

TRENDING

Awards 2019

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Review

## Bowers & Wilkins PX7 review

Hugely impressive noise-cancelling headphones *Tested at £350 / \$400*

★★★★★ By [What Hi-Fi?](#) Posted

15 hours ago



(Image: © Bowers & Wilkins)

### OUR VERDICT

B&W's flagship noise-cancellers are born entertainers and can rub shoulders with the very best

#### + FOR

Lively, insightful sound

Three-tiered noise cancellation

Sophisticated, comfortable design

Competitive battery life

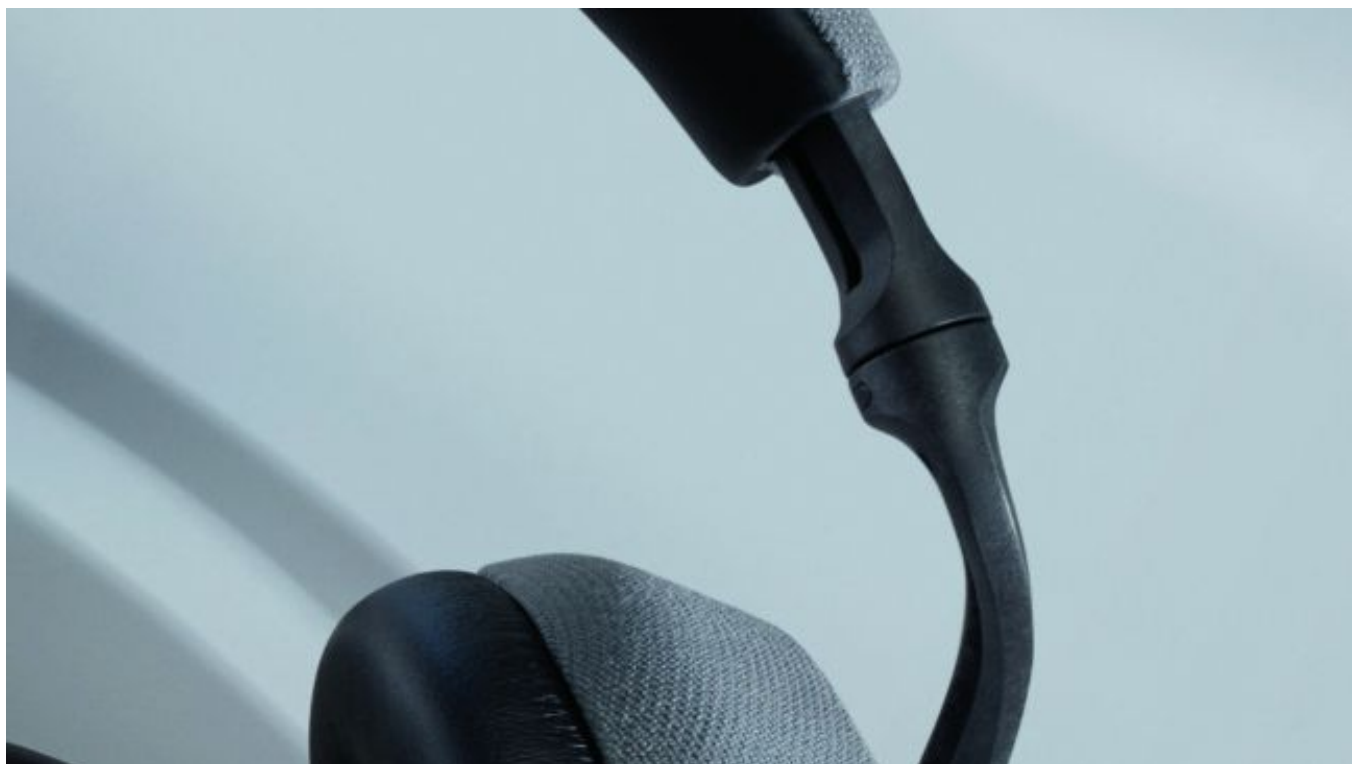
#### - AGAINST

Earcups don't fold inwards

If we thought the premium noise-cancelling headphones market couldn't get any more intense, with the Award-winning **Sony WH-1000XM3s** competing against **Sennheiser** and Bose newcomers, yet another contender has arrived in the shape of the Bowers & Wilkins PX7s.

