2024: a good year for earbuds

The year 2024 has been another very good one for wireless earbuds. We've reached a point where every tech giant is firing on all cylinders. Apple's AirPods Pro, Samsung's Galaxy Buds 3 Pro, and Google's Pixel Buds Pro 2 are each fantastic in their own right and fairly comparable in the features they offer. Are there advantages depending on which you pick? Sure. Samsung's new voice controls are super convenient. Google wins out on comfort. And Apple's new hearing health features really level up what we expect from consumer earbuds. But in terms of everyday performance, they're all within spitting distance of each other.

As for over-ear headphones, Sonos introduced its long-rumored Ace headphones this year. Their marquee trick, TV Audio Swap, is the ability to receive audio from a Sonos soundbar for private listening – a good example of a brand trying to muster a unique selling point in a competitive market, while Apple, Samsung, and Google are laser-focused on interplay within their own respective ecosystems. (Of course, Sonos' headphones were all but forgotten in the avalanche of controversy brought on by the company's overhauled mobile app.)

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Fitness tracking is another area where we'll continue to see earbuds offer new advantages. Heart rate tracking is becoming relatively common, and the next-generation Powerbeats Pro, due

early in 2025, are rumored to include the useful feature.

As for the new year, Sony’s long-popular 1000X series is due for a refresh. The 1000XM6 earbuds (and headphones) seem like a lock for 2025. I think the same is true of the next AirPods Pro; Apple will reportedly release a redesigned third-gen pair sometime next year. On the other hand, with Samsung and Google having both released new models in the last six months, I wouldn’t expect much from them in the near future.