

Sound-tweaking earbuds and app fine-tune music, real-life noise

February 4 2016, by Nancy Owano



Earbuds that redefine how we hear the world? The Here Active Listening system including earbuds from Doppler Labs, which ran a Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign, is inviting people to sign up on their waiting list.

Also, they have started shipping units to Kickstarter backers, said *TechCrunch*.

A number of writers have been playing with the buds and the response largely is beyond good, up a few notches to awesome.

Senior writer Jordan Crook of *TechCrunch* appeared impressed: "The folks at Doppler Labs believe the future of augmented reality starts with the ears. It's Here."

Mario Aguilar in *Gizmodo* similarly reacted: "I've been using one of the first production versions of the sound-altering tech for a few days, and I'm excited about the [potential](#) for a world in which I might never hear anything except for exactly what I want to—exactly the way I want to."

Ryan Waniata in *Digital Trends* said, "We haven't had the chance yet to take them along in many real-world scenarios, but even just sitting at your desk, Here offer an extremely impressive sonic [experience](#)."

The Here Active Listening system features two wireless buds and a smartphone app which offers control over the user's audio environment via different effects and filters.

How it works: Will Shanklin, *Gizmag*'s mobile tech editor, provided a simple, clear and brief description: "Here Active Listening is a pair of wireless earbuds that pair with an app on your iPhone or Android phone. Inside each bud is a processor that tweaks the sound you're hearing in your [environment](#) based on your chosen settings, and broadcasts the remixed audio directly into your ears."

One scenario for audiophiles and live music enthusiasts may be where one can creatively manage not only volume but special effects such as Echo, Flange and Fuzz. There is a 5-band EQ, preset filters, and the

various layered effects.

The company started shipping units to backers in the Kickstarter campaign.

Crook got a pair for review. "I'm no audiophile, but the Here Active Listening System made me feel like a live music [producer](#)."

In order to test out her buds she did not go to a show but instead went to the NYC subway system. That's quite a testbed. "The Subway is full of live performers, from drummers to guitarists to Mariachi bands to one-man bands, all as screeching trains pull in and out of the stations."

When a train pulled in or out, she used a Noise Mask filter which kept the screeching sound to a minimum. She turned up the volume to listen to the artists. She used Echo for the bucket drummer and raised the treble section for the Mariachi band.

The level of customization and ability to use "effects" are Here's key points of interest. They go beyond noise cancellation. Aguilar said, "The Here Active Listening System's most basic functionality is volume control. It allows you to decrease the loudness of sound around you by 22dB, or increase it by 6 dB. Imagine having a volume control for your life. It's wonderful. As a set of earplugs, Here's potential already starts to reveal itself."

Dave Gershgorn in *Popular Science*, meanwhile, had also taken the buds down to the subway. He had this observation: "Their power [the buds] lies in the ability to fine-tune the noise that we've passively accepted our entire lives. It's curating your listening experience."

Doppler Labs was founded in 2013. "Long term, we'd love to enable real-time language translation, etc. and to make voice-input/audio-output

mainstream UX paradigms – and generally to establish the ear as the focal point for the next phase of computing," said Doppler Labs co-founder Fritz Lanman in *TechCrunch*.

The current version of the Here Active Listening System is being shipped to people who had supported it in the Kickstarter campaign.

The site invites people to add their names if desired to a signup waitlist.

More information: www.hereplus.me/

[www.kickstarter.com/projects/d ... hear-the/description](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/d...hear-the/description)

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