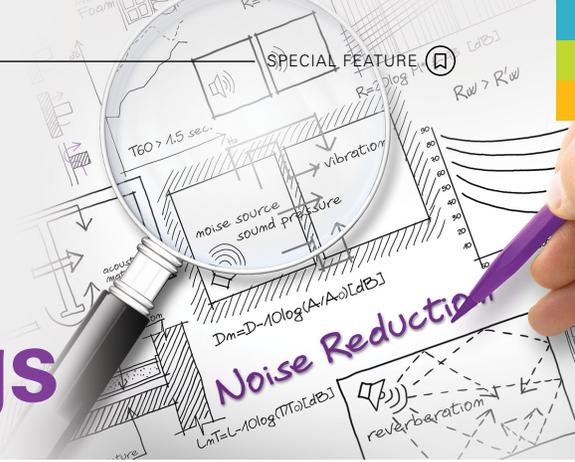


Musicians Should Invest In Custom-Fit High-Fidelity Earplugs



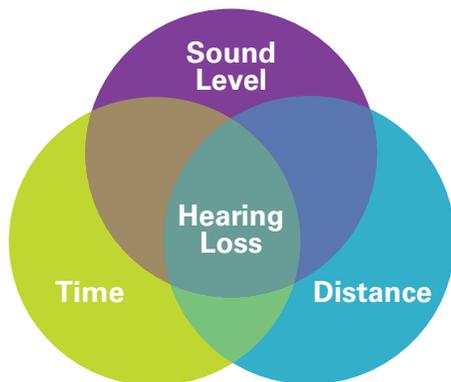
By Robert M. Traynor, EdD, AuD

Question

I'm a fairly serious musician and also attend loud concerts and dance clubs. Should I invest in custom-fit high-fidelity earplugs?

Answer

Top priority is to use some sort of hearing protection for situations when you are part of an audience in a loud atmosphere. For dance clubs and loud concerts, you can choose from a number of inexpensive earplugs that allow you to hear the musical aspects of the performance and still prevent hearing damage. They are available online, and many cost less than \$25—not much money to preserve your hearing for the future. One website, Best Reviews Guide, reviews over-the-counter earplugs to help you in choosing the most suitable type.



Adapted from the National Institutes of Health's It's a Noisy Planet. Protect Their Hearing® public awareness campaign (<http://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov>)

Musicians have options for higher-quality hearing protection: custom-fit high-fidelity earplugs or in-ear monitors. Many laboratories offer custom-made high-fidelity earplugs that differ by the amount of intensity reduction they supply. The best way to obtain these is by visiting an audiologist, who will work with the laboratory to custom-fit the earplugs to your ears. Tell your audiologist what you will use the earplugs for and then decide together which laboratory and which type of earplug to order.

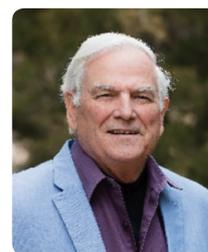
The audiologist will take deep impressions of your ears and send the order to the laboratory for manufacture. It usually takes about a week to get the custom high-fidelity earplugs back for fitting. Depending on the clinic, the audiologist may assess the actual amount of sound reduction the custom plugs offer while fitted in your ears.

Fees for high-fidelity earplugs vary by area but generally cost around \$200–\$250. For musicians who practice routinely and have stage performances occasionally, these will do a nice job of protecting hearing while not affecting the quality of the sound of the music.

Professional musicians who practice daily and perform frequently need more serious hearing protection. The best solution for professional musicians is in-ear monitors (IEMs). IEMs allow musicians to hear the

monitor mix with an adjustable level of on-stage ambient sound mixed in, all while keeping the ears acoustically sealed when both earpieces are safely and comfortably in place. Miniature embedded microphones pick up ambient sounds with natural directionality and sound quality.

IEMs are the only way professional musicians can have great hearing protection that simultaneously preserves the integrity of the music. Audiology clinics that specialize in musicians and their particular needs sell these systems, which range in price from around \$400 to \$6,000. For professionals exposed to high-intensity music daily, IEMs are as essential a tool as the high-quality musical instruments they play. 🎧



For 45 years, Robert M. Traynor, EdD, AuD, practiced audiology at Audiology Associates, Inc., in Greeley, Colorado, providing diagnostic and rehabilitative treatment for hearing

loss and tinnitus. He is a frequent lecturer in the United States and abroad, with speaking engagements in more than 40 countries. As an academic, Traynor has been an instructor, assistant professor, and associate professor of audiology as well as an audiology program director. He currently teaches as an adjunct professor in three university programs.

As the founder of Robert Traynor Audiology, LLC www.roberttraynor.com, he provides expert witness services and audiology consulting to the hearing industry. He also serves on the ATA's Board of Directors.