume to the Turtle Beach headsets we tested it with, but it is an immeasurably higher quality sound, whilst through the PS4, which has a more powerful audio output, it was definitely louder, whilst still retaining the beautifully rich and detailed sound quality. Again, through a mobile phone this time, the sound was crisp, clear, and had perfectly ample volume for casual listening.

Whichever source you choose, though, the sound is absolutely outstanding. Having used some high-end audio gear in the past, I can safely say that the LCD-GX are the best sounding headphones I have ever used, and I can't think of anything I'd rather use when I'm looking for the purest, accurate and detailed audio. The LCD-GX is primarily aimed at PC gamers, though, and whilst they are amazing no matter what they are plugged into, if you have a good amp plugged into a capable PC, there is no better way to experience these headphones.

Microphone quality has also been carefully considered, with your voice being picked up clearly by the flexible boom mic. The mic has a removable foam cover, which is useful if you have a lot of background noise, as we found this mic picked up quite a bit of background noise without it. The mic isn't removable, but it is unobtrusive and can easily be moved out of the way if you are having a quick drink or snack.



Usually, by this point, I'd be discussing any negatives with you, but the LCD-GX is absolutely faultless. At a stretch, needing an amp to power them could be seen as a minus point, but that's like complaining that a Ferrari needs an engine to go fast. *(Okay, that analogy doesn't really work, because the engine is included in the price, but you get what I mean)*

Before we summarise these astonishingly good headphones, I'd like to leave you with a personal take on these headphones, from a prospective customers perspective.

The LCD-GX is the best sounding headset I have ever used. They are simply, astonishingly, remarkably brilliant, but... Would I buy them, at the market price of over £800?

The answer is a definite yes. If you are an audiophile who wants the cleanest, best sounding audio, and you have access to a good DAC or amp, good quality

hardware and high fidelity audio sources, then there is nothing better than the LCD-GX for enjoying pristine music, gaming, movies and more. There is a small caveat to this, though. I would buy these without hesitation if I had the spare cash, however, having recently reviewed the Audeze Mobius, I would buy those for the incredible implementation of the 3D audio and Waves NX surround sound first, then save up for the LCD-GX, too!

To the good folks over at Audeze – if you can make an updated version of the LCD-GX that combines the 3D audio and 7.1ch surround sound processing of the Mobius, I will literally throw money at you for those!

A small warning to anyone thinking of trying out either of these Audeze headsets. There is no going back... Once you have experienced this quality of audio for any length of time, nothing else will ever seem good enough. Most of us can appreciate the pleasure we get from a well-made screen to view our chosen content on, however, many of you are probably using admittedly good, but not outstanding headphones. Now, with the Audeze range of gaming headsets, you can have superior audio to match the visual fidelity of the best screens.

Summary

The LCD-GX is, without a doubt, the best sounding headset I have ever used. I have used a lot of headsets, and there are many I would recommend, but I have found very few headsets that I have actually *loved*. I love these headphones though. There simply isn't anything aimed at gamers that can offer the sound quality of the LCD-GX. The pure simplicity of these headphones, along with their compatibility with almost any device on the market, makes them an essential purchase for any audio purist.

9.9

The Good

- Compatible with almost any device
- Incredible audio quality
- Excellent build quality and design
- Strength and durability
- Did we mention how good they sound?

The Bad

- Price is high for a gaming headset (but worth it)