

Bog beauties



Kennerton Audio Magister
headphones

Gorgeously-styled bogwood-carved headphones, from Russia with audio love...

The staggering growth in the personal audio sector has seen a relentless tsunami of new headphone makers and products bobbing forth, predominantly from the mega factories of China. But Kennerton Audio, the luxury brand of headphone specialist Fischer Audio, hand-makes its Magister headphones in Russia.

Before a single note is played you appreciate the craftsmanship here, the luxurious dark headshell of bog oak timber (simmered and hardened for millenia, we are told, at the bottom of the darkest bog pits in Russia).

It's not just the ancient timber that sets this headwear apart from the run-of-the-mill. The overall fit and finish is of the highest standard, while construction reeks of quality, from the Kennerton-embossed stainless steel headband to the large ear cups featuring soft lamb leather cushioning. The Magister's 42mm drivers are fashioned from ultra-lightweight titanium-reinforced Mylar and, according to Kennerton, their acoustic performance is enhanced by the headshells' internal shaping, which uses a hand-carved stepped non-parallel 'Helix' design.

The Magister's ear-cup cushions can be cleaned by simply rotating the cushions' plastic frames off their

bayonet-style mounts, and it's a nice touch of longevity that Kennerton provides a spare set of cushions.

The Magister is supplied with two sets — standard and high quality — of generously-long (three-metre) removable cables, terminated via gold-plated mini-jacks both at the ear and connecting ends. A 6.5mm gold-plated jack adaptor is provided. The high-quality cable features OFC copper conductors. The headphones come packaged in a rather large but very lightweight padded heavy-cotton zip case. (A soft cloth bag might be a nice addition for carrying the headphones on aircraft or other forms of transport where the large case would be impractical.)

The Magister headphones prefer a dedicated amplifier. As good as the sound was connected directly to a smartphone loaded with uncompressed music, hooking them to a headphone amp really delivered their full potential. And you'll be listening to these for long periods of time because the sound presentation is utterly natural, extremely well-balanced and oh so smooth. Zero fatigue here, unlike some designs that impress with oodles of detail but wear you down with listener fatigue after extended listening.

And balance is a key word here too. Across the entire range there aren't rogue frequencies, especially of the bass-heavy kind to which headphones are often

prone. They don't deliver the most powerful bass we've heard — they don't pound your ears, rather the foundation is solid with good detail and transient snap, a more refined and even-handed bass reproduction that coheres with the rest of the superbly-rendered frequency range.

So this is a genuine high-end headphone design, and its painstaking build quality is reflected in the price of admission. The 2000-year-old bog-oak headshell enclosure story is an entertaining point of difference, the handcrafted-in-Russia angle is an unusual deviation from the manufacturing status quo, and most importantly the balanced and totally refined sound reproduction proved a fine departure from the nauseating doof-doof of the run-of-the-mill mediocrity... just what the Dr did *not* order. Highly recommended. *Edgar Kramer* +

SPECS

Kennerton Audio Magister \$1390

Type: over-ear closed-back headphones

Drivers: 42mm composite Mylar/titanium

Impedance: 64 ohms

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