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## [Sony MDR-NC300D Noise Canceling Earphones Review](#)

*The world going silent in just a few seconds*



Sony MDR-NC300D  
earphones  
Sony

Some of the most interesting products we came across during our short visit at Sony's booth from [IFA 2009 were the MDR-NC300D noise canceling earphones](#), recently released by the Japanese company (well, at least they were pretty recent at the time of our visit), which really managed to draw our attention for two reasons: the fact that they provided noise cancelation even in the absence of a Sony portable player, as well as the quality of the sound they produced.

[As we pointed out within our reviews of the [Sony Walkman players providing noise canceling functions](#), the possibility of listening to one's music without being disturbed by the surrounding environment is an extremely interesting prospect, especially when commuting on a noisy means of transportation (train, subway, etc.). But in those cases, the technology was implemented within an MP3 player, which meant that people who wanted to enjoy such a function had to purchase the whole thing.

On the other hand, there aren't that many people out there who'd be willing to purchase a Walkman player just in order to enjoy this noise-canceling technology and, for this reason, Sony decided to offer it as a separate option. Thus, the MDR-NC300D earphones were born, this external accessory turning any music listening experience in a much more private and, why not, elegant one.

And the main reason why we've chosen the word "elegant" in order to describe this audio accessory is related to the sales package, which targets people for whom style and the way they look while using a certain product is almost as important as the features the respective device is able to provide.

Anyway, that's as much as we're willing to say about the Sony MDR-NC300D noise canceling earphones for the time being, so if you want to take a closer look at the features the product has to offer, as well as to the components included in the sales package, just go ahead to the next chapter.

[[BREAK=Aesthetics and Design]]

### *Overall design features*

Talking about the MDR-NC300D earphones in terms of design is a bit tricky, since we've got two different aspects to tackle here, namely the control and noise canceling mechanism and, separately, the earphones.

The main component of the MDR-NC300D is represented, quite obviously, by the aforementioned control system, which features a silver case and where one can encounter all of the buttons, which, in their turn, sport a brushed aluminum finishing. Apart from its size, the unit is extremely good looking, giving out an overall feeling of elegance and style.

The same can be said about the silver/black earphones, which are accompanied by color-coded silicone earbuds. Sadly, the colors are on the inside and they're useful only for keeping track of their size.

## *Size and portability*

While we haven't measured the main control unit of the MDR-NC300D earphones, the truth of the matter is that it's pretty big. Of course, there's some good reason for it, too, probably the most important being the fact that it has to provide the necessary space for one AA battery, required for powering the earphone set and for enabling the noise canceling functions.

In fact, this is one of the few minuses of the NC300D, since a lot of people might feel that they're packing a second, bulkier MP3 player of PMP besides the one actually doing the playback, which is not exactly something they will look forward to. However, if you're the type of person that carries the respective player in a backpack or something like that, then you shouldn't have any serious problems finding some extra room for the NC300D as well.

## *Controls*

As mentioned above, all of the control options the MDR-NC300D have to offer are placed on the various sides of the main unit, each and every single one playing a very important part in the overall noise-free experience these things enable.

So, first of all, on the front side, we can notice a small display, providing access to a single line of text, which is enough, however, for delivering valuable information regarding the NC300D's functions. Also on the front side, to the left of the display, there's a Monitor button, used for pausing the music in order to allow users to actually listen to what's happening around them.

On the top side of the NC300D, we can find another set of controls, starting with the Sound Mode button, which allows users to easily cycle through the three available pre-set audio modes (which we'll detail a bit later) and continuing with the volume controls. Last, but not least, comes the power switch that also has a "Hold" setting that can really come in handy when using the noise canceling earphones on the go (clearly what will happen most of the times).

The last control option of these noise canceling earphones from Sony can be found on the rear side. Labeled "NC Optimize," this button has the purpose of adjusting the amount of noise cancelation in a direct relation to the noise levels of the surrounding environment, thus allowing users to enjoy the best possible audio depending on just how much noise there is outside.

