

Playback

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music & movies that matters

equipment

iListen



Klipsch Image

[\$349]

If you are in the “bigger is better” camp, then Klipsch’s Image in-ear headphone will come as quite a surprise. The Images, you see, are not only the firm’s flagship earbuds, but also—by a significant margin—the smallest in-ear headphones that Klipsch (or anybody else) currently makes. But spend a few hours listening to the tiny Images and you may find yourself convinced that in their case less is definitely more.

sonic character

Although a bit less sensitive than Klipsch’s Custom-3s (also reviewed in this survey), the Images also sound extremely pure, transparent, and open-voiced. Two differences, however, are that the Images provide slightly warmer tonal balance and offer somewhat more powerful bass. This combination of virtues may make the Image as close to a “perfectly voiced” earbud as anyone has yet built (though you could build a good case for a few others, too). One of the Image’s greatest strengths is its ability to convey low-level sonic information in a pure, believable, cohesive way. Harmonics, overtones, and other small details always sound like natural, organic extensions of the voices from which they originate. It’s a subtle quality that quickly becomes addictive.

Accessories: Three sets of oval-shaped single-flange eartips (sizes S, M, and L), two sets of oval-shaped double-flange eartips (size S and L), ¼” jack adaptor, airline adaptor, cleaning tool, small carrying pouch, and a larger carry case that can hold the Images plus an iPod.

Weight: 10 grams

Sensitivity: 110db/mW



Visit klipsch.com/headphones or call 1-800-KLIPSCH for more information.

musical example

One of the real beauties of the Images is that sound great on audiophile-grade material (as you would expect), but also make the most of not-so-perfect records. On “You Have Loved Enough” from Leonard Cohen’s *Ten New Songs* [Sony], the Images not only captured the dark weight and gritty textures of Cohen’s voice but also contrasted them against the much lighter, yet still decidedly earthy, overtones of Sharon Robinson’s voice (Robinson co-wrote the song with Cohen). What impressed me was the Image’s ability to let me follow even the smallest and most subtle inflections of either performer’s voice—just as I often do at live concerts. It’s that ability to invite listeners to relax and lose themselves in the music that sets the Images apart.

comfort factor

Klipsch Images are, hands down, the most comfortable and easy-to-use in-ear headphones we’ve ever tested, and comments from first-time listeners show why. “Man, these things are a *revelation*,” one listener said, “I can’t believe how easy they are to insert and remove.” Another listener added, “They slip into your ears so easily, and then give

you instant fidelity; you don’t have to fiddle around with them to get great bass.” And yet another test pilot observed, “They’re so light and comfortable you may forget you’re wearing them.” Credit goes to Klipsch in two ways. First, the drive mechanisms of the Images are incredibly small and light, yet capable of top-shelf performance. Second, Klipsch has developed patented, soft-rubber eartips that are *oval-shaped*, and that fit your ear canals much better than round eartips typically do. They work like a charm, and feel terrific.

BOTTOM LINE: *The Images are superb in terms of tonal balance, openness, top-to-bottom coherency, and attention to small sonic details and nuances. While Klipsch’s Custom-3s might offer a hair more resolving power, the Images offer even smoother highs, while their slightly warmer tonal balance works better with a broader spectrum of records. In terms of long-term comfort, however, the Images are in a class of their own. PB* ★★

KLIPSCH IMAGE

