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Noise-busting headphones compare well to pricier models

By Ric Manning, The (Louisville) Courier-Journal

When it comes to noise-canceling headphones, most people think Bose is the gold standard.

The company initially developed noise-reduction headphones for pilots, then created a version for consumers. But with a \$300 price tag, you need a pilot's paycheck to afford a pair.

The new NoiseBuster headphones from Pro Tech Communications (www.protechcommunications.com) perform almost as well as the Bose headphones for a lot less money — \$69.

Like Bose, the NoiseBuster NB-FX uses active-noise-reduction technology to identify and cancel unwanted noise.

The headphones contain a small battery-powered microphone that hears and identifies the audio signature of the noise around you. It could be the sound of an airplane engine, a subway train or highway traffic.

Built-in electronic circuits then counter the offending sound by producing an opposite sound wave. The competing waves nearly cancel out each other.

The outside sounds don't disappear, but they become much less audible. The roar of a lawn mower, for instance, becomes a low hum, so you can use the NoiseBuster headphones to listen to music and radio programs without having to crank the volume all the way up.

The NoiseBuster headphones have an open-back design that makes them lighter and more comfortable than headphones with cups that completely enclose the ear. Their smaller size also makes them more convenient for travel.

The headband also has a hinge in the center, which allows the phones to fold up for storage.

NoiseBuster's earlier models had the electronics and battery compartment built into a box that dangled from the headphone cable. The box was annoying and had to be clipped to your belt or shirt pocket.

The new NB-FX model has all of the electronics and battery compartment built into the ear cups or headband.

Score: 4.5 stars (out of 5)