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Discussion Thread: FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Nuforce NE-700X earphones / IEM (non-mic version)

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I'll write a short review since I had been stuck on vacation with a bunch of headphones for a week and got a chance to listen to them in comparison. I hope it isn't going to be hard to understand as I'm going to just crank it out before I get a browser crash or a circuit breaker trip (which has happened a few times due to running my two electric heaters in my power constrained circuit breaker).

I've been using the ne-700x for a week trying to evaluate it compared to my many other IEMs. I've been mainly driving it out of an ipod 5th generation and iphone 4, with and without a pico slim. I've also spent time with it on an HDP through a pico slim. I have to admit they are quite enjoyable, even though I am used to using > \$400 IEMs of different brands. I usually rotate between the turbine pro copper, the triplefi, and the se530 when it comes to IEMs, none of them being perfect. I also got a chance to compare them with the RE0 and RE1. Well, I can just throw the RE1 out of the comparison as after giving it a try for a while, it just seems so far below the others that it isn't worth worrying about. At this point I don't even remember what I didn't like about it, but it just had nothing really pleasing about it. I think it may have been too smooth, way too smooth with no detail, lack of bass, lack of speed, put you to sleep kind of sound.

Well the first thing I must say is among all of the IEMs I directly compared it with, the 700x is the most tipped towards the bass by far. Once I find a good listening volume, I generally turn up the volume of a song to where the vocals are just loud enough to be clear. Using this method, where the RE0 easily had the least amount of bass, the 700x had the most by far, more than the TripleFi and even the turbine copper in overall quantity. Before I thought the turbine copper was a bit tipped toward bass as compared to even the TripleFi it is much more focused on Bass. But my first feeling when listening to this headphone is that it would appeal to bassheads, the bass being so strong, much more tipped towards bass than even the Turbine Copper. I was wondering if this is how the Beats by Dre type headphones would be tuned. In songs that I started off tuning the volume based on the opening instrumentals and drums,

often I would end up feeling the midrange was recessed because I was basing the volume from how I'm used to the balance from my other headphones. I was fearing the entire midrange and highs would be poor like many bass heavy headphones, but once I turned up the volume to get the vocals where they are supposed to be, they sounded clear and smooth to me. That is a good sign.

Now how is the actual bass quality? Well if you actually match volume levels based on the bass, the Turbine Copper and TripleFi produces tighter and punchier bass with better speed as well. Here the Copper wins overall, however the 700x is totally enjoyable and I am in a dilemma if I prefer the amount of bass, especially at this price point. Hip Hop, Rock, Metal, Pop, they all sound good with this headphone. When you hear the RE0 right after this, all sorts of sounds seem to be missing. I didn't try turning up the volume to see if I can get the bass to step up with the RE0 as I know when the vocals or highs hit, I'll probably have my ears slaughtered as the RE0 are tipped towards the highs IMO.

It's hard to judge the mids and highs well since the bass is so present. Something like the RE0 has so much more detail at similar perceived volume it makes it seem like the 700x is not resolving things. But then once I compare, I realize the RE0 seems to have more detail than any of my other IEMs. This may be due to so much lack of low end that I'm able to turn it up higher without it feeling loud and hearing much more of the mids and treble. But at least nothing sticks out at me about the midrange and treble. It is pretty smooth, clear, and well controlled, but doesn't present anything special to me. That's pretty good already as many headphones have easily detected problems that make me not want to listen. To me, this headphones is about the bass, and with that it delivers a pretty good performance. I think it's probably very well tailored to the majority of the public who like strong bass, but with the added advantage of still having clarity in the rest of the listening range.

The interesting thing is if I listen to the 700x exclusively for a while, it doesn't seem like the bass is overpowering at all, it sounds right. Does it mean all my other headphones lack bass and this headphone gets it right? Probably not, but the added bass this headphone has integrates well enough to not distort the rest of the spectrum and allows a natural listening experience. The fact that I can rotate this headphone in with my others without feeling disgust, now I'm wondering, do many other headphones at this price range perform at this level these days? It really surprised me how enjoyable this headphone was at a much lower price than the headphones I'm used to. Though I see how the RE0 is also something special with the extremely detailed highs which might cater to audiophiles especially at a relatively low price, but I can also see how gifting those could result in disaster as they sound horrid unless paired with really good sources and amps, and the lack of bass especially directly out of a DAP will be easily noticed by all. The 700x on the other hand is a much more appealing

headphone for most at an even lower price. I've watched many movies on it and it is very enjoyable for that purpose, the accentuated bass giving more impact for action scenes.

