

SOUNDBITES – SENNHEISER OMX 90 VC EARPHONES

Neville Roberts

Sennheiser OMX 90 VC Earphones £50

You will find the OMX 90 VC earphones listed under the 'Style' section on the Sennheiser website. These stereo clip-on earphones are top of the 'Streetwear Headphones' range and incorporate an integrated volume control. They are clearly designed for use with portable MP3 players, such as iPods and the like.

The earphones, which have an amazing quoted frequency response of 19 – 22,000Hz, employ dynamic transducers and have a 64 ohm impedance.

The OMX 90s are beautifully presented in an ingeniously designed package, from which it took yours truly a good 5 minutes to carefully extricate all the various parts! Apart from the volume control and 3.5mm right angled gold-plated stereo mini-jack plug, the earphones come with two sets of ear pads and a rather nice carrying case.



Fortunately, the carrying case is easy to use as the left and right earpieces fit into an inner hinged plastic holder with a moulding to wrap the wires around. The 'stick' volume control is neatly positioned along the wire so that it lines up nicely with its slot in the holder. The volume control itself incorporates a sliding shaft to adjust the volume – very elegant and, dare I say, stylish?

The ear clips fitted neatly over the top of my ear, but unfortunately they failed to hold the earpieces securely in my ear canal, which is a requirement for good sound reproduction. Judging by the number of young people I see walking down the street using earphones to listen to their iPods with great ease, I have come to the conclusion that the process of evolution and natural selection has played its part in forming the ear canals of the next generation of our species! They can clearly do what I have never been able to master in that they can wear earphones without them falling out. Sadly, the only way I could listen to the OMX 90s properly was by holding them in place with my fingers!

In spite of the above difficulty, the earpieces did sound extraordinarily good once they had been correctly situated in my ears. Used in conjunction with a standard MP3 player, I found the OMX 90s to be in a completely different league from the earphones originally supplied with the player. As one would expect with a higher quality product, the Sennheisers were less sensitive than the original earphones. I therefore found that the volume on the MP3 player needed to be set near maximum and the stick volume control used to set the appropriate level.

As far as sound quality is concerned, the Sennheisers won hands down in every respect - cleaner and clearer top end, smooth midrange and extended bass response. The earphones weren't phased by full orchestras, nor did solo instruments uncover any nasties.

Starting at the low end, the bass was well balanced with the rest of the audio spectrum on the OMX 90s, whereas it was completely missing on the supplied earphones. Having said that, I feel that Sennheisers claim of a response down to 19Hz is probably a little optimistic, but in fairness they don't quote a tolerance in dB either! In any case, it is unfair to judge these earphones against, say, a pair of Sennheiser HD580s driven by a valve headphone amplifier fed from a vinyl front end.

Moving up to the midrange, this sounded smooth and vocals were very well presented. Piano music was very believable and enjoyable.

At the top end, the digital harshness, which was so apparent on the supplied earphones, was well tamed by the Sennheisers. Strings lost their rough edge, but without losing detail or clarity.

All in all, considering their intended market and their use for music on the go, they certainly justify their cost. Providing you have compatible ear canals, they actually make listening to MP3 music a pleasurable experience!

Contact Sennheiser on +44 (0) 1494 551 551 or visit their website at <http://www.sennheiser.co.uk>

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