



"Music should make you feel alive" A Flashback message from Big Country

Hear Hear! Cambridge Audio's Melomania P100 SE over-ear headphones



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

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PERFECT FIT

Acoustic Energy's AE300² is a space-saving dynamo

QOBUZ PLAYLIST

Black Sabbath, Tame Impala, Nick Drake, Wolf Alice & more...

BUYING GUIDE
100+ Essential Components p104

AWESOME!

Sony's WH-1000XM6 wireless closed-back headphones

Bargain of the month

Musical Fidelity's B1xi integrated amplifier

+ NEWS SPECIAL:

Launches from Monitor Audio, FiiO, Lenco, JBL, Eversolo, CoLinear, Pro-Ject & more...

BOOM TIME!

SVS SB-5000 R|Evolution subwoofer

COMPANY CONFIDENTIAL

How Exposure creates great British hi-fi



FABULOUSLY FLEXIBLE

Marantz's MODEL M1 streaming amp

ON POINT!



Audio-Technica's new VMx cartridge range

"BIG & BOLD"



Wilson Audio's Sabrina V three-way floorstander

IMMACULATE



Silent Angel's Bremen SL1 Plus network streamer





Signature dish

Neville Roberts is smitten as he slips on the second headphone offering from Grado's new Signature line

I was impressed with the sound quality of Grado's first Signature headphone offering – the HP100 SE (HFC 527), so am expecting great things from this latest addition.

The first thing that strikes me is the attractive housing, which is made from a handcrafted Brazilian walnut that's grown in the rain forests of the Amazon. It's the first time Grado has used this type of wood and, while it looks elegant, the company claims that it gives the headphones a more relaxed presentation and stability to the rather analytical sound of the older HP100 SE.

The S950 uses the same 52mm S driver as the HP100 SE with its paper composite cone attached to a voice coil made from lightweight copper-plated aluminium. The coil sits in a powerful high-flux magnetic circuit, which uses rare earth alloys – giving it a claimed sensitivity of 115dB/mW.

As with all of the Signature line, the S950 has detachable cables and is supplied with a 1.8m cable with a soft, durable braided finish and improved insulation. The cable is terminated with a 6.3mm stereo jack and connects to each housing via

4-pin mini XLR plugs. Additional detachable cable options (4-pin XLR equipment termination, 4.4mm balanced termination and various cable lengths) will be available soon.

The Signature S950 utilises the new headband assembly that was first made available on the Signature HP100 SE. It features 50 percent more padding than previous designs and has a stainless-steel band and height rods, which can be adjusted for fit to minimise listening fatigue. The gimbals are made from an aluminium alloy and the stainless-steel height rod adds stability at the connection point. The rod is designed to remain secure to the junction block as well as restrict the housing rotation to 105°, helping minimise wear over time.

The headphone is supplied with the new 'G' over-ear cushions and older style flat 'F' pads that came with the original HP1, HP2 and HP3. In my opinion, the newer pads are preferable to the older ones.

Sound quality

I hook up the Signature S950 to my valve headphone amplifier and commence listening with a copy-master tape of Barbra Streisand's

Evergreen from the 1981 *Memories* album. Surprisingly for headphones, the Signature S950 reproduces the natural depth of the recording with remarkable authenticity and Streisand's voice sounds as if she is singing in a large hall – which she is! The orchestra is sparkling and clear, but natural and not edgy while the music exudes refinement.

Switching to some baroque music, I spin a vinyl LP of Vivaldi's *Cello Concerto in A major RV419* by Interpreti Veneziani. The detail of the cello is fantastic, its positioning just to the right of centre as it should be. The strings of the orchestra are extremely

The S950 reproduces the recording's natural depth with superb authenticity

clear, but smooth and refined, while each of the eight players retain their own space within the soundstage – which is impressive for headphones.

I finish off with a full orchestra and the powerful Tchaikovsky recording of *Symphony No. 4 In F minor*, by the Cleveland Orchestra. The Signature S950 takes the huge dynamics in its stride and produces great clarity throughout. The very deep bass drum is punchy and well extended. The exuberant presentation, for which this performance is noted, is brilliantly handled. Of particular note are the strident trumpet blasts during the opening, which are clear and bright without being overly harsh.

Conclusion

The Signature S950 puts out excellent musical textures and a very polished performance overall. I personally prefer the Signature HP100 SE as the S950 sound is more refined, but it's an excellent quality headphone option for the discerning audiophile ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Grado Signature S950

ORIGIN
USA

TYPE
Open-back headphone

WEIGHT
395g

FEATURES
● 52mm paper composite drivers
● 4-pin mini XLR connection
● Detachable 1.8m cable

DISTRIBUTOR
Armour Home

WEBSITE
grado.co.uk

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

LIKE: Smooth and elegant sound that is easy on the ears

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

DISLIKE: Nothing at the price

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

WE SAY: Another high-quality headphone from Grado that sounds impressive, is attractive and beautifully made

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★