



Retro beat

With styling that comes straight out of the fifties, Grado's on-ear cans are given a work out by thoroughly modern man **Ed Selley**

When it comes to launching new headphone models, the words 'Grado' and 'new' are rarely seen in close proximity to one another. The brand has an almost glacial product churn and so any revision is big news. The latest e Series models represent the largest change to the lineup in some years and the SR125e we reviewed in *HFC* 389 demonstrated an impressive performance boost over its predecessor.

The SR225e is one rung further up the ladder and is the penultimate member of the Prestige Series. This isn't immediately obvious from the appearance, though. Other than there being an extra '2' on either earpiece, it is effectively identical to the 125e. This means that the Grado sits somewhere between 'retro', 'vintage' and 'dated' depending on your taste.

Internally, a considerable amount of revision has been carried out, mainly on the drivers and their relationship to the earpads that enclose them. An area that Grado has seemingly expended considerable effort has been in the symmetry of the drivers within their respective spaces. This sounds peculiar given the inherently symmetrical nature of headphones, but relates to the mounting and

connections made to the drivers to ensure symmetry is achieved. The newly mounted drivers boast revised voicecoils and motors to tune the magnetic field of the whole headphone and so boost performance.

No changes have been made to the physical design of the 225e. The single sliding pin that mounts the earpad to the headband is simple, but allows the earpads to rotate and find a height on the head independently of one another. The unchanged design means that the 225e – for me at least – is still not very comfortable to wear long term. There's not enough padding and the speaker grille is too close to the ear. The cable also contributes to the discomfort as it goes to both earpads and tends to interfere with my face.

Sound quality

It might not be the most comfortable headphone around, but it is a credit to Grado's revisions that you'll do all you can to keep wearing the 225e. It does nothing to alter the largely positive perception of Grado equipment being refined, honest and impressively neutral. Listening to the 24/96kHz download of Craig Armstrong's *It's Nearly Tomorrow*, demonstrates the impressive ability

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Grado SR225e

ORIGIN
USA

TYPE
Open-back, on-ear headphones

WEIGHT
260g

FEATURES
• Pair matched drivers
• Quoted impedance: 32ohms
• 3.5mm jack (6.35mm adaptor comes supplied)

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to create a palpable sense of space and scale from drivers that are millimetres away from your ear. Brett Anderson's soaring vocals in *Crash* are packed with fine detail and weight and presence and there is a real sense of positioning, which is a neat trick when the sound is being beamed directly into your ears.

The other standout area of the performance is the bass. Grado has never been poor in this regard, but the SR225e brings a speed and definition to its low end that stands in good stead whether the bass is the swell of an orchestra or some deep electronic rumblings. This would count for very little if this heft didn't fit seamlessly with the rest of the frequency response, but it offers wonderful integration from top to bottom. It is also extremely forgiving. Feed it a diet of beautifully mastered hi-res and it revels in the available quality, but listening to the same pieces on Spotify is far from unpleasant too.

With all material, hi-res or compressed, the only real weakness that the Grado displays is a slight lack of outright excitement with up-tempo material when you really want it to get the head nodding. It is possible that the refinement and accuracy comes at the expense of this last ounce of drive and attack, but for many people these qualities will outweigh any limitations at inducing approving head movements.

Conclusion

The SR225e is a genuinely impressive headphone for the £200 asking price. Perhaps the highest praise I can give it is that the performance is on a par with the 325is of the preceding generation, which was 50 percent more expensive. If you are looking for an open-backed home headphone, the SR225e is a seriously capable example of the breed and suggests that Grado's e Series models might be its best work yet •

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Impressive sense of scale, fine detail and weight; bass

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Slight discomfort; lacks excitement with up-tempo music

BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



WE SAY: The performance is so good that you forget any discomfort

OVERALL

