

Press release

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GO pod

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Above iFi's 'GO pod' wearable Bluetooth DAC/headphone amp, connected to Symphonium Meteor IEMs

GO pod + IEMs = brilliant wireless sound on the GO

Plug a pair of 'GO pod' wearable Bluetooth DAC/amps into high-performance IEMs to make the best-sounding true wireless in-ear headphones in the world.

Southport, England – Joining iFi's GO series of ultraportable headphone enhancers, the GO pod is a pair of wearable Bluetooth DAC/headphone amps designed to make any pair of corded in-ear monitors (IEMs) wireless. Given the quality of the GO pod's circuitry, when combined with a well-chosen pair of high-performance IEMs, the resulting sound is far in advance of any 'true wireless' earbuds or Bluetooth headphones.

Using a pair of GO pods is simple. First, detach the cable from your favourite IEMs and connect the earpieces to the left and right pods. Then, pair the pods with your source device (a smartphone, for example) and hook the ergonomically designed ear loops behind your ears to ensure a comfortable fit... the result is unrivalled TWS (True Wireless Stereo) headphone sound.

To launch the GO pod, iFi is partnering with some of the world's finest manufacturers of high-performance IEMs to make curated 'GO Pod + IEM' packages. Spanning both new and established models from 64 Audio, Craft Ears, Meze Audio, Symphonium and Westone, these special collaborations have produced six world-class pairs of TWS in-ear headphones.

Hi-fi separates for your ears

Comparing true wireless earbuds to the GO pod combined with a pair of high-performance IEMs is like comparing a smart speaker or all-in-one music system to a hi-fi separates system with a pair of well-chosen speakers. Sure, a smart speaker is compact and convenient, but a separates system delivers sound quality in an entirely different league.

True wireless earbuds – even the more expensive ones – rely on SoC (system on a chip) solutions to integrate the requisite tech into a tiny space. From a high-performance audio point of view, this is not ideal; amalgamating critical stages such as Bluetooth decoding, digital-to-analogue conversion and amplification saves space and reduces cost, but compromises sound quality.

The GO pod is distinctly different. Each of these critical stages is designed separately and optimised individually to ensure excellent sound quality – like an audio system made from individual hi-fi components. In addition, much like top-level hi-fi speakers, high-quality corded IEMs are engineered for sonic excellence, combining multiple high-tech drive units to transmit sound directly into your ear canal. Connect a pair of these IEMs to the GO pod and it's no wonder that the resulting sound is so much better than regular true wireless earbuds, given the level of audio engineering involved.



Left The GO pod's pliable ear loop hooks behind the listener's ear

Stage 1: Bluetooth

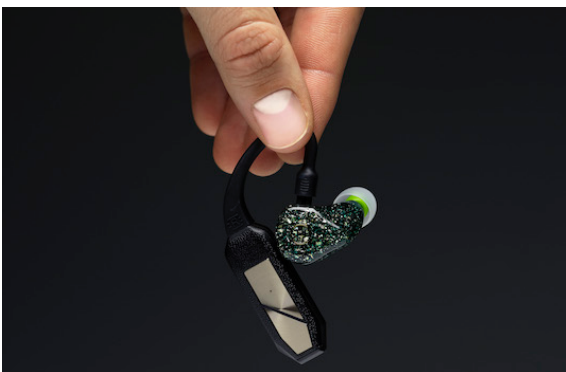
iFi has gone to great lengths to ensure its Bluetooth technology is state-of-the-art throughout its product range, earning it a class-leading reputation. The GO pod continues this uncompromising approach, including certification for Qualcomm's Snapdragon Sound platform and Bluetooth 5.2 for optimum range, speed and reliability. Bluetooth processing is handled by Qualcomm's top-tier QCC5144 module, with its 32-bit, quad-core architecture and low power draw delivering excellent wireless audio performance whilst minimising drain on the GO pod's battery.

As always with iFi's Bluetooth audio devices, the GO pod is compatible with an impressive array of high-definition Bluetooth formats. LDAC and LHDC (HWA) are both supported to their maximum 32-bit/96kHz specifications, with LDAC's highest 990kbps bitrate available to users of Android devices that support Snapdragon Sound (660kbps with other LDAC-enabled devices).

Qualcomm's 24-bit aptX Adaptive formats are also covered, offering sample rates of up to 48kHz and 96kHz, with the additional benefit of QHS (Qualcomm High Speed) providing an

extra 300kbps of bandwidth. Other supported codecs include regular aptX, AAC and SBC. This means that every possible source device is handled at the highest audio resolution its Bluetooth specification allows.

Another Qualcomm technology enabled in the GO pod is TrueWireless Mirroring. Although appearing as a single device when paired, both the left and right pods can receive Bluetooth signals – but only the one with the strongest connection acts as the receiver while the other mirrors the connected pod. If the listener moves position and the connection to the mirroring pod becomes stronger, they swap over so the mirroring pod becomes the receiver without interrupting the audio signal. Similarly, if the receiving pod is removed from the listener’s ear, the other pod becomes the receiver, ensuring a seamless true wireless stereo experience.



Left iFi's GO pod turns any pair of high-performance IEMs into brilliant sounding true-wireless in-ear headphones

Stage 2: DAC

In addition to Bluetooth processing, Qualcomm’s QCC5144 chipset can be configured to perform digital-to-analogue conversion and headphone amplification too – but this is not the iFi way. Though more complicated and costly to design, the sonic benefits of separate, individually optimised DAC and amp stages are far more valuable to iFi than the savings made by one-chip-does-all solutions.

