

# Rivals: beat it

**Richard Black** discovers a top-class newcomer from AKG that's been developed with music legend Quincy Jones and it shows

**A**KG has enlisted the help of legendary music producer god, Quincy Jones, with its new range of high-quality headphones.

Musicians endorse all sorts of things and for all sorts of reasons, and even good ones don't necessarily have good sonic taste – we can vouch for that from personal experience.

But we are much less inclined to be cynical about AKG's gesture of donating a share of the proceeds from these headphones to Jones's foundation which aims to make music education 'an ongoing part of the lives of American children'. We're all for that.

And we're all for new, high-quality headphones. We've been properly spoiled recently by some memorably fine models from Grado, Sennheiser and Audio-Technica and we're in the mood for more.

## New tech

AKG has a good track record and we've fond memories of models going back decades. With the new Q701, features that stand out in the specification include flat-wire voice coils and two-layer diaphragms. Both of these are relatively common in loudspeakers, but the smaller dimensions of headphone drive units make them harder to implement and AKG must have spent some time over the microscope working these out.

Flat wire allows voice coils to be wound more efficiently, with less wasted space, than the usual round wire, while diaphragms using two-layer construction can be quite less resonant and, therefore, more accurate-sounding than most single-layer techniques will allow.

## Built to last

There's a wild choice of colours in addition to the silver samples pictured – go to [akg.com](http://akg.com) and check out the lime green option! Build quality is of a high standard for the

asking price. The earcups are metal, as is the inside of the headband, which is covered in real leather: we found it a little hard on our (admittedly bald) head, but this is quite a comfortable headphone, self-adjusting thanks to cunning elastic support of the earpieces. The lead is replaceable (you even get a spare) and is almost completely immune to mechanical noise transmission, one of our pet hates.

## DETAILS

**PRODUCT:** AKG Q701  
**ORIGIN:** Austria  
**TYPE:** Dynamic headphone  
**WEIGHT:** 235g  
**FEATURES:**  
 • Impedance 62 ohms  
 • Detachable cable  
 • Open back  
 • Circumaural  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** Harman International  
**TELEPHONE:** 01707 278113  
**WEBSITE:** [akg.com](http://akg.com)

## Live aid

Headphones, even more than loudspeakers, can get away with murder if one listens to them for long enough to get acclimatised. To put it another way, first impressions are very important – that's when you really hear the colorations. We were, therefore, most impressed when we put these on and were greeted by some delightfully natural tonal balance. For best effect, we deliberately opened the listening with a recording made two hours earlier, of which we could still remember the live sound very clearly. The Q701 didn't quite bring back the colour of the carpet or the smell of the upholstery in the recording venue, but it did recreate remarkably faithfully the voices, the piano, the hall ambience and even the passing traffic!

## HD800: time to worry?

Just as welcome, it did nothing to boost the mild hiss on the recording, something that a great many headphones do – hiss and sibilants in general. Again, one can quickly get used to that, but it's still inclined to produce headaches over long listening sessions. By contrast, this headphone, if anything, just got better the longer we listened.

To cut a long and very pleasant story short, it is actually everything AKG claims it is. In a word, accurate. If we have one very slight quibble it is over what seems to us the slightest trace of hardness in the upper bass, but otherwise we just loved the tonal balance (deep bass is glorious, and quite effortless), the detail, the imaging and the general sense that real music is happening somewhere right in front of one's seat.

Rhythm is great, dynamics are vast, complex textures are handled with the same unflappable calm as a solo. Good recordings sound great, bad ones sound, well, as good as they're going to. Quincy Jones? He's the man! ●



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

<b>SOUND QUALITY</b> ★★★★★	<b>LIKE:</b> Simply gorgeous sound, very close to our Sennheiser favourites but half the price
<b>VALUE FOR MONEY</b> ★★★★★	<b>DISLIKE:</b> Very minor upper-bass hardness
<b>BUILD QUALITY</b> ★★★★★	<b>WE SAY:</b> A welcome addition to the ranks of the world's finest transducers
<b>FEATURES</b> ★★★★★	

### OVERALL

