

T.H.E. Show Newport 2016 - Irvine, USA

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T.H.E. Show Newport 2016: Affordable Headphones at a High-End Show?

Since it moved to the much nicer venue of the Hotel Irvine last year, T.H.E. Show Newport has become one of North America's more important regional hi-fi shows. The show's website says that the show will feature more than 400 manufacturers. I walked some of the show yesterday during the press preview. Many of the manufacturers were still setting up in preparation for weekend crowds, but that didn't stop me from noticing the first trend of the show. To my surprise, the most interesting thing I noticed during the first day was the introduction of several shockingly affordable new headphones. It's especially surprising after I spent so much of the first day listening to speakers costing more than \$10,000 USD per pair.



The first of the new headphones I encountered cost \$300, which doesn't seem all that inexpensive until you look at the aircraft-aluminium construction and learn that they're made in the United States. The Base-Audio Reflex G7s are a semi-open-back design styled a bit like Grado headphones, but with softer ear pads. The ear pads are washable, the headband cover and cables are replaceable, and the earpieces fold flat for easier transportation. To my ears, the Reflex G7s definitely sounded like they were voiced for audiophiles, with clear and present treble and well-controlled bass. In other words, kind of like Grados.