WHAT IS IT?

Closed back, dynamic, studio headphone

CONTACT

Who: SCV London
Tel: +44 (0) 20 8418 1470
Web: www.focal.com

HIGHLIGHTS

1 Comfortable fit
2 Detailed sound
3 Replaceable cabling

Focal Spirit Professional | £239

A set of headphones for tracking and mixing designed by the monitor masters… ***Trevor Curwen*** keeps these Focals in focus

SPECS

Type: Closed-back, circumaural, dynamic headphones
Driver: 40mm Mylar/ Titanium
Frequency response: 5Hz – 22kHz
Sensitivity: 102dB SPL/1mW @ 1kHz
Rated impedance: 32 ohms
Cable: 4m coiled (oxygen free)
Connections: 3.5mm stereo jack socket for removable cable
Included accessories: 4m coiled cable, straight cable with remote control, jack connector 3.5/6.35mm, carrying bag
Weight: 280g

French company Focal is well known in the hi-fi world and also for their studio monitors. They say that their new Spirit Professional headphones benefit from their 34 years manufacturing speaker drivers and loudspeakers. Intended for sound engineers and musicians, these headphones are circumaural, designed to cover your whole ear and are of the closed back variety, offering minimal sound leakage which ought to make them ideal for close-to-the-mic tracking situations where open-backed headphones could prove problematic.

Cable choice

Connection is via a detachable cable that connects via a 3.5mm minijack to the left cup. You get two cables in the package – one is a 4m coiled cable which is recommended for studio work, while the other is a straight cable with built-in remote control so you can also use the headphones out and about with a mobile phone, music player or other compatible device. The coiled cable terminates in a stereo mini jack with a screw-on 1/4-inch stereo adaptor jack.

Constructed in the main from textured black plastic, the headphones seem sturdy enough for a hard-working studio life. They have several available adjustments with the earcups both pivoting and swivelling on a ball and socket type joint for optimum placement on your ears and also for folding into a smaller area for easy portability in the included cloth bag. If you want more substantial storage you can use the smart foam-lined black box that the headphones come in.

A curved headband features a comfortable memory foam pad at the point where it connects with the top of your head and you get about 4cm of vertical adjustment for each earpad. All of the adjustments display a nice degree of resistance to movement, which should keeps things firmly in place. While their oval earpads are not as large as the circular pads found on some headsets, they do cover your ears and are made from memory foam with a soft vinyl finish. Overall, they have the unobtrusive feel of the sort of headphones that you could wear for long periods of time without any bother.

Focals for vocals

Matched 40mm transducers deliver the sound and provide a quality all-round listening experience. All frequencies appear well represented across the spectrum – these headphones don't hype anything and they don't hide anything either. We thought that they delivered a clear and neutral sound that translated familiar mixes with accuracy, so would be happy to use them as part of the mixing process.

The stereo soundstage may not be perceived as quite as expansive as a really good set of open headphones but it is accurate and the closed back design has its own advantages, specifically when tracking. It provides a degree of insulation from outside sounds that proves to be very useful when, say, recording in a room with other musicians when you need to be concentrating on your monitor mix rather than the acoustic environment around you. Also it eliminates or at least minimises leakage, as alluded to earlier, when recording a vocal – ensuring that the recorded sound is not coloured by the headphone monitor mix and preventing any howlround feedback. The degree of sound insulation provided by the Spirit Professionals makes them go-to tracking headphones.

These are practical and versatile headphones – with a primary use in studio recording and mixing, they can also double as your means of listening to music on the go, certainly giving you a rolls royce listening experience over a set of earbuds. FM

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

Comfortable, quality sounding headphones for tracking, mixing and mobile listening.