## Positives

- **Durable construction** - solid aluminum housing looks crushproof under normal circumstances like being sat on or stuffed into a pocket, seems like the earpiece would be even stronger than the turbine copper as it doesn't have that stiff strain relief that looks like it could crack off, instead it has a flexible strain relief design that can bend either way. The cable is relatively thick, with a rubbery feel, and of the non-tangling kind like the monster turbine copper cable. I guess it has to be strong though as the case is just a simple drawstring sack that won't protect from pressure at all.

- **Good Sound** - a bass heavy but solid performance with no real negatives especially at this price point. Compared to better headphones, it seems not as well balanced with the mids and highs feeling recessed compared to the bass. Also, the bass is a little sloppier and slower than the best and with less impact as well, but still respectable overall. The soundstage does present wide enough, and the imaging is coherent.

- **No ear pressure problem** - I don't know really what to call this, but on my turbine copper I really have to deal with insertion carefully as frequently I cause pressure buildup and cause the driver flex popping sound. In fact it's hard to avoid. I've never encountered this with the 700x which is a welcome relief. Maybe it is a vented design where the turbine copper is not. Maybe it's the eartips. But whatever the cause, I'm glad I never have any trouble with pressure buildup or driver flex noise with this headphone.

- **Less sensitivity** - for me this is a positive as I can use it directly out of a DAP with significantly less hiss than I hear with my other IEMs. In addition, I have more range of actual volume control instead of in some cases where a volume of 1 is just right, 2 is too loud, and 0 is off. I find most IEMs far too sensitive for their own good. Why do they do that? I have no idea as I find no real correlation with sensitivity and sound quality with DAPs driving IEMs. The hiss and lack of fine volume adjustment is a real negative for many IEMs and I'm glad this one has sensitivity low enough to use comfortably without my headphone amp and not sound like junk the way some headphones do directly from the DAP. Now I have to point out the sensitivity is noticeably less than my regular 3 IEMs, but not at the level of the RE0 and especially the RE1 which absolutely have no hiss out of any of my sources but require substantially higher settings to get to the same volume and seem underpowered with any DAP.

- **Short Body** - this headphone allows me to lay sideways on a pillow without a problem. Many IEMs stick out enough to pose a problem but this one works for my particular ears. Though you have to note the short and wide body may make deep insertion harder for some ear shapes. They are a little wider in diameter than the turbine copper but overall a bit shorter if you are looking at eartip end to the back of the headphone. The turbine copper always posed an insertion problem for me where the cable is pressing on my ear before I can get the tip deep enough. Luckily the 700x doesn't have this problem because the cable is farther back on the body and is more flexible, instead of the stiff stem of the turbine. This is what allows it to be more flush with my ear and sticking out less than other IEMs.

## Negatives

- **Isolation** - for an IEM, this one is probably one of the least isolating models I've tried. It is clearly much less than my 3 regular ones in rotation. I personally would not use this in a loud environment as I feel like I'd have to turn up the sound too loud to compensate, especially trying to bring the vocals to the right volume. The bass at that point would probably be at ridiculous levels. The RE0 is only slightly better isolating than this, both are far below my reference for isolating which is the triplefi with the comply tips.

- **Microphonics** - Though this does not pose a problem for me as I usually sit still when listening to music, I did notice when the cable moves around it causes more noise than my other IEMs. I think this would be impossible for me to enjoy in a walking or running situation as the noise is quite loud. Do note I am wearing it in the cable down position when I noticed the very loud noises. When looped over the ears it improves significantly but there is still sound when the cable moves around.

- **Doesn't fit original iphone** - Not sure if it is just this particular pair matched up with the particular iphone (original with recessed jack) I tried, but I couldn't get the audio jack inserted. It looked like it would just fit with no clearance, but that lack of clearance really prevented it from going in. Maybe another unit of an iphone of this style or headphone would fit as it looks like it is exactly supposed to slip into the hole but somehow just doesn't. But I wouldn't bet on it. If you have an original iphone, I'm guessing you won't be happy if the headphone doesn't fit. They should have probably designed the plug to be just a bit slimmer so it wouldn't come close to posing this problem.