## *Connectivity*

There's really not much to be said as far as the connectivity options provided by the Sony MDR-NC300D are concerned, since we're only talking about a single 3.5-mm audio jack, used for attaching the earphones to an audio signal source, whether we're talking about a PMP, an MP3 player or a mobile phone. However, the plug is gold-plated, for superior audio quality, and also L-shaped, thus enabling easier connectivity (at least in a couple of different situations).

As mentioned above, the noise canceling earphones from Sony are powered by a single AA battery, which occupies pretty much the largest part of the main control unit. The battery is inserted via a side slot, which we had a pretty difficult time opening, which means that it will most likely stay closed even when subjected to some pretty serious movements.

## *Lifestyle accessories*

Although we usually list the accessories in the last chapter of a review, we'll make an exception in this case, simply because the contents of the sales package are quite important when talking about this here product.

The centerpiece of the accessory set is the black leather case, which can be used for storing both the earphones and a companion MP3 player, since there's plenty of room inside. Plus, we have to mention that the sheer quality of the leather material used is absolutely fantastic and worth pretty much every penny of the otherwise pretty spicy price tag of the MDR-NC300D noise canceling earphones.

The other accessories include a cord adjuster, in-flight plug adapter and no less than seven different pairs of silicon earbuds, meant to fit various ear sizes. They're meant to allow users to enjoy a high level of comfort and, although the drivers are a bit large, that's exactly what happens, in the end.

[[BREAK=Tech Facts]]

### *Tech specs*

#### Weight and Measurements

- Cord Length (Approx.): 1.5 m;
- Weight (g) - 8 / 53 (box).

#### General

- Case Type: Carrying case;
- Design: Vertical in-the-ear design, noise canceling;
- Plug: Gold-plated, L-shaped stereo mini plug;
- Type of Use: Noise canceling.

#### Hardware

- Cord: 1.2 m, Neck-chain type;
- Headphone Type: Vertical in-the-ear style earbuds;
- Magnet - Neodymium (360kJ/m<sup>3</sup>);

#### Audio

- Driver Unit: 16 mm, closed;
- Frequency Response: 6 - 24,000Hz.
- Impedance - POWER ON (Ohm) - 16;
- Noise reduction effective range - 40 - 1.500 Hz;
- Noise reduction rate (at 300 Hz) - 98.4%;

#### Power

- Battery Indicator: Yes;
- Battery Life (Approx): 15 hours;
- Battery Type: AA battery x 1.

## *Noise canceling technology*

Naturally, the noise canceling technology represents the main asset of the MDR-NC300D earphones from Sony, given the fact that, after all, their main purpose is to reduce ambient noise and provide a quieter environment to enhance audio entertainment. The secret here is that the headphones have an inside microphone on each earpiece that works with electronic circuitry, managing to seriously cut back on the ambient sound by synthesizing with a sound in opposite phase produced by the noise canceling circuit.

According to Sony, their MDR-NC300D are capable of reducing up to 98.4% ambient noise (20 dB at 160 Hz) when the noise canceling circuit is activated, which is truly a noteworthy achievement, by all accounts.

The company also informs us that total noise suppression ratio is approx. 20 dB (when the noise canceling function is on) and approx. 7 dB (when the noise canceling function is off). The total noise suppression ratio is the difference in noise energy when the Noise Canceling function is active and when not wearing the headphones.

Of course, these are just numbers, so if you want to find out just how using Sony's noise-canceling earphones "feels" in real-life, check out the next chapter of our review, dedicated to the real-life experience enjoyed while using the NC300D earphones from Sony.

[[BREAK=Real Life Performance]]

### *Using the MDR-NC300D in real life*

We've talked a bit about the design of the MDR-NC300D earphones, and the aspects we pointed there are quite important, since they're directly related to the way in which they behave in real-life situations.

So, the first thing we'll have to point out is that if one is looking for ultra-portability and convenience, then the NC300D is not exactly the best solution out there. I mean, if you really want to cut yourself out from the world, and at the same time travel very light, then perhaps one of Sony's Walkman players with noise canceling technology might be a better choice.

The biggest issue here is that of the size. I mean, the main control unit of the MDR-NC300D is quite a bulky piece of gear, and carrying both this device and an attached MP3 player within one's pocket might prove to be a fairly uncomfortable task.

