

“Fancy a light bite to eat!”

Pros: Light, Spacious sound, Look great, Oh so Natural, Eventually Comfortable, Cable

Cons: Cable fit, Uncomplete Bass, MMXC Connectors

Nuforce Primo 8 Disclaimer

This unit was bought at my expense for the purpose of review. So firstly I would like to thank me for this review sample. I kid, but seriously glad I made the purchase for a few of the reasons I will go on to explain.

Equipment used

For the purpose of this review I used my beautiful AR-M2 with a wide array of music, also my iPhone 6 which partnered fairly well with the Primo 8. Whilst the Primo 8 requires no really amping to reach very content listenable volumes the added output power and weight of the AR-M2 really gave the Primo a push in the right direction to accentuate all of its best features and qualities.

Introduction

So if there is one thing about this hobby I love it's just the way sound and the way you perceive it can all change at a moment when you hear something new. I've had this experience with headphones and earphones alike. However, the Primo 8 certainly got my blood racing and head hurting as I was figuring out this whole new presentation. I will expand on the sound signature and each component a little more, but to give you a flavour of what these are all about I've added a little teaser section.

Teaser

Since trying out a fair few variations of earphones I've got quite used to a diverse variety of presentations, when first listening to the Primo 8 I knew there was something different. I still can't decide today whether or not it's a good thing or a bad thing possibly both or, maybe more of a marmite kind of deal here. Let me just state it isn't because these sound bad just different, special, unique and individual in its own right. Okay synonyms aside let us get down to business.

What to expect when listening to these exclusively distinct earphones is a light airy presentation full of space. A midrange that is dependent on a good recording but has the ability to sound oh so suburb like liquid silk running through your soul. The bass line is quick but has a nice amount of rumble on bass heavy tracks it lacks body but on acoustic and orchestral pieces just sounds ridiculously organic and natural. The highs are marvellous maybe one of the best representations I've heard so far, strings come across just as you were listening to the artist playing for you live in front of you, detailing can be a new experience I won't claim you will hear details you haven't heard before, you might, but you will certainly may hear them more vividly and clearly then you may have before.

Technology

The Primo 8 uses a quad balanced armature design, with two drivers working together for the bass frequencies, and single balanced armature drivers for the midrange and treble. Not unlike many high

end multi BA driver earphones the Primo 8 uses a crossover which is basically an EQ filter designed to mitigate the frequencies not allowed through a particular speaker. The frequency range that is allowed to pass is called the passbands.

Any crossover with poor implementation usually leads to a lesser sound and sometimes frequency drop out. Whereas a well implement and well thought through design will lead to a fluid seamless sound resulting in natural decay and layering, a poor crossover will tell your brain where a mid-range driver cuts off and where that tweeter picks it up.

It can kill the fluidity of the sound, making things translate as artificial and un-natural. The Primo 8 NuForce decided to use a first-order filter. "This type of filter is preferred in the recording industry for mixing and mastering as it reduces the ripple effect in the passbands providing for a less grainy, more natural sound. NuForce's crossover approach, what they call their "Linear Phase Crossover" network, is also patent-pending.

Thankfully for us, NuForce got it right. There is a magnificent continuity in the low-end, something much more akin to a three-way speaker system rather than a four-way design. The music sounds wonderfully fluid, more natural, which is key in any speaker system: headphone or loudspeaker.

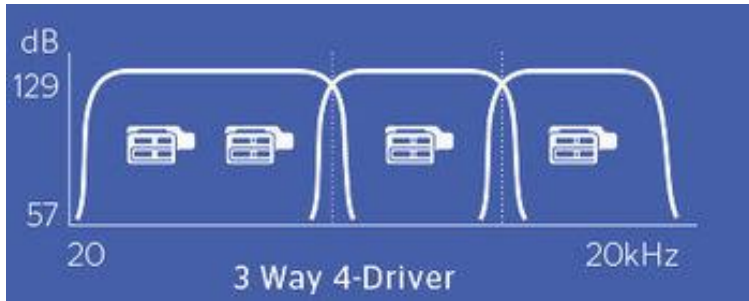
The Primo 8 is a quad balanced armature design, with two drivers working in tandem for the bass frequencies, and single balanced armature drivers for the mids and highs. While this is intuitively easy to understand, it's also devilishly tricky to get right... especially with regards to the crossover network that is used. A crossover is an EQ filter designed to attenuate the frequencies not allowed through a particular speaker. The frequency range that is allowed to pass is called the passbands. A poorly designed crossover leads to graininess and sometimes frequency drop out. As opposed to a wall of sound, or sounds having natural decay and layering, a poor crossover will tell your brain where a mid-range driver cuts off and where that tweeter picks it up, etc. Your brain tells you immediately that it's not actual instruments and artists performing this music in front of you. It can kill the liquidity of the sound - making things translate as artificial. It sounds like poor hi-fi trickery, and un-natural.

