



Looking for trouble:
The Black Crowes
come out fighting

Elegant! Grado's
Signature HP100
SE open-back cans



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

Issue No. 527

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RUARK ROCKS

Retro R610 music system & Sabre-R speakers are a rave

**REASONS
TO BE
CHEERFUL**

Spinal Tap,
Bono, Oasis,
John & Yoko &
much more...

**BUYING
GUIDE**
100+ Essential
Components
p105

MUSCULAR!

Klipsch's Flexus Core 200
Dolby Atmos soundbar

BARGAIN OF THE MONTH

Bowers & Wilkins' Pi6 Bluetooth in-ear buds

**NEWS
SPECIAL:**

Launches from
**Pro-Ject, Michell,
Meze Audio, Piega,
FiiO, Rega & more...**

**TOTALLY
FORMIDABLE**

Bluesound's NODE
ICON preamp/
streamer



Desktop dynamo

iFi audio's stunning ZEN DAC 3

BRILLIANT UPDATE



PMC's Active twenty5.23i
two-way floorstanders

SUPER SONICS



Ortofon's Concorde Music
Blue moving-magnet cart

HOMEGROWN CHARMER



English Acoustics'
Downton preamplifier



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100 not out

100 years since the birth of founder Joseph Grado, the US company has new flagship cans. **Neville Roberts** celebrates

Back in 1953, watchmaker Joseph Grado founded Grado Laboratories to produce phono cartridges that he'd made on his kitchen table for years in Brooklyn, New York. In fact, he also went on to invent the first stereo moving-coil cart while building up the company's lineup. Jump forward to 1990 and Grado's nephew, John, bought the business from his uncle and created its first line of headphones with the Signature HP1 at the top of the range.

Although Joseph Grado passed away in 2015, the company wanted to celebrate the centenary of his birth by launching a new flagship headphone: the Signature HP100 SE. Despite being a nod to the Signature HP1 and still hand-assembled in the company's Brooklyn-based headquarters, this is a completely new design. As well as having updated engineered drivers, the HP100 SE now comes fitted with detachable cables and has an improved headband assembly.

One of the design aims of the HP100 SE was to create a new 52mm driver with a good high-frequency resolution, midrange, smoothness and bass energy with low distortion. To this end, a new paper composite cone was chosen, which is attached to a new voice coil made from lightweight copper-plated aluminium. This voice coil sits in a powerful high flux magnetic circuit using rare earth alloys. The resulting sensitivity of 117dB/mW makes it very efficient, so amp power should not be an issue.

This is the first Grado model to feature detachable cables, which have been engineered to a softer but durable braided finish, with insulation that improves flexibility and decreases weight. Additional detachable options such as 4-pin XLR, 4.4mm balanced and different cable lengths will be available in the future.

The headband assembly features 50 percent more padding than previous Grado designs and has a stainless steel band and height rods that can be adjusted to minimise listening fatigue.

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Grado Signature
HP100 SE

ORIGIN
USA

TYPE
Open-back
headphone

WEIGHT
520g

FEATURES
• 52mm drivers
• 12-conductor
detachable 1.8m
cable fitted with
6.3mm jack
• Quoted sensitivity:
117dB/m/1W

DISTRIBUTOR
Armour Home

WEBSITE
grado.co.uk
armourhome.co.uk

The gimbals are made from an aluminium alloy and the height rod using stainless steel. The housings come in a Space Grey finish and are machined from specially treated aluminium and supplied with new 'G' over-ear cushions (my preference) and the older style flat 'F' cushions of the original HP1, HP2 and HP3.

Sound quality

Plugging in the HP100 SE to my HD83 valve headphone amp, I commence listening with Steve Race's *Take One*. The muted trumpet is perfectly positioned just right of centre, with the guitar far right, highlighting great image placement. The bass and drums are punchy and well extended.

Spinning Lyn Stanley's *It's Magic*, vocals and orchestral backing have real presence. The bass is clear and the brass sparkles with great clarity. The performance comes through as effortless, detailed and very refined.

Moving on to Mendelssohn's *Octet* performed by The Locrian Ensemble, the detail is absolutely superb and each individual instrument clearly occupies its own position within the soundstage. Finishing off with the rousing *Spartacus* by Khachaturian and the Vienna Philharmonic, the performance is big, full and very powerful. The drums in particular really seem to resonate with a commanding authority. The detail in the percussion is crystal clear and the strings are not at all harsh. Brass instruments are not over bright, but have a very real presence.

Conclusion

The HP100 SE puts out a really refined sound and, while some may feel it lacks a modern and elegant appearance, it certainly makes up for it when it comes to sound quality. This makes it perfect for those audiophiles wanting reference-quality dynamic open-back headphones •

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

LIKE: Full, elegant and refined sound

DISLIKE: Slightly dated appearance

WE SAY: A high-quality and well-made headphone that will certainly be at home in any high-end system