

Suunto's new headphones finally made me appreciate bone conduction

As a city runner, I never thought too hard about wearing noise-canceling earbuds. I'd dabbled with open-ear buds in the past but mostly ran in well-lit parks where my biggest danger was dodging goose poop. It's different in the suburbs. Recently, I was nearly pancaked by a Range Rover going at least 10 over the speed limit. I never heard it coming, even though my headphones were in ambient mode.

Which is why I've spent the last two months testing the \$199 Suunto Wing and \$149 Suunto Sonic.

Both the Wing and Sonic are bone conduction headphones – a category that's long been dominated by Shokz (formerly AfterShokz). The Sonic is the more basic, entry-level device, while the Wing adds a few more flourishes – namely, LED lighting, a portable power bank, and head motion controls. The Wing also has slightly better IP67 water and dust resistance compared to the Sonic's IP55 rating.

I generally don't love wraparound headbands, but this was more comfortable than I expected.

On that first point, I was pleasantly surprised that the Sonic and Wing were both comfy to wear. My old AfterShokz headphones had a wraparound neckband that dug into my skin, hurt my smallish ears, and never sat quite right. These headphones also have a wraparound design, but I felt no discomfort. The headphones were stable and secure during my runs and walks.

Plus, the part that sits over the ear was thin enough that it didn't cause issues when wearing glasses or headbands – a problem I've had with other open-ear headphones like the chunky Bose Sport Open Earbuds.

Bass still isn't amazing, but I was stunned at how much better it sounded on the Wing and Sonic compared to my first foray into bone conduction headphones. The rumby intro on Stray Kids' "Megaverse" didn't sound nearly as cool as it would've on my Beats Fit Pro, but it was good enough to keep me pumped. After a few weeks, I stopped noticing the difference. (It helps that Suunto offers various sound profiles, including an outside mode that boosts bass a bit.)