Two years after its first effort, the five-star **PXs**, B&W has launched a new pair of flagship noise-cancellers. The company hopes that the combination of its proprietary driver technology and Qualcomm's new aptX Adaptive Bluetooth codec will see the PX7s repeat the success of their predecessors, and help them take the fight to the **best wireless headphones** on the market right now.

## Build



(Image credit: Bowers & Wilkins)

The **PXs** were among the first headphones to support Qualcomm's **aptX HD** Bluetooth – a high-quality codec that enables the wireless transmission of 24-bit hi-res audio – but the PX7s and their siblings, the PX5 on-ears (£270) and PI3 (£170) and PI4 (£270) sporty earbuds, are the first **aptX Adaptive** headphones to hit the market.

Announced at IFA last year, the next-gen Bluetooth technology combines the 24-bit/48kHz capability of the now widely adopted aptX HD with the benefits of aptX Low Latency (improved synchronicity of audio and video content between your source and headphones).

## BOWERS & WILKINS PX7 TECH SPECS



(Image credit: Bowers & Wilkins)

**Charging** USB-C

**Battery life** 30 hours

**Bluetooth** Yes (supports aptX Adaptive)

**Noise-cancelling** Yes

**Weight** 310g

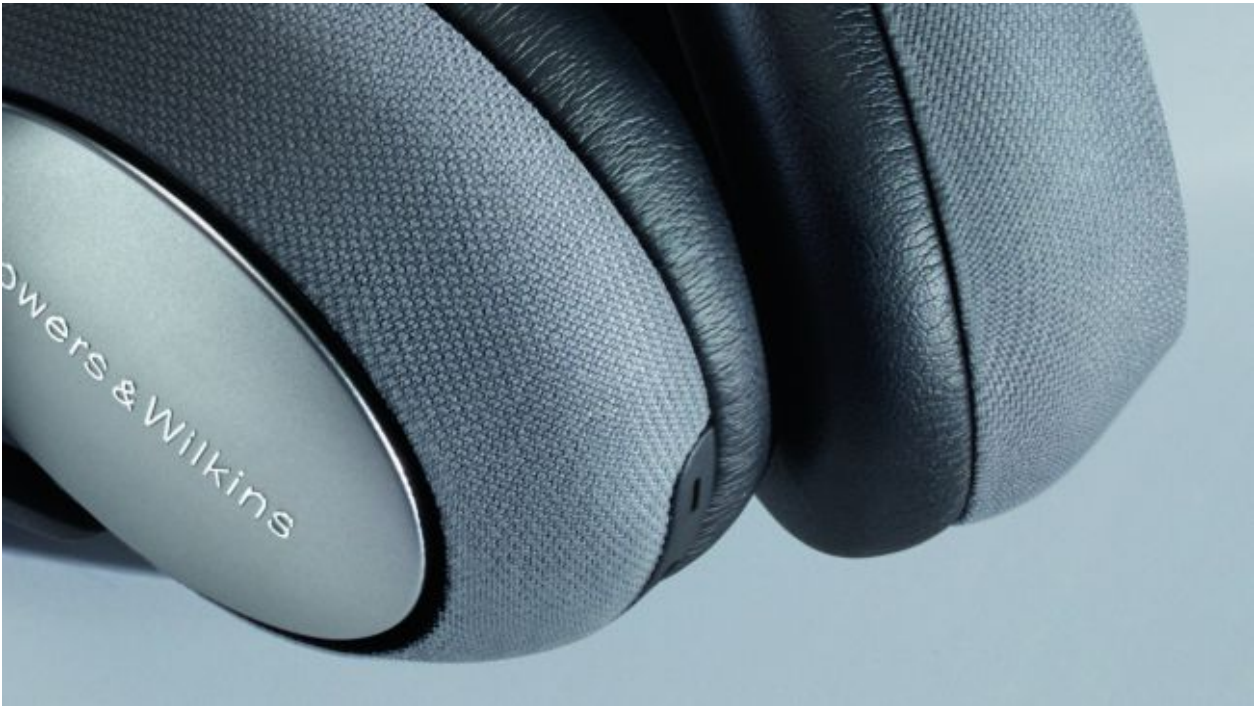
So, if you're using the PX7s for gaming or smartphone apps, the sound in your ears should be instantaneous. The aptX Adaptive codec has also been designed to improve the robustness of the wireless connection by taking into account the external environment around you to reduce the frequency of drop-outs.