In the Primo 8 NuForce decided to use a first-order Butterworth filter. This type of filter is preferred in the recording industry for mixing and mastering as it reduces the ripple effect in the passbands providing for a less grainy, more natural sound. NuForce's crossover approach, what they call their "Linear Phase Crossover" network, is also patent-pending.

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Source: http://www.audio360.org/iems_a0026_review_nuforce_primo_8.php



Design, Fit and Cable

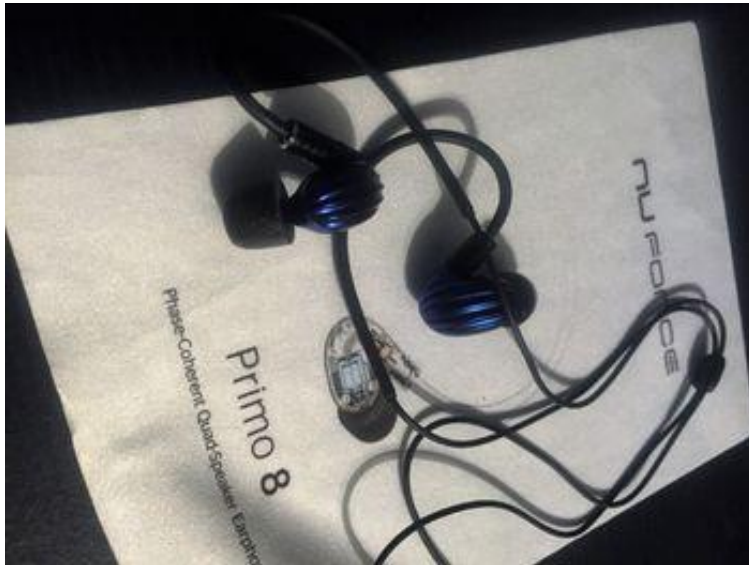
Due to the highly detailed reviews already posted regarding this earphone I have decided to upload a few links to a more informative description of these earphones so as not to waste any space and time. I would like to say this is down to sheer laziness but I'll just sugar coat it by saying everyone else has just done such a fantastic job.

Basically the design of the Nuforce Primo 8 holds true to the design of many multi BA earphones from offerings such as Westone and Shure. It's an over ear design with memory glides to hold the earphones securely in place. These things are a really beauty to behold and I must admit I am extremely fond of the metallic blue colour choice Nuforce decide to go with on the Primo 8. There are some waves/ridges adding a subtle detail to a seemingly plain and fairly brilliant design, below are some pictures to add to the visual affect.

The fit for myself I found extremely tricky to start with but this isn't that uncommon, especially with earphones that seem to use, in my opinion, that tricky MMXC connector type. I don't know why but I have yet to get on well with this design for a few reasons. One is the connection does seem to break on very rare occasions and with the added ear glide design can make for one pain in the ass to get the earphones to settle in, especially when you're a user of glasses like myself.

However, after a bit of fiddling and finding the right set of comply ear tips comfort became way less of an issue, still not perfect but stable enough to hold in place and manoeuvre around the house, but don't go jogging they will fall out and cause frustration!

Complaints aside I am thankful Nuforce decided to put some effort into the cable and quality of it. The cable consist of a Kevlar silk core, an inner layer of 7x silver wire and an outer layer of copper wire which is made up of 9 bundles of 7 insulated strands. So as you can see no expense was spared here to make this a completely durable cable and one of great sound quality. As a bonus you also get a fairly clumber sum microphone which works surprisingly well. I did try it on occasion with no issues, the microphone also doubles as a play and pause button when using it with compatible devices.



