

Get the right “Headphones”

Choosing the right headphones for SamePage Mix

Either you just bought SamePage Mix or you are thinking about it, understanding what headphones are best is very important. In ear monitors (IEMs), headphones, and earbuds... what are they? How are they different? They are very different and picking the right ones is very important. Let's start by quickly understanding the difference in the terms.

IEMs (In Ear Monitors) – are earbuds that are specifically designed for live sound reproduction. The high-end models that the pros use are usually custom molded to fit their ears. There are a wide variety of universal fit IEMs and these are what we will talk about mostly. These can range in price from \$50 to \$1000.



Headphones – A lot of people refer to anything that you wear on your head to listen to music as a “headphone”. Headphones are the large over the ear style “can” headphones. They usually cover the entire ear. Their quality and price can range from \$10 and low quality to over \$1000 and excellent quality.



Earbuds – This term refers to “headphones” that sit in your ear. For example, the earbuds that came with your iPod. These can range from FREE and low quality to \$300-400 and high quality. However, the more expensive earbuds are probably actually IEMs that are marketed for personal listening.



This is not a comprehensive discussion on headphones, there is a great deal not discussed here. The purpose is to help you pick the right “headphones” for SamePage. There is nothing wrong with iPod earbuds as long as you are listening to an iPod. **They simply won't work well with live sound on a stage.** A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. You wouldn't strap a parachute to your back with duct tape would you? **So don't use iPod earbuds or cheap headphones with SamePage Mix.**

The Big Three

Noise reduction – This is measured Decibels (dB) of the amount of ambient noise the earpiece will reduce. IEMs are intended to completely recreate the listening environment meaning all you need to hear is going to come out of that earpiece. Therefore the more noise reduction the better. Good IEMs provide 20-34dB of noise reduction depending on the fit and sealing of the ear canal. STAGE NOISE is the **number one** enemy of getting a good IEM mix. Just as you would go to a quiet room to have a phone conversation you need to have a quiet stage. So get rid of wedges and amps and lower drum noise. You can learn more about this when you read 'Stage Noise'.

Sensitivity – This is measured in dB/mW which means how much volume your IEM will produce for each watt of power. You need volume to hear yourself so the higher the sensitivity the better. These usually range from 100 -130dB/mW

Frequency Response – This is the ability to produce all the frequencies needed to accurately reproduce the listening environment. This is particularly important for bass guitar players and drummers.

So, what does it boil down to.....?

Don't get these... Or...  Get these... 

Why? Because IEMs offer great noise reduction, sensitivity, and frequency response and they are easier to hide because they are designed to discreetly wrap around the back of your head. High-end headphones can offer good noise reduction and frequency response but lousy sensitivity. Not to mention they are huge and just don't look good, and we all know you want to look good...;) Earbuds, especially cheap ones, are terrible for noise reduction, sensitivity, and frequency response so don't even think about using them.

We recommend either Shure or Westone IEMs. Both companies make great products that range in price from \$100 - \$600.

The Shure SE215 or Westone UM1 are great for most musicians. For drummers and bass guitarist we would recommend the Shure SE315 and Westone UM2 or better.

<http://www.shure.com/americas/products/earphones-headphones/se-models/index.htm>

<http://www.westonemusicproducts.com/universal-fit-products/UM-Series>