

# HEAD OF THE CLASS?



The AKG K 812 headphone is already a sumptuous pleasure at 1500 euros, but the company's new closed-back brother, the K 872, is 400 euros more. Can that be right?

**A**s a long-standing observer of the hi-fi world, one is astonished when a traditional manufacturer such as AKG brings a new headphone to the market, which is very similar to a model produced for years, but still carries a much 'ambitious' price tag.

### Home and professional use

Look at the K 812 and the new K 872, and you might wonder what's going on:

the drivers are the same, and you'll look in vain for differences in the headband and details, even if the description suggests to suggest differences are there. In fact, only when you put on the new model can you see – or rather hear – the changes, in the clear insulation from the outside world - an unmistakable sign of closed-back headphone.

Take another look at the ear-pieces, and you'll note that the porous, air

permeable structure of the K 812 has given way to a hard back without holes, sealing the rear of the drivers in, and external noise out. It should also be mentioned that the 812, which we have repeatedly used for comparisons, was produced in Austria, while „the new“ model is made in Slovakia.

The drivers themselves are unchanged between the two: 53mm diameter, they use an extremely powerful neodymium “motor”, which still delivers 1.5 Tesla of drive, while coil is double-wound, which should ensure a first-class impulse behavior. Both models have almost the same electrical ratings: high sensitivity of 112 dB on the 872 is 110 dB on the 812, and the impedance is 36 ohms, which is compatible with most amplifiers. The weight is also identical, at 390 grams.

The structure of hangers and headband show no differences, but instead of the headphone stand included with the K 812, there is only a hard plastic case - not suitable for the living room, but at the most impractical and ultimately also less valuable than the stand of the 812.

There have always been intensive discussions about whether a closed-back headphone listener in makes any sense in the domestic landscape, or merely brings with it disadvantages such as warm ears. However, in an average living room environment the family might like to watch TV, but the music-loving father prefers to spend the evening with music.

With is no second TV, nor an “evacuation room” with a music system, a closed headphone offers the solution: the music doesn’t leak from the headphones to the outside world, and the television sound no longer disturbs the music lover.

**Open closed**

However similar the two siblings may seem, they are so different application, and ultimately in sound, to the point that, if you want to listen undisturbed at moderate levels, the K 872 is a definite alternative to the 812. Both resolve plenty of detail, meaning that 70s disco and radio music such as Evelyn Thomas’s „High Energy „or Inner Life’s „I’m caught up“ can get quite annoying, while the new model has more powerful bass.

Things were more pleasant with Johnny Cash’s „Hurt“, but the sound of the two differs more clearly than would be expected from the many similarities. The closed K 872 sounded more sonorous and full-bodied, but sometimes to an excessive degree. The better the source and amplification, up to our reference amp from MalValve, the more questionable was the 872’s effect: with the more feeble output of the headphone jack on the MacBook the 872 was in front, but with the MalValve there was hardly any doubt that the 812 took the prize. The result with Natalie Merchant’s „Sally Ann“ is similar - with the exception of the lower ambient noise, used with the MalValve



▲ Unbalanced, but very soft and pliable upholstery pads, combined with the bracket construction, ensure good comfort.

the K 872 couldn’t provide a serious reason for its acquisition. Since it is significantly more expensive and a headphone stand is not supplied, the suspicion remains that the semi-professional customer is being exploited here.

*Michael Lang*



The cable with professional Lemo plug is connected to the left earpiece.

AKG K 872	
Around 1900 € Warranty: 2 years Contact: Audio Pro Tel.: +1 (888) 452-4254, www.ake.com	
Top price, high-quality closed-back earphone. High resolution. Clean, rich, sonorous sound with powerful bass. Neatly built, very comfortable. Also works on portable products.	
EQUIPMENT	
Closed model, interchangeable three-meter cable with Lemo plug, Screw-in adapter from 3.5 to 6.3mm jack plug included; Carrying case	
STEREO - TEST	
SOUND QUALITY	91%
PREIS/LEISTUNG	
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆ <b>GOOD</b>	