Upgrade Cable

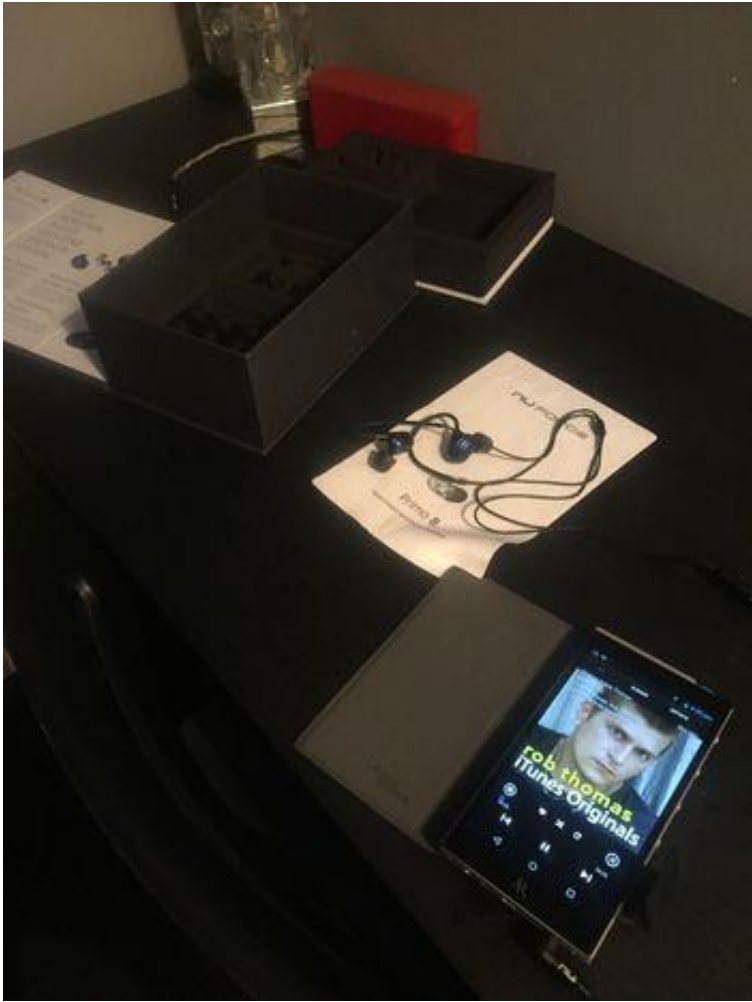
As Nathan mentioned in his brilliant review although a lot of thought and time has been spent on the cables audio reproduction and build quality. The fit will be tricky for some however, switch the cable out for something like the Lithum BaX cable and you'll be set with one of possibly the comfiest iems on the market.

Packaging

Okay so what are you getting should you decide to drop the £299 on these shiny blue gems? , Something of excitement and joy comes to mind from the premium box, well thought-out layout, vast array of accessories, and encapsulated display of the magnificent, awe capturing earphones really give the Primo 8's packaging that sense of quality and luxury you would expect to experience and see.

What's in the Box: 2 pairs of Comply Isolation foam ear tips (M, L), 8 pairs of silicone ear tips (S, M, L, XL), 51.2in (130cm) detachable cable with microphone, 3.5mm to 6.5mm adapter, Primo8 soft faux leather pouch, cleaning tool and microfiber cleaning cloth

Here are some pictures below:





Sound

Although this section will be a little tougher to describe I am going to go off the basis whatever I say about these earphones holds true generally overall because your mileage will vary! From recordings, ear tips to fit the sound becomes somewhat of an enigma. Swiftly moving on let's explore that airy, detailed sound I started to tease you with in the start.

Treble

Screw saving the best till last, let's start with one of the best features you get from this earphone from the get go! Right, now on a poor recording or on an overly bassy track things will get masked a bit, a smear will occur detracting from some of that drool inducing timber and neutrality.

Natural and organic are just two words I want to use so much with this earphone. When listening to "Sound of your voice" one of the soundtracks from "Courageous" (The Movie), strings and instruments just come across with such a timber and sparkle it's almost unreal. But that is a choice of word I can't use as the guitar strings just twinkle and mesmerize you with its own reality and truth.

Air! My word talk about room to breathe if you ever needed a light spacious display you need to hear these for yourself! Honestly yes it can cause its own issues but overall the soft touch and presentation combined with the immersive soundstage just adds to the depth, sparkle and neutrality these earphones offer.

