

10 Tips To Get Your Music HEARD

# RECORDING

The magazine for the recording musician

## SONGWRITING SUCCESS!

How To: • Improve Your Studio  
• Grow Your Audience  
• Make More Money



## Microphones

—Pointers In The Right Direction



# 15 New Product Reviews

Blue • Daking Audio • Korg • Prism Sound  
Realitone • Samson • SBS Designs • sE Electronics  
Soundtoys • Toontrack • and more!

NOVEMBER 2014  
USA \$5.99  
CANADA \$5.99



VOL. TWENTY EIGHT  
NUMBER TWO



**Ears On**  
HEADPHONES  
ON REVIEW

# Audio-Technica ATH-M60x

*A worthy on-ear addition  
to a world-famous line of  
workhorse headphones*

Review by Mike Metlay



Over the years, a large family of headphones, called the M-Series, has been built up around Audio-Technica's famed ATH-M50x (reviewed March 2014), which was itself a thoughtful update of the original ATH-M50 to meet the needs of musicians worldwide. The M-Series is characterized by exceptional sound quality and a completely rethought approach to what engineers and recording artists really want in a workaday headphone—rugged design with easily replaceable cabling and pads.

Nowadays, the M-Series includes upscale models with improved components, special-edition versions in custom colors and finishes, a whole line of more affordable models with different voicings and features, and even a groundbreaking open-backed design. So where does Audio-Technica go from here? Onto your ears rather than over them, apparently.

The new ATH-M60x is the first supraaural (on-ear) headphone in the M-Series line. It's designed to take everything that makes M-Series headphones great, and give it to pros who prefer the compactness, isolation, and lighter feel of an on-ear headphone.

## On ear—on paper

The ATH-M60x is a closed-back dynamic headphone with 45 mm drivers with neodymium magnets and copper-clad aluminum wire voice coils. In fact, Audio-Technica states that these are precisely the same drivers used in the ATH-M50x, a claim I'll talk about more in a moment. Stated frequency response is 15 Hz to 28 kHz, maximum input power 1.6 Watts at 1 kHz, sensitivity 102 dB, and 38Ω impedance.

It's wonderfully light, coming in at a hair over seven ounces, and its generously padded earcups adjust to fit the head but don't swivel for off-ear use. There's also plenty of padding on the comfortable headband, which doesn't fold for compact carry. Given how small and light the ATH-M60x is, though, this isn't much of a problem.

Like all of the upper-end M-Series phones, the ATH-M60x comes with a protective carrying pouch and three interchangeable cables, each of which connects via a twist-lock submini jack to the left earcup. You get a coiled cable that stretches from 1.2 to 3.0 meters (about 4' to 10'), a 10' (3 m) straight cable, and a 1.2 m straight cable. All three end in gold-plated

TRS miniplugs, and the first two are threaded to accept a gold-plated 1/4" TRS adapter.

I didn't do any surgery on my review pair, but they look to use the same fitting mechanism for the earpads as on other M-Series headphones. The same is true of the headband, so when they get ratty, you can order replacements from Audio-Technica without having to simply discard the phones. In our throwaway society, small touches like this add up to big benefits.

## On ear—on review

When I received the ATH-M60x for review, I was happy to see all the little extras that go into an M-Series headphone and make it such a good value, but I was a tad skeptical about what to expect in terms of my listening experience. I'll be honest: I am not an on-ear kind of guy, and that's mainly for medical reasons.

Genetic quirks in my jaw joints and the mastoid/temporal bones behind my ears mean that any headphone that exerts pressure on my outer ears can quickly become uncomfortable, annoying, even painful. I try to be as fair as possible in my evaluations of on-ear phones, often getting other engineers to weigh in on comfort issues when doing reviews, but I've always been grateful that the vast majority of studio phones are circumaural, placing pressure on my (admittedly thick) skull instead. I've even been known to stop using certain in-ear monitors simply because they come with over-the-ear hooks that pull the wrong way.

My trepidation was quickly forgotten when I put on the ATH-M60x and started in on my trusty reference library of high-resolution music. I had about fifteen seconds to think, "Huh—these are pretty comfortable," before that thought was replaced by "Hey... wait just a darn minute here! These sound exactly like my Fifties!"

Indeed they do. Remember that I mentioned the drivers in these headphones are identical to those in the ATH-M50x? Sonically, wearing these headphones was like putting on a favorite pair of old jeans, as comfortable and familiar as anyone could ask for. I've been using the ATH-M50 (first the s and then the x) regularly in all kinds of applications for over a decade now, and it's a sound I'd recognize anywhere... and that sound is reproduced in the ATH-M60x with almost eerie accuracy, the on-ear design having little effect on the sonic character.

The low end of the ATH-M60x is a dream to work with... powerful, enveloping, with plenty of detail and harmonic clarity and no one-note resonant woofiness or sloppy thump. If you work with anything that puts out really deep bass, from 808 to acoustic bass to grand piano to electronic synthesizers, the ATH-M60x lets you hear it with clarity and great balance.

As on the ATH-M50x, the mids are fairly flat and neutral rather than pushed

forward (the ATH-M30x is an example of that other voicing), giving the impression of being slightly "scooped" if you're used to a hard-rocking, mid-forward phone. You can still hear everything in its proper place, but if you're used to a phone that pushes vocals and lead guitar way out front, this won't be to your taste. The highs are clear and sweet without being ringy or shrill or hashy; listening to my high-resolution audio reference tracks was a very pleasurable experience, and I didn't feel that anything was being left out or misrepresented.

As I worked with the ATH-M60x, I noted the advantages of a good on-ear phone married to the sound I liked so much. Isolation was fabulous, almost as good as some "drummer headphones" I've reviewed, and I thought nothing of taking them with me everywhere I went. Even though they can't fold, there's pretty much no backpack or satchel that doesn't have room for the ATH-M60x.

Somewhere in the third week of my listening sessions, when I'd moved from

my reference tracks to playing live and tracking/mixing my own material, I stopped at the end of a work session lasting nearly three hours, took off the ATH-M60x, rubbed my jaw... and went right back to work. It took me that long to realize that these phones are so well-balanced and light that they were barely noticeable, even with my jaw problems!

### On ear—on the shopping list

There's not a lot more to say about the ATH-M60x—it's another winner from Audio-Technica, plain and simple. If you thought on-ear headphones weren't for you, give them a try... and if you're an on-ear fan looking enviously at the folks with ATH-M50x phones and wishing you could join the party, now's your chance. ➤

**PRICE: \$199**

**MORE FROM:** Audio-Technica,  
[www.audio-technica.com](http://www.audio-technica.com)