

# ADL

## Cruise Headphone Amplifier Review Tone Audio (USA)



## Macro

Music for Your Desktop

By Jeff Dorgay

## Furutech Cruise Headphone Amplifier

Furutech's Alpha Design Labs is all about small. Earlier this year, the company introduced its GT40 that squeezes a MM/MC phono preamplifier, headphone amplifier, and USB DAC/ADC all into a petite box no bigger than a short stack of CDs. Incredibly handy, it became a permanent addition to *TONE's* reference collection. Furutech continues this trend of small but mighty products with the Cruise.

A fully equipped desk Death Star needs a great headphone amplifier for the times when your stressed out co-workers don't share your enthusiasm for Slayer and when you don't want them to know that you really do like Justin Bieber. The Cruise gives you a great headphone amplifier and a 24bit/96kHz USB DAC as well.



## Simply Gorgeous

The Furutech Cruise seems “mega” just sitting on a desk. Sheathed in carbon fiber and polished stainless, it looks more like a telemetry device from the Ferrari pit. And if you really want to impress your friends at work after being gone for a long weekend, tell them you took a few vacation days to hang out with your F1 pals at Ferrari, and this just happened to be in the gift bag.

With a footprint barely bigger than an iPod Classic, the Cruise has its own self-contained battery that can be charged via a provided wall wart or a computer’s USB port. My Furutech goodie bag included its cool, purple 3.5mm i-D35SP stereo interconnects that directly go from an iWhatever (that doesn’t have a high-res USB output) to the Cruise and an ADL Formula 2 USB cable. Furutech is known for cable products that feature ultra-pure conductors and its proprietary cryogenic treatment process. Indeed, both of these cables are well made and reasonably priced (\$59 for the USB, \$50 for the line-level cable). Most importantly, both take the Cruise further down the high-performance road. After spending all that hard-earned money on high-res downloads, you don’t want to shortchange yourself with cable from Radio Shack, do you?

## Down to Business

The Cruise requires five hours to fully charge, after which it’s said to deliver 80 hours of playback. Sure enough, I played it for more than

62 hours at near-full volume on a headphone stand (we do not recommend or endorse high-volume headphone listening) and it was still going strong. Suffice it to say that the Cruise claims enough capacity to outlast any device with which you’ll pair it.

For Mac users, hookup is simply a matter of selecting the output device in the System Preferences. I’ve been told it’s just as easy to mate with a PC. But, as a Mac die-hard, I didn’t go this route. A green LED indicates signal lock on the USB side while a blue one on the front confirms audio output. When fully charged, the LED goes from red to green.

## The Test Kitchen

I divided listening sessions between an iPhone 4, iPad 1, and MacMini, running Pure Music with a majority of the music on the desktop system high-resolution 24/96 files. Most of my listening was done via Audeze LCD-2 headphones, but Grado, Sennheiser, and AKG models all worked well.

The Cruise sports an overall natural sound, without a hint of solid-state glare. On Keith Jarrett’s *Concert in Koln*, the piano floated between the earpieces, sounding just slightly in front of my head rather than directly between the ears, an experience I prefer. With Kenny Burrell’s *Soulero*, the Audeze/Cruise combination effortlessly revealed the nuances of Burrell’s delicate fretwork.

Of course, no headphone review is complete without trippy headphone effects. Enter Pink

Floyd’s *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. Mmmm, nothing like 60s rock and headphones. Four Grateful Dead albums followed, and my trip finally came to an end with Todd Rundgren’s “Sounds of the Studio” from *Something/Anything?* Those little sounds bounced all around the soundstage.

The Cruise also offered great extension at both ends of the frequency spectrum. Bass was powerful and well defined. And while the Audeze ‘phones go deep, shuffling through Genesis and Daft Punk tracks revealed that they were up to the task when mated with the Cruise, which has more than enough resolution on tap to satisfy those with a serious collection of high-resolution music.

## Paid In Full

While the USB DAC casts the Cruise in its best light, the latter is no slouch when utilized via the line level input. And as much as it added to iPod listening sessions, it worked wonders for watching movies on the iPad, as the latter really struggles with driving high-quality phones. If you spend a lot of time on an airplane, you will really appreciate the Cruise.

Whether you enjoy the Furutech Cruise at home, at the office, or on the go, its superb sound quality and long battery life will bring you closer to your media. You don’t need a \$1,000 pair of headphones to partake in the journey. But the more time you spend with the Cruise may have you shopping for headphones sooner than later. ●  
[www.furutech.com](http://www.furutech.com)