To that end, the GO pod incorporates two Cirrus Logic MasterHIFI chips – one in the left pod, the other in the right. This 32-bit hi-res DAC chip is dedicated to single-channel digital-to-analogue signal conversion in the GO pod’s circuit design, combining with a jitter-eradicating precision clock to deliver ultra-low distortion and high dynamic range – one of the key reasons why the GO pod unlocks better sound quality than true wireless earbuds.

Another factor is the hardware-based analogue volume control. The GO pod doesn’t rely on the software-based volume controls in connected digital devices, which can have a deleterious effect on audio resolution. Instead, adjusting the volume on the connected device controls the volume level in the DAC, rather than in the phone, tablet or computer.

To minimise pre-echoes and ringing artifacts, the DAC is designed with proprietary digital-interpolation filters that support multiple digital filter responses. This enables the GO pod to offer five filter settings, user-selectable to suit personal taste, musical style and format type – no true wireless earbuds offer such a facility.

Stage 3: amplification

Delivering a balanced output signal to each connected earpiece – another first for the TWS in-ear headphone scene – the GO pod’s amp stage has been carefully designed to ensure ultra-low distortion and a silent background with high-sensitivity IEMs. With a power output of 120mW into 32 ohms, and an output voltage of 4V into high-impedance 300-ohm loads, each GO pod supplies plenty of gas to drive any connected IEM with consummate ease, without rapidly draining the internal battery.

To ensure its output perfectly matches the connected IEM, each pod auto-detects the IEM’s impedance and adjusts power accordingly. There are four settings – 16 ohms, 32 ohms, 64 ohms and 300 ohms – with the setting most appropriate to the connected IEM selected automatically.

Those familiar with iFi audio devices will know that the company uses discrete, high-grade components in its circuit designs, and the same is true of the GO pod. Devices such as TDK COG multilayer ceramic capacitors and inductors from Taiyo Yuden and Murata deliver qualities such as low ESR (Equivalent Series Resistance) and high linearity, paying great dividends in terms of sound quality.



Left The GO pod's ear loop can be detached and swapped for another with a different IEM connector

External affairs

Whichever connection type your favourite IEM brand uses, iFi has it covered. The GO pod’s detachable ear loop contains the IEM connector, and these are interchangeable – iFi has made ear loops for MMCX, 2pin, Pentaconn, T2 and A2DC connectors.

Weighing just 12g, each pod is designed to be lightweight and comfortable, yet robust and durable. The ear loops are mouldable to fit around your ears and the pods are water- and sweat-resistant (IPX5 rated), so no problem wearing them down the gym or getting caught out in the rain.

A built-in microphone utilises Qualcomm’s cVc noise suppression technology for excellent voice clarity, whether you’re making a hands-free phone call, chatting on a video call, speaking to the connected device’s voice assistant or even playing a game online. The aluminium panel on the front of each pod works as a touch control; simply tap to play or pause audio, skip forward or back, answer or reject a phone call, or engage the connected device’s voice assistant.

Ready? Charge!

The GO pod comes with a smartly designed charging case, with softly lined internal compartments and sufficient room to accommodate connected IEMs as well as the pods themselves. A 1500mAh rechargeable battery is built into the charging case; a pair of GO pods will play for up to seven hours on a single charge, while the case provides multiple recharges to enable up to 35 hours of playing time. The case supports both Qi wireless charging and USB-C fast charging.



Left The GO pod's charging case protects a pair of pods with or without connected IEMs and provides multiple recharges for up to 35 hours of playing time

Perfect partners

Rather than just launch the GO pod and leave users to choose the IEMs they think would work best, iFi has collaborated with some of the world's finest IEM manufacturers to find perfect 'GO Pod + IEM' partners. As a result of this research, the first 1000 GO pods produced will come packaged with a pair of IEMs from a carefully curated selection.

All six 'GO pod + IEM' packages and their RRP's – which represent a saving on the individual prices of the GO pod and IEMs when purchased separately – are listed below:

GO Pod + IEM package	Package RRP (UK)
GO pod + 64 Audio U4s	£1299
GO pod + Craft Ears Aurum	£1399
GO pod + Meze Audio Advar	£999
GO pod + Meze Audio Ria Penta	£1199
GO pod + Symphonium Meteor	£799
GO pod + Westone MACH 60	£999

The GO pod launches on 14th April 2023 at AXPONA (Audio Expo North America) and the 1000 'GO pod +

IEM' packages are available to order from this date. 60 days later – or when these packages have all sold through, whichever is sooner – the GO pod will be made available as a standalone product to combine with any pair of IEMs.

As a standalone product, the GO pod will have an RRP of £399. Each pair will come with two ear loops catering for MMCX and 2pin IEM connections; additional ear loops for Pentaconn, T2 and A2DC connections will be available at £29 each.



Top row from left GO pod + Craft Ears Aurum; GO pod + 64 Audio U4s; GO pod + Meze Audio Advar

Bottom row from left GO pod + Meze Audio Ria Penta; GO pod + Symphonium Meteor; GO pod + Westone MACH 60

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iFi is the sister-brand of Abbingdon Music Research (AMR) and is headquartered in Southport, UK. The two brands respectively design and manufacture portable, desktop and lifestyle audio products and high-end hi-fi components. Combined in-house hardware and software development teams and a 'music first' approach enable iFi and AMR to create advanced audio products that deliver new levels of design, functionality and performance at their respective price points. Since iFi's formation in 2012, its products have earned many awards around the world, helping it to become one of the fastest-growing brands in its field.

www.ifi-audio.co.uk