The other headline feature is noise-cancelling. Here, pressing the button on the headphones' left cup allows you to cycle through modes ('low', 'medium' and 'high') by. 'Low' is fine for keeping office chatter and background noise out, while 'high' effectively cocoons you in silence, even during the noisiest real-life scenarios.

Want to hear a plane announcement or dip into a conversation quickly without having to take the headphones off? Pressing and holding the noise cancellation button for two seconds will initiate an ambient mode.

While the original PXs boasted 22 hours of wireless ANC playback, the PX7s increase that battery life to 30 hours – in line with the class-leading **Sony WH-1000XM3s**. A 15-minute charge via the USB-C port provides five hours of audio playback.

## Comfort



(Image credit: Bowers & Wilkins)

The PX7s are clear evolutions of their predecessors, with a branded badge and fabric finish on the elliptical earcups. There have also been some revisions to the design in the name of improved comfort.

Most crucially, the arms are now made from a custom carbon fibre composite that is lighter than the metal used in the **PXs'** design. While we've always found the PXs comfortable, they were heavy enough to take a toll on your head during longer periods of listening – but at 310g, compared to 335g, the PX7s do feel notably lighter. The headband is well padded, while earpads clamp with a calculated pressure and provide a good seal.

Elsewhere, the cables are now hidden within the band, and the earcup's central oval badge is now flush against the new, softer fabric for a more streamlined aesthetic. The Space Grey finish survives, although the **PXs'** Soft Gold has been swapped for a sophisticated Silver. We're pleased to see big 'L' and 'R' graphics inside the respective ear cups, too.

The PX7s look and feel a little cheaper than their predecessor, but we'd take them for their extra comfort. Ultimately, they're still one of the more striking pairs of headphones on the market.

Apart from the noise-cancelling button, the playback buttons are located on the right earcup in a logical configuration. The power slider initiates Bluetooth pairing mode, as well as play, pause and skip track and volume controls in a three-button strip. As with the **PXs**, the PX7s have a proximity sensor, so when you lift an earcup from your head, music is automatically paused – while returning it to your ear conveniently restarts playback.

What's less convenient is the PX7s' inability to fold into a more compact form for slinging in a bag. The cups only twist flat to fit into their oval carry case.

## Sound



(Image credit: Bowers & Wilkins)

At 43mm, the PX7s' drivers are the largest in B&W's headphone collection, so what are they capable of? In short, a great deal. We had assumed it would be a tight contest between the PX7s and their [Sony WH-1000XM3](#) and [Sennheiser Momentum Wireless](#) rivals, and as soon as the tunes start, it's pretty much game on.

There's a shared sonic DNA between the PX7s and their predecessors, with a solid, detailed and tonally balanced sound that prioritises rhythmic precision and communicates music in an entertaining way. But B&W's engineers clearly haven't been resting on their laurels in the past two years, as they strive to meet the standards set by the arrival of fresh competition in the market.

The PX7s retain their predecessor's character, but the gains they make in terms of clarity and detail are clear. With The Tallest Man On Earth's *There's A Girl*, the PX7s deliver the harmonica with greater dynamic expression while uncovering extra layers of insight into the accompanying guitar plucks and red-hot vocal.





(Image credit: Bowers & Wilkins)

We play Nick Cave's *Waiting For You* and his lamentation and the piano melody feel more affecting, due not only to more transparency and clarity but also a bigger, more open soundstage. That contributes to a considerably better all-round performance that's on a par with its closest competition.

Not only are the PX7s insightful, but their sonic character also prioritises entertainment – they are the headphone equivalent of that friend with seemingly inexhaustible supplies of energy.

We play St Vincent's *Sugarboys* and they storm through the pacey, pulsating electronica, bringing the saturated, synthy production to life and giving gravitas to the breakneck beats. They reveal more enthusiasm and drive than their peers, even if the Sonys have a more grounded disposition and sound more authentic in the way they convey music.

## Verdict

All a pair of headphones can do is sound, look and feel great – and the B&W PX7s tick all three boxes. In our initial hands-on review, we predicted that the PX7s would be up there with the very best noise-cancelling headphones, and that's where they sit.

The **Sonys** might have pipped them to a 2019 *What Hi-Fi?* Awards Best Buy, but these are no alternatives – especially for those who value sonic sprightliness and street-cred style.

### SCORES

- Sound 5
- Comfort 5
- Build 4