



M-Audio IE Reference Earphones with Ultimate Ears Technology

The Story That Starts with Van Halen and Continues with You

Jerry Harvey never envisioned himself as an entrepreneur. Like most great inventions, his innovative reference earphones were born of necessity. While Harvey was touring with Van Halen as a monitor engineer, drummer Alex Van Halen demanded a better solution for the outdated wedge monitors that blasted his ears night after night. After trying and quickly discarding the available in-ear options, Harvey leveraged his experience with high-performance live monitoring systems to engineer the first two-way, custom-fit earpieces. Van Halen couldn't have been happier with the result, and the word quickly spread to other artists and engineers. A company was born when Mindy Harvey, Jerry's wife at the time, quit her job to help him seize the opportunity.

The Harveys brought a fresh perspective to the world of pro audio manufacturing, quickly distinguishing them from the competition. By focusing on cutting-edge design and extraordinary customer service, the pair led Ultimate Ears to become the industry standard in reference earphones. Recently, the company partnered with M-Audio to produce the IE line of professional reference earphones. IE earphones are available in three different models, bringing acclaimed Ultimate Ears technology to your mobile studio.

The Ultimate Ears Difference

For the first five years, Jerry and Mindy built their business through word of mouth, one band at a time. Jerry encountered prospective clients while touring as a monitor engineer, and Mindy tapped into the extensive artist community around their base of operations in Las Vegas. From the beginning, they established a reputation for taking great care of their artists.

"Since we started by selling product to our friends and peers, Jerry's reputation was very much on the line," explains Mindy. "Anyone who has been around monitor engineers knows it's one of the hardest jobs in the industry. We know that if our product fails, somebody's job can be on the line, so quality and customer service have always been tremendously important to us."

With a lifetime of experience in sound engineering and building large PA

systems, designing and manufacturing miniature components posed an entirely new challenge for Jerry Harvey. Unfettered by traditional methodologies, Harvey sought new ways to build products—even going so far as to recruit a hearing aid manufacturer to set up their in-house production facilities. Through the years, Harvey demonstrated relentless ingenuity in pioneering new solutions that transformed the product landscape.

"Jerry takes a more musical approach to the product than a researcher who's looking at it through an audiologist's eyes," says Mindy. "His philosophy is to take all the components of a large PA for an arena and place that in something that can fit inside the human ear. That's always been our approach, and the result is that the audio signature represents a different perspective than any other manufacturer on the market."

"We do things inside the earpiece that no one else does," Jerry explains. "We have a patent pending on the nozzle. There is a specific recipe to get a two-way earpiece to resonate out to 16k, and if you change any one of those parameters—if you're even a millimeter off—it'll roll off at 8k. Even with boost and EQ, you'll never get anything above 8k out of that earpiece."

A state-of-the-art manufacturing facility lets Ultimate Ears maintain rigorous quality control over the custom product line. After hand-assembling every model one by one, each product is hand-tuned and subjected to a dozen quality-control procedures. "None of my competitors are testing the earpieces the way that we test them at Ultimate Ears," he continues. "All the earpieces that we build are phase correct. Other companies may test them and see if they're in phase, but they're not correcting for phase shift in the crossover, or phase cancellation in the high end because they're dumping the lows and highs into one tube. We really are critical about getting that curve out to 15 or 16k and on the custom side, we have 1 dB plus and minus of tolerance on the curve."

Ears Wide Open

It wasn't long before artists like k.d. lang and Aerosmith joined Van Halen and Skid Row as satisfied customers. Today, the company boasts a large

endorsee roster featuring diverse talents such as Stevie Wonder, Seal, Depeche Mode, Celine Dion, Norah Jones, Big & Rich and many more.

"Every day, I work with artists who say there's nothing out there that's working for them," Harvey explains. "I've built custom solutions for Bette Midler, Julio Iglesias and Richie Sambora—all ends of the musical spectrum. I've been working with this technology so long that I know how to tweak it to get whatever response we're trying to achieve with that earpiece."

Harvey never tires of hearing how his earphones transform the user's experience with audio. "Most of the time, the response is that they've never heard their music like this before," he attests. "They hear new things in the mix—little congas, little percussion hits and reverb trails. It's as close to near field as you can get without mainlining it into your brain. Because of the isolation, frequency response and headroom of these earpieces, most people are blown away by the audio quality."

From Custom to Universal Fit

As you might expect, custom earphones—while worth every penny—carry a price tag beyond what many musicians can justify. Fortunately, Harvey and his team have leveraged their expertise in hand crafting custom earphones to create what they believe are the best universal fit earphone products available on the market today. And it's this technology that's built into M-Audio's IE-10, IE-20 XB and IE-30 models. "We've taken everything we've learned about building custom monitors—the secret sauce, our intellectual property—and we've manufactured that into the canal, the crossover network and everything inside the earpiece," he explains.

"If we're going to put the Ultimate Ears name on a product, it has to be better than what's out there," says Mindy. "We spent a lot of time working on both the interior and body design of the universal fit models. When it all came together, we got the look of the product we wanted and an audio signature that we'd be proud to put the Ultimate Ears name on."

Like reference monitors, M-Audio IE professional earphones are designed with different types of listeners and budgets in mind. While the IE-10 represents the entry level of the line, one listen will confirm



that there is no finer monitoring experience available at this price. Like all IE models, the IE-10 includes a universal fit kit so you can achieve a personalized fit for a tight seal, which is critical in reproducing bass frequencies. Firm seals also provide isolation from outside sound, letting you enjoy more nuances without turning up the volume to levels that can damage your hearing over time.

The IE-10 and IE-30 both deliver 26dB of isolation, which is enough to render a noisy airplane ride silent. Where the IE-10 uses a single driver, the IE-30 employs separate drivers and aural canals for the highs and lows, complete with a crossover—just like premium monitors. In addition to greater definition, the high end of the IE-30 extends to 16kHz versus 13kHz in the IE-10. Like the IE-30, the IE-20 XB features dual-driver technology. However, the IE-20 XB boasts an extended low end designed especially for dance music—which makes it as close as you can get to having a subwoofer in your head.

In partnering with M-Audio, Jerry Harvey's original solution has developed into a complete line of professional reference earphones for mobile and performing musicians of all types. IE models with Ultimate Ears technology are perfect for making music on the go, in addition to providing an alternative to stage monitors. And you'll never be satisfied using standard earbuds with your personal music player again.

