

Ultimate Custom Made Ear Protectors

“I’ve got 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 senses working overtime”, so sang Andy Partridge and XTC way back when. And indeed, we all have five senses that I’m sure most of us take for granted. I know I do.

One of the motorcyclist’s senses battered more than most has to be the ear. Although cocooned within the protective shell of the helmet, the eardrum takes a terrible hammering from wind noise when on the move. The more worrying thing is that you probably won’t notice as your hearing becomes more and more affected. The final nail, so to speak, is that hearing damage is irreversible. Once you’ve lost it, it’s gone for good!

The Dutch Government’s Occupational Health & Safety Service commissioned a study on the effects of wind noise and discovered some disturbing results. At 50mph the sound level under a helmet was 90decibels (dB). Speed has a significant effect on sound levels and for each 12mph increase in speed, the intensity of the sound is doubled. According to the report, at 60mph, a rider is experiencing the same level of noise as a circular saw operator, the only difference being that the circular saw jockey would have to wear, by law, ear defenders.

Using Noise Regulations figures laid down for the workplace, the following figures would apply to safe exposure times while riding a motorcycle:

Speed (Mph)	Noise Level (dB)	Safe Riding Time
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50	92	2 Hours
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62	94	1 Hour
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74	97	30 Minutes
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86	100	15 Minutes
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98	103	7.5 Minutes
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110	106	3.75 Minutes
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All of the above noise levels exceed the point at which hearing protection MUST be worn in a working environment. If biking was covered by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), all motorcycle riders would have to wear ear plugs by law. But it isn’t and they aren’t.

So, it's up to you to protect your ears. First step is to buy some of those squidgy disposable earplugs on sale at virtually all bike shops. These are cheap (typically 50p-£1 per pair), largely comfortable and efficient. But, I find them awkward and fiddly to use, they have a tendency to pop back out of the ear if you don't stick them in properly and get gungy easily (maybe I need to clean my ears out more often!). Also, if you forget which went in the right and which when in the left, you can easily transfer an infection from one ear to the other. That said, they are better than nothing.

The alternative option is to go the Ultimate route. Ultimate Ear Protectors are custom made to fit the shape of your ear canal and so are infinitely more comfortable and do a more effective job of reducing wind noise.

Crafted from medical grade silicon, the plugs are made from a mould of the inside of your ear. The mould takes about five minutes to produce and includes an internal check up of your ear-drum as the mould cannot be taken if you already have any inflammation or infection.

The plugs, which don't absorb water and can be washed in ordinary detergent, come in different styles and colours depending on what your requirements are. If you want to be able to hear your mobile or radio/Walkman, special earplugs with insets can be made to hold the ear-piece. This may sound strange, but because the sound is being directed straight into the ear, the volume can be set at a lower level because the outside noise interference is being damped by the ear plug. If a lower level of noise reduction is required, filters can be inserted that allow a certain level of noise through.

A standard set of Ultimate ear plugs will reduce noise levels by up to 30dB. As you can see from the table above, this represents a serious noise reduction and less damage to your ears will occur. Of course, because the Ultimate earplugs are so easy to pop in your ear, you'll be more inclined to use them every time you go out, even on short journeys. For couriers, who probably experienced more and continuous high wind noise levels, I'd say I was a mug for despatching for four and a half years without them.

Ultimate ear plugs start from a very reasonable £55 per pair all the way up to £325 + for specialised plugs for shooters (of the clay pigeon type) and take approximately ten days to two weeks to deliver. For more information, please call Ultimate on 01689 876885