

Choice EXTRAS

Musical Fidelity MF-100 headphones

WHEN THE HEADPHONE and earphone market suddenly exploded into life a few years back, Musical Fidelity was quick to respond. The EB-50 earphone managed to look and feel like a Musical Fidelity product and is still one of the best value propositions at the price. Now, the company is back with two new models. The EB-33 is a new less expensive earphone, while the MF-100 is the first foray into over-ear models.

The MF-100 is at the 'large portable' end of the size scale and the pads sit on, rather than over, the ear. The earpads are interesting as Musical Fidelity claims to have achieved some of the air and space of an open-back headphone while keeping the MF-100 closed back. This has apparently been achieved by paying close attention to the alignment of the components in the housing and their position relative to the ear. Quite how this works is unclear, but placing them on your head with no sound playing does reveal a slightly open quality to the sounds that make their way into the enclosure suggesting that something has been achieved to this end.

The other interesting feature is two sets of interchangeable earpads are supplied. You have a choice of leather or alcantara – good for those looking to use them for exercise. Changing the pads over is less simple, however, and you should make sure you have plenty of time and some space before trying to switch from one to the other. Both types provide a reasonable degree of padding, but the spring loading on the headband is quite aggressive and I find the pressure exerted on the back of my ear in particular after about an hour or so is rather high.

The look of love

Internally, the MF-100 makes use of a pair of 41mm dynamic drivers and these are set well back from the ear thanks to the earpads. In use, the MF-100 is impressively sensitive and should not be a challenge even for fairly low-powered headphone amps in smartphones and tablets. There



are some other neat design touches to make them more recognisably Musical Fidelity, like the coloured rings to denote left and right sides and a little machined metal remote on the cord. This also includes a microphone to allow you to make and receive calls from a smartphone. The MF-100 comes supplied with a carry bag and although it doesn't fold up, it is reasonably easy to stow.

In use, the sensitivity of the MF-100 is perhaps its greatest asset. It manages to sound effortless and civilised with a wide variety of music. Part of this is down to the bass response. Musical Fidelity claims a frequency response that suggests performance is almost completely flat, but in reality the bass response is extremely potent and this gives the MF-100 a real sense of drive even at low volume levels. As per the suggestion of the chart, the bass itself does seem to integrate well with the rest of the frequency response.

This bass extension combines well with a midrange and treble that is clear and detailed, but has the very slightest warmth to it. This means that even with compressed or edgy material, the MF-100 stays easy to listen to and very smooth. Being hyper critical, this warmth can rob strings and voices of absolute impact in comparison to something like Grado's forensic SR60i, but the

forgiving presentation is a good idea for any headphone that seems to have been designed with a view to being used on the move.

Considering that the design of the MF-100 is closed back, there is also a commendable sense of space to the performance too. Again, compared to a true open-back design, the MF-100 cannot compete with the airiness and space available, but given that the Musical Fidelity also effectively keeps the outside world at bay while doing so, the results are encouraging. Big orchestral pieces manage to have a soundstage to them that gives them an all-important level of believability. The MF-100 also proves at home with smaller-scale pieces too by capturing a sense of the space they were recorded in.

All right on the night

For a first attempt at a pair of over-ear headphones, Musical Fidelity has managed to get an awful lot right with the MF-100. This is a sensibly sized, well assembled and competitively priced pair of headphones. If you are looking for a pair of cans to use on the move that also manage to do the business for some home listening as well, there is a great deal to like about the way that the MF-100 goes about making music. **ES**

DETAILS

PRICE
£119
WEBSITE
musicalfidelity.com

OUR VERDICT