I am in love with the treble of these earphones everything is so well presented there isn't a slight hint of grain or too much warmth, or even a tinge of metallic texture just unadulterated brilliance. Smooth incredibly detailed treble is what this earphone brings to the table with just the right amount of weight to make everything sound oh so perfect.

Midrange

A few reviews have mentioned this section a lot and in all honesty I expected something so different when I heard these for myself now I will go on to describe my own experience with vocals and midrange in this section however there is a paragraph I read in another review which mirrors my own impressions so well there is almost no point in writing it myself so I am using it as a quote.

"The mid-range however seemed a bit veiled, hanging around in the back of the mix, like it was quite

possibly shy and didn't want to join the party. After a few days of listening the mid-range decided to join the fray, and like a dance floor after the drop, the party erupted.” Quote from:

http://www.audio360.org/iems_a0026_review_nuforce_primo_8.php

(Also please check out their review as it's offers more detail than the review I am writing, only due to time constraints)

Now adding to this well-articulated analogy of the midrange I'd like to throw in some of my own impressions of how the midrange comes across after brain burn in and with the right track. Smooth, gorgeous, liquid and actually slightly forward. It's almost too natural especially when listening to some acoustic recordings. What I mean by this is it's almost like your sitting in the microphone as you hear the subtle details of the singer open their lips or strings as you breathe in this totally immersive sound. I love it, I wouldn't say it's been my favourite earphone for vocals but that is simply a preference thing as I prefer a more coloured syrupy type of sound. On the other hand I have discovered a whole new appreciation for vocals and the way they are reproduced which has lead me away from some of my typical conventions.

I am going to miss this earphone when it's gone but man when I look for my next big choice of earphone the presentation of this earphone will be used a reference. I can't get over the space and spatial cues and organic sound this earphone offers. Truly as cliché as this sounds because the term has been so excessively used I'm tentative to say it, but still tempted, this may be one of the truest and closest representations of vocal reproduction I have ever heard in an earphone.

Bass

Awkward, why? Because this area is so good and really one of the areas that stops me from making it my go to earphone and potentially settling with it for the rest of my life. The bass reproduction is accurate fast paced and actually not timid.

Mid bass is present on tracks when it's called for and there is even a deep sub bass rumble that really adds to the overall flavour of the sound. Unfortunately, I always ask myself where the body to the sound is, it doesn't sound hollow or empty because you know it's there but it lacks that fullness and meaty texture you expect and get used to with so many earphones. I don't know if it's the bass that is causing this or just how the earphones were created to sound but this is literally one of its biggest pit falls.

The bass rarely bleeds into the midrange and remains extremely clean, clear and tactile. But there is something about the sound which reminds me of the echo heard in in a great hall. You hear and feel the bass and it's of great quality but the soul of it fails to add to the sound like it's missing the part of the music that makes it complete.

Sound stage and Imaging

Amazing what a new sound can do to your thinking. Absolutely love this hobby as you discover sound reproduction more and more just when you think you've sussed it all out. The soundstage is vast on these bad boys. If I could find an earphone that had the soundstage of these earphones added

comfort more body and thicker vocals think I'd be sold for a good long while. (A cry out to anyone who has).

So with the Primo 8's soundstage you get a hall like sound, spacious breathy, wide and fairly deep. Listening to well mastered tracks in DSD quality just add a whole new lease of life to the music. These earphones make the top 5 list of most competent earphones I've heard for soundstage perhaps not imaging but I'll get to that.

I hope you've managed to get how spacious these things sound, with this also comes the spatial cues it throws out. Instruments decide to be played from wherever there positioned although I find sometimes because of its try hard attitude placement is slightly alluded. Most of the time everything is accurate but sometimes because these offer so much detail you end up feeling like too much is happening all, at once.

Conclusion

Summarising these earphones won't be a hard thing to do. Simply put they will be some audiophiles dream. Especially those lovers of classical, orchestral and acoustic pieces. Please try these out with the highest quality files you can and a warning for hip hop lovers don't expect these to fulfil that full body sound hip hop usually requires. Fit can be tricky yes, but overall these will offer a unique sound a lot of purists will find extremely addictive so it's almost worth the trade off if you can manage.