

GIZMO PATROL

NoiseBuster Masks Annoying Background Sounds

By James Cummings

While you're taking a long airline flight or jogging on a treadmill or mowing the lawn, it's sometimes pleasant to immerse yourself in your favorite music. The background noise associated with those activities, though, can make your music hard to enjoy.



NB-FX headphones cost \$69 and are available direct from the manufacturer.

NoiseBuster NB-FX headphones can go a long way toward improving the quality of music you hear by electronically canceling out some of the low-frequency noise that normally reaches your ear from irritating sound sources in the environment.

NoiseBusters and other noise-canceling headphones have been around a few years, but Pro Tech Communications of Fort Pierce, Fla., introduced what it says is an improved model, the NB-FX, a couple of months ago. A test unit provided to the *Dayton Daily News* performed fairly well, but showed some limitations.

The idea behind noise-canceling headphones is that they produce balancing sound to counteract noise. When a low-frequency noise reaches the headphones, they produce a "mirror image" high-frequency sound. The two sounds cancel one another out, so the listener hears only what's on the CD or movie sound track.

Unlike ear buds that fit into the ear opening, NoiseBuster headphones come with cushioned cups that completely surround the ear. The mere presence of the padded cups reduces some of the environmental noise that normally interferes with music listening.

In tests, the NoiseBuster performed best in canceling the low-frequency roar of a lawn mower. With the noise-canceling feature turned off, music was barely audible with the lawn mower running 10 feet away. With the noise-canceling feature turned on, the roar was reduced to a background hum; the lawn mower was still audible, but the music came through clearly, even with the CD player set at relatively low volume.

Pro Tech Communication says the product is perfect for reducing other noises, such as the drone of an airplane engine or the whine of a treadmill. The product comes with an adapter that makes it compatible with standard airline sound systems.

The NoiseBuster NB-FX was less successful cutting through the high-pitched sound of a vacuum cleaner. It also was only moderately successful covering the sound of a talk-radio program played near the listener.

NoiseBuster NB-FX headphones can be purchased direct from the manufacturer for \$69 by going to www.protechcommunications.com and clicking on "Products" and then "Headsets."

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