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TECHNOLOGY TRADER

Our Gadget of the Week: Phoning It In

IF YOU WANT TO SNOOZE WHILE YOUR WIFE TAKES in the 1 a.m. rebroadcast of Oprah, or better yet watch the end of an extra-innings thriller while she dozes, a set of earphones plugged into your TV is essential. There are quite a few on the market—Amazon alone lists more than 60—and prices range from cheap to wallet-busting. I've owned a set for years, but Able Planet's Sound Clarity unit is a big leap forward in quality. And it won't break the bank.



Able Planet Sound Clarity IR400T2; Price: \$180. Stats: Headphones weigh about 6 oz. Features: Full-size soft-foam ear cushions. Auto sensors shut set after TV signal ends, to save battery life. Website: www.ableplanet.com

The lightweight earphones are comfortable, and the stereo sound is good—in fact, a lot better than good, providing both clear speech and full, rich background sound. The company says its Linx Audio technology creates "high frequency harmonics" that enhance sound and speech clarity and boost the perception of loudness without actually increasing volume.

The small base unit plugs into a TV's sound-out sockets and transmits an infrared wireless signal to the headset. You can turn your head and the sound doesn't fade, but if you go much more than 10 feet away, you'll get static. An

unlimited number of headsets can share the same IR signal.

One caveat: Check that your TV does have sound-out sockets that send full volume even when the main sound system is muted. If it doesn't, you can still use the headset but you won't be able to mute or turn down the sound on the television without doing the same for the headset, which sort of defeats the purpose.

Privately owned Able Planet has an award-winning line of noise-canceling headsets. It's a small fry in a headset market dominated by the likes of Bose and Sennheiser. But sets like this should turn up its volume.

—JAY PALMER