

# Review of the T+A SOLITAIRE T on Musicalhead

The German high-end manufacturer T+A presents the SOLITAIRE T, which is intended to ideally combine mobile and audiophile demands. According to the manufacturer, the newly developed dynamic transducer system of the closed headphones is also capable of transmitting musically high-quality source material not only in wired mode, but also wirelessly via Bluetooth standard 5.1 (class 2) in perfect sonic quality.

For this purpose, any interference factors were already eliminated during the development phase. The SOLITAIRE T therefore uses newly designed cone drivers whose edge areas are additionally damped, for example, to effectively prevent reflections from the coils. Due to their lightness and rigidity, the 42 mm cellulose diaphragms continue to offer advantages in terms of impulse fidelity and dynamics without breaking down prematurely into inherent modes.

## Linear Tuning

A new type of low bass system also ensures optimized vibration behavior and thus a largely linear frequency range thanks to the careful tuning work of the Herford developers. Since the closed headphones were originally designed for purely passive operation, the SOLITAIRE T basically requires no active signal processing to satisfy even high musical demands.

In the purist, passive version, the SOLITAIRE T is connected to external sources either unbalanced via a 3.5 mm jack plug - or balanced via 4.4 mm PentaConn - using low-borne noise OFC copper cables with gold-plated contacts. However, the T+A can also be operated fully digitally via its USB-C input without data compression.

## High Resolution DAC

In active mode, the sonic quality of a headphone system is inevitably determined by the quality of the individual electronic components used. For this reason, T+A relies on the Qualcomm 5127 - currently one of the best Bluetooth chips in the world - as the digital bridge for the SOLITAIRE T. In the switchable "High Quality Mode", an ESS-Sabre reference chipset (9218) is also used, which converts even demanding acoustic material in a high-resolution manner.

The manufacturer has also placed a special focus on the intuitive operation of the T+A SOLITAIRE T - particularly regarding multisensory feedback. Regardless of whether one uses one of the metal buttons or switches on the side, operates the interaction field on the right-hand driver housing, or switches on the environment via an integrated transparency field - all inputs are confirmed acoustically by spoken feedback.

## Ideal Travel Companion

The SOLITAIRE T follows the long-established design language of the German high-end manufacturer, whose consistent reduction also characterizes these headphones as a typical T+A product. All aluminum components are milled from the solid, bead-blasted, and anodized. The driver housings are also suspended on close-tolerance precision joints made of hard metal, allowing them to rotate through 90° each and to be folded in.

In the high-quality and compact transport box, which incidentally also contains the extensive (cable) accessories, the new T+A SOLITAIRE T thus becomes the ideal travel companion for many years. The use of anti-allergenic protein leather for the soft ear pads and the equally padded headband also ensures a corresponding wearing comfort.

Only the somewhat ambitious contact pressure as well as the principal design as on-ear headphones could occasionally cause slight annoyance for one or the other grail knight of fine tones, if the wearer's head or ears exceed the "standard size" considerably - a try-on of the compact ear speaker is therefore recommended.

### Listening Test (Part 1)

In the listening test, the new T+A SOLITAIRE T, especially in wired mode in combination with the ASTELL&KERN KANN ALPHA, impresses after just a few bars of music with a natural sounding reproduction of my selected acoustic gems. In particular, the bass range of the compact ear speaker does not seem too present, but rather blends surprisingly homogeneously with the rest of the frequency band.

The tonal tuning of the T+A is a bit of a surprise in my opinion since most manufacturers in the mobile segment prefer the more bass-driven style. And despite the seamless transition to the fundamental range - free of any overlays - the SOLITAIRE T convinces with an always powerful and contoured bass with remarkable depth.

Particularly in the sound-relevant midrange the ear loudspeaker from Herford knows to inspire lastingly. The excellent elaboration of small details goes hand in hand with an astonishingly transparent presentation of the same - no easy task, especially for closed headphones. In addition, the T+A always maintains coherence in the musical events and creates generous spaces with firmly defined boundaries.

### Sound Talent

The SOLITAIRE T also pleases in the high frequency range with a very good resolution and a silky as well as low-sibilant reproduction of the high frequencies. Even fine reverberation tails are not left out by the T+A but are nuanced and conscientiously traced. However, the headphones require meticulously broken-down data fare if they are to fully demonstrate their sonic talent.

By the way, this also applies to the respective playing partner. Preferably in balanced combination with the T+A HA200, the SOLITAIRE T impressively demonstrates the musical feats of which the headphones are capable - especially in dynamic terms. And even if the combination with the reference amplifier from Herford may seem a bit excessive in terms of price, in my opinion it can still serve to acoustically define the position of the closed ear loudspeaker.

Against this background, the new T+A SOLITAIRE T in passive mode does not show any sonic weaknesses in my view but convinces especially in its price class all along the line.

## Bluetooth Operation (Part 2)

In the second part of my review, I put the SOLITAIRE T through its paces in wireless Bluetooth mode. For this purpose, I again use the KANN ALPHA for the now digital connection - and my iPHONE 13 PRO also gets some play time on the T+A to explore the acoustic qualities in the data-reduced AAC codec.

The wireless principle undoubtedly offers advantages in terms of practicality and is thus virtually predestined for mobile operation. While in the connection with the ASTELL&KERN no significant changes regarding the sound quality can be determined in comparison to the unbalanced cable variant, the SOLITAIRE T has to leave some musical feathers in the interaction with my iPHONE.

In addition to a slight loss of dynamics, especially the mids in combination with the APPLE device sometimes seem a bit overcast and the spatial localization of the sound events suffers from the draconian data reduction to 256 kbps. While these acoustic restrictions are certainly easy to get over in the hustle and bustle of the city, they are more noticeable at home.

### High Quality Mode

Especially when the identical music tracks are played back in direct connection via the KANN ALPHA in the superior Bluetooth codec APTX-HD. Although the SOLITAIRE T also struggles with the restrictions imposed on the volume that can be achieved, which is limited to a maximum of 98 dB by European legislation, the T+A achieves a more convincing sound quality, almost at CD level, thanks to the higher data transfer rate of 576 kbit/s and a resolution of up to 24 bit.

In "High-Quality Mode", the SOLITAIRE T finally reaches its acoustic peak. In this mode, only the ESS-Sabre reference chip takes over the sensitive processing of the musical data, the conversion via the implemented Qualcomm converter is consequently deactivated. And even though I prefer the balanced cable version via 4.4 PentaConn in combination with the ASTELL&KERN, the outstanding Bluetooth HQ version from T+A is hardly inferior to the former.

Only in terms of transparency, the maximum spatial extension in depth and width, as well as in terms of the more excessive macrodynamics, the connection via copper strips still has slight advantages in my opinion. Nevertheless, the new T+A SOLITAIRE T is by far the best Bluetooth headphones that I have reviewed on Musicalhead so far. The mouse doesn't bite off a thread.

And in view of the diverse acoustic application possibilities, the small ear speaker naturally also receives my explicit recommendation. The SOLITAIRE T is available immediately at a retail price of 1,300 euros from German retailers. For further information, please visit the T+A website at [ta-hifi.de](http://ta-hifi.de).

Yours Fidelio

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