

t.bone HD 515 £25

Jon Musgrave tries these new headphones from Thomann's low cost brand. Can they provide a meaty sound?

KEY FEATURES DESIGN: Closed-back, over-ear TRANSDUCER: Dynamic TRANSDUCER DIAMETER: 45mm FREQ RANGE: 10Hz to 26kHz IMPEDANCE: 32 Ohm MEAN SOUND PRESSURE LEVEL: 97dB MAX. POWER HANDLING: 1500mW ACCESSORIES: 3m cable (minijack to minijack), adapter 3.5mm to 6.3mm WEIGHT: 290g (incl. cable)



Thomann's t.bone brand is aimed squarely at the budget end of the market. But the vast majority of its products I've tested have been pretty decent, and recently I was particularly impressed by the performance of its RM 700 ribbon mic. Up for review now I have the new HD 515 headphones. At £25 a pair, you probably wouldn't have big expectations of these headphones, but it's fair to say other brands such as Superlux have certainly shown that it is possible for budget headphones to challenge more expensive designs, so I am optimistic these can do the same.

As you might expect for a budget offering, the design is simple and the accessories limited to one 3m lead. That said, the use of a regular minijack connection on the underside of the left earcup means you can use any minijack-type lead if you want to. There's no locking system for the plug, but the socket produced a reassuring click when I plugged them up.

Construction uses a combination of plastic and metal, including metal earcup enclosures, and this no doubt imparts a quality feel. That said, the earcup adjusters which slide into the headband are not particularly smooth. Both the headband and earpads use regular foam, which is quite soft but feels good in use. I found the overall fit tight but comfy. The HD 515 has quite a classic look that's somewhat reminiscent of the popular Sony MDR-7506, and although they may not offer the same finesse or foldability of the Sony headphones, the finish and new t.bone logo look stylish.

Thomann describes the HD 515 as a monitoring headphone and I found the closed back over-ear design delivered reasonable passive noise cancellation. In a recording environment this means there's not going to be bleed into any close mics, and from a performer perspective much of the room sound is successfully kept at bay. This is all good news as my interface headphone output was easily able to get them pretty loud.

The monitor remit continues with the sound. This is chunky in the lows and low-mids, although thankfully doesn't sound too flabby. Meanwhile



Budget headphones can certainly challenge more expensive designs

the high frequencies are quite subdued. This means the overall impression is that the mid-range is prominent. I think this is preferable for a recording headphone, where a more hyped hi-fi sound can be a bit of a hindrance. That said, it means the HD 515 is probably not best suited to other studio tasks such as mixing and mastering.

Finally, although the HD 515 is listed at £24.90, it's only available from Thomann, so with the accompanying £10 delivery charge, the real cost to the user is just under £35 per pair.

Overall, I think the HD 515 is a decent product. As mentioned, I don't think they're suitable for mixing, but if that's not important to

you and you're simply after an affordable studio headphone for recording, they're solidly made, look good and offer excellent value. **FM**

FM VERDICT

7.8

Although not suited to mixing, if you're simply after a well-made budget headphone for recording this could be ideal

THE PROS & CONS



Great value

Good construction

Detachable standard minijack lead

Good passive noise cancellation

Tailored sound for recording



Not suitable for mixing and mastering