

hi-finews
OUTSTANDING
PRODUCT

Circumaural planar-magnetic headphone
Made by: Audeze LLC, California, USA
Supplied by: Exertis UK, Essex
Telephone: 01279 822822
Web: www.audeze.com; www.unlimited.com
Price: £399

AUDIO
FILE

Audeze LCD-1

With these open-backed headphones costing £399 Audeze has produced a smaller, lighter alternative to its other LCD models. Here it has adopted a single-sided planar magnetic driver unit with profiled bar magnets on one side of the diaphragm only.

A possible concern for some will be the smallish earpads, commensurate with the reduced capsule dimensions. They don't have a large enough opening to surround the entire ear – unless yours are notably dainty. So despite its low weight and a modest head clamping force, comfort will depend on the shape of your head...

Also, our lab tests suggest that the LCD-1 is moderately sensitive to the integrity of the earpad seal. Avoiding leaks is an imperative if you want to enjoy the prodigious bass extension that PM 'phones usually deliver, and of which the LCD-1 is certainly capable.

The cable is almost 2.1m in length and divides 37cm short of

to a price. In many ways this seems the least idiosyncratic Audeze headphone ever – which piles pressure on it to deliver a sound that the marque's devotees have come to expect...

TELLING TEST

While the mind-blowing £3599 LCD-4z has spoiled us rotten, Audeze has also shown mastery with affordable kit, including our choice for train travel: the sealed-back, on-ear Sine. But the open-backed LCD-1 immediately showed more bloom, warmth and refinement.

We assessed them with LP, tape and digital download sources. The latter surprised us no end, and it's particularly telling as the

LCD-1s were analytical enough to allow us to hear the difference between the same song via two different smartphones and our superior Pioneer XDP-100R portable [HFN Aug '16].

These LCD-1s are no slouches when it comes to hearing nuances!

Our track selections included the mono version of 'Ue O Mu-ite Aruko' by Kyu Sakamoto (originally issued by Toshiba-EMI), and the ultra-wide stereo of Julie London's 'They Didn't Believe Me' from *Julie... At Home* [Liberty Records]. Both these recordings feature distinctive, emotive voices, lush backing and enough beauty to allow one to play them a dozen times in a row without losing the will to live.

Both Kyu and Julie sang largely within the head, true, but the breathiness of the latter and the clear enunciation of the former were perfectly preserved and 'non-intrusive'. How can something be in one's skull and *not* be intrusive?

'These LCD-1s are no slouches when it comes to hearing nuances'

the capsules to connect separately to each via gold-plated 3.5mm TRS mini-jack plugs. The same connector is fitted at the source end of the lead, and there is a clip-on (rather than screw-on) adapter provided for use with 1/4in jack outlets.

There's no channel identification on the headset plugs but the capsules themselves are clearly labelled on the inside of the headband. So take care not to misconnect L/R channels! And gratifyingly, while the lead has a braided sheath, this is not a headphone prone to disconcerting levels of capsule noise when the cable drags across clothing.

While some may consider the LCD-1 perhaps a little ordinary, it has necessarily been engineered



ABOVE: While the fold-up capsules and provision of a carrying case suggest mobile music use, the one lead provided (with 1/4in adapter) is a lengthy 2.1m

Well, we heard both an absence of artifice and enough outside-of-the-head sound to preclude any such distraction from the performances.

VERDICT

The Audeze LCD-1s can fold up to near-pocket size, sound superb whatever the source and are so free of nasties that we could even imagine them crossing the thin line between hi-fi and studio usage. If you want true high-end cans but can't (or just won't) pay four figures, you simply must hear them. ☺

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL at 1kHz for 1Vrms input)	118.1dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	13.1ohm @ 4.4kHz 13.3ohm @ 9.9kHz
Capsule matching (40Hz-10kHz)	±3.3dB
LF extension (-6dB ref. 200Hz)	<20Hz
Distortion 100Hz/1kHz (for 90dB SPL)	<0.1% / <0.1%
Weight (headset only)	253g