However, if you move past this issue, Sony's pair of noise canceling earphones represents a very good solution, being able to deliver a great level of control over the audio playback, not to mention good sounding audio. In fact, as far as this issue is concerned, we can say that the MDR-NC300D makes good use of the company's S-Master full digital amplifier and digital sound enhancer technology, users being able to enjoy clear, powerful audio with some good bass levels tagging along.

Furthermore, users are able to easily choose between the three available sound modes (Movie, Bass and Normal) and fine-tune the frequency response to match their own personal listening preferences.

In terms of controls, we can say that pretty much every option of this type worked great, the

most important of them, as far as we're concerned, being the monitor button, which automatically stops the noise canceling function, enabling users to hear what's going on around them.

Also worth mentioning is the fact that the accessories included in the sales package really came in handy, the leather case making the whole music listening experience a much more... elegant one, so to say. Plus, those numerous silicon earbuds included in the sales package practically allow more users to enjoy the noise canceling capabilities of the MDR-NC300D by choosing the specific size that delivers the best level of overall comfort.

### *Noise canceling performance*

In order to see for ourselves just what the MDR-NC300D earphones are all about, we've decided to test them in the noisiest environments available on a more or less daily basis: within our own office, on a busy street, on the subway, on the train and on an old bus going through some even busier streets.

The first interesting thing we noticed while moving from one environment to the next is the fact that the device is capable of automatically detecting the level of surrounding noise and then act accordingly, countering its effects. So, there's no need to push any buttons or adjust any settings, since this thing will do it automatically for you.

When using the headphones in our office, the effects were pretty impressive, since there was really not even the shred of a sound coming through. Things were not particularly different when moving to noisier environments, probably the highest amount of noise getting through when we moved around the busy streets, with numerous car horns going off, trams and buses going by, and so on. Noise cancelation was also almost perfect when going on the subway or the train.

One thing that we liked in particular about the NC300D earphones was the rather smooth transition between noise cancellation and lack thereof. So, when one presses the monitor button, the effect is progressive, meaning that one won't be immediately "assaulted" by the surrounding noise, thus enabling the ear to get used to the noise.

### *Battery life*

As mentioned before, the earphones from Sony require one AA battery in order to work, which is a pretty good thing, given the fact that these batteries can be found pretty much all over the place. However, the functioning life is not what we'd call fantastic, since we're talking about 18-20 hours, on the average - in other words, you probably have to change the batteries every couple of days or so.

[[BREAK=Conclusions]]

### **The good**

- good quality audio;
- great noise cancelation capabilities;
- multiple music playback modes;
- intelligent (automatic) noise cancelation system;
- very impressive sales package.

### **The bad**

- bulky control unit;
- low battery life.

## **Overall impressions**

If you're the type of person that spends a lot of time on the go and you want to be able to listen to your favorite songs without being disturbed by the surrounding noise, then the MDR-NC300D might be just the thing for you. These earphones will certainly bring you very fast into a world of almost complete silence, whether you're on the street, on the subway or flying long-distance. Of course, we're talking about silence as far as the environment sounds are concerned, because one will also be able to listen to their favorite music at a very good quality level.

However, silence on the go does come at a price, and in the case of the MDR-NC300D, that price is related mostly to the size. Unfortunately, the main control unit is pretty bulky and, despite the fact that the cables included in the package are pretty long, most people might still have a problem finding the necessary space in their pockets or bags for this device.

To make things easier for the user, Sony was kind enough to provide a pretty comprehensive sales package, which includes, among other things, a very nice leather case, providing enough room for storing the MDR-NC300D, a couple of adapters and even a smaller MP3 player (we've tried even a PMP, but there's not enough space for a large-screen device in there).

Last, but certainly not least, we'll also have to mention a different kind of price, namely the actual sum of money you'll have to pay in order to get this thing - 290 USD, which, to be honest, is a bit high, all things considered.

## **Sales package**

[IMG=21][IMG=22][IMG=23]

- Carrying case;
- In-flight plug adapter;
- Neck-chain style cord with controller (3.9 ft);
- Extension cord (0.6m);
- Cord adjuster;
- AA battery.