

hi-fi news

THE HOME OF REAL HI-FI

& Record Review

172 pages!

135+
REVIEWS
SEPARATES,
VINTAGE
& MUSIC

ULTIMATE HI-FI 2015

The year's finest products
and essential music

PLUS

THE
HI-FI SHOW

Preview of
the UK's premier
high-end event,
page 16

Equipment

Over 60
standout
separates tested

Music

The best LPs,
CDs and hi-res
downloads

Vintage

Audio icons
of yesteryear

Opinion

Our columnists'

• VINYL DS Audio to VPI • CD/SACD PLAYER/DACS Quad to T+A • NETWORK/USB AUDIO A&K to Naim
• TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS Audio Research to Rotel • HEADPHONE AMPS Auralic to Simaudio
• LOUDSPEAKERS & HEADPHONES AKG to Wilson Audio • VINTAGE B&O, Meridian, Technics & more

HI FI NEWS YEARBOOK



0 74820 90111 3

US\$14.99

PRINTED IN UK



Closed-back, circumaural headphone
 Made by: Furutech Co. Ltd, Tokyo, Japan
 Supplied by: Sound Foundations, Berks
 Telephone: 0118 981 4238
 Web: www.adl-av.com; www.soundfoundations.co.uk
 Price: £295

AUDIO
FILE

Furutech ADL H128

In most respects the H128 is a pretty conventional closed-back headphone but it does depart from the norm in the shaping of its capsules and earpads. ADL calls them 'Alpha Triform Contour Earcups' – its way of saying that the cavity for your ears is triangular rather than rectangular or circular.

This does improve the earpads' seal to the head, assuring a more consistent bass response, while the lack of parallel surfaces reduces standing waves within the volumes of air enclosed by each capsule. However, the H128's capsules could hardly be called capacious and its head clamping force is rather on the high side – not all will find them ideally comfortable to wear.

It comes with a short (1.3m) as well as a long (3.0m) connecting cable and a zip-up hard-shell carrying case. To accommodate the two different-length cables ADL has used mini-XLR connectors to join these to the left capsule.

Within each capsule is a 40mm driver featuring a diaphragm formed from PEEK (a robust semicrystalline thermoplastic), a neodymium magnet system and copper-coated aluminium wire in the voice coil to reduce moving mass. Three external colour options

'The big-boned beauty of Beethoven's music really shone through'

are available – silver/black, silver/brown or dark blue.

INFORMATIVE LISTEN

Both the test measurements and the listening show that ADL has chosen the now popular boosted bass route. This is moderate but it nevertheless gives a distinct cast to the H128's sound. If you accept its tonal weighting towards LF,

there's a lot to like about the H128 as it will give an informative and enjoyable account of the music.

Listening a 44.1kHz/16-bit version of the third movement of Mozart's Divertimento in E-flat, K375, from the SCO Wind Soloists [Linn Records], we looked for the key requisites of delicacy and fidelity of instrumental timbres. While the H128 fattened the textures marginally and didn't quite have the 'air' to render the full expanse of the recording acoustic, the skill and enjoyment that the SCO soloists bring to this programme remained abundantly obvious.

If you are a DSD aficionado you will probably know about Native DSD (www.nativedsd.com). Some of the tracks are offered in DSD64, DSD128, DSD256 and DXD format, allowing for some interesting comparisons, and multichannel versions are available as well as stereo. We particularly recommend the 'Heiliger Dankesang' movement from Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 132, played by a Boston string orchestra [Dreams & Prayers, Crier Records], which is available in both DSD64 and DSD128 formats.

There's also a binaural version yet we find the standard stereo version to sound significantly more spacious replayed over these headphones!

This recording is extraordinary and (even if you convert the DSF files to 88.2kHz/24-bit PCM as we did) the difference between the DSD64 and DSD128 versions is plainly audible, in favour of the latter, as you'd suppose. What makes this recording so special is the gargantuan size and sheer presence of the stereo image.

It's a challenge to which the H128 stood up well. The big-boned



ABOVE: The most notable feature of the H128 is its triangular-shaped capsules, intended to improve the seal of the earpads to the head and suppress internal resonances. Three colour options are available

beauty of both the music and the recording really shone through. Once the track had started playing it would have been a wrench to stop it prematurely.

VERDICT

The H128 merits adding to the shortlist of anyone looking for a standout £300 model. Its bass is shelved up, but not so much as to obscure its inherent resolution and musicality, qualities which make it enjoyable across a wide range of programme genres. ☺

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL at 1kHz for 1Vrms input)	115.0dB
Impedance modulus min/max (20Hz-20kHz)	71.6ohm @ 20Hz 83.7ohm @ 76Hz
Capsule matching (40Hz-10kHz)	±4.5dB
LF extension (-6dB ref. 200Hz)	19Hz
Distortion 100Hz/1kHz (for 90dB SPL)	1.3% / <0.1%
Weight (inc cable)	336g