

Forbes

Technology

GADGETS WE LOVE

Ultimate Ears

WHEN I WAS A KID I WAS OBSESSED with becoming a rock star—and it drove my parents crazy. Every night after dinner I retreated to my room, loaded the stereo with the latest U2 or Guns N' Roses album and pressed play. I practiced at the highest volumes possible, shouting melodies from atop my bed to an audience of *Star Wars* action figures. Eventually my father insisted I use the cheap, muddy headphones that had come with my portable CD player. Ever since, I've been desperately searching for a pair of buds that could deliver both brilliant sound and a comfortable fit. Last year I discovered Ultimate Ears—now the irreplaceable complement to my iPod and computers at home and work, the headphones for my life's soundtrack.

Favorites of pros like Aerosmith and Jimmy Buffett, Ultimate Ears are custom-fitted to my ears. After I ordered a set, for \$550, an audiologist was dispatched to my office to create impressions of each ear, a painless ten-minute process completed by filling them with a cool green silicone. A week later a small metal box arrived with what looked like really slick hearing aids, engraved with my initials on each bud, blue on the left and red on the right. I slipped them in and, because the fit was so seamless, immediately the office went silent.

I plugged them into my computer and started The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again." In a blast of sonic brilliance, the two speakers inside each of the headphones separated the high and low frequencies, delivering sharp, rich tones straight into my ear canals. It was as if I were in the room with the band.

Ultimate Ears are perfect for aspiring audiophiles bent on hearing every layer of a song, or just the average listener looking for peak performance, consistently. They never fall out and never disturb people next to me, unless I decide to sing along. —Matthew Miller

Ultimate Ears UE5c
Price: \$550
www.ultimateears.com