6 and the city

The latest evolution of Sony's world-conquering noise-cancellers has brought subtle upgrades in a bid to stay ahead of the pack. Is this the new gold standard?



[Words Khumail Thakur]

Plonk these on your head and you'll be shocked at the level of performance Sony has squeezed from their new 30mm driver.

It's the same size as before, but it's paired with a new QN3 processor that is responsible for ANC and also the sound quality. Sony says the QN3 has a 'look-ahead noise shaper', which advances the digital-to-analogue conversion and improves timing and rhythm. Call me impressed because the darn thing works, and the improvement over the QN1 is immediately noticeable.

The Sony's place the backup singers and the percussion instruments in *The River of Dreams* with precision, clarity and detail, and does that without colouring Billy Joel's falsetto and spiritual candour. Everything just comes together here with immaculate cohesion and timing that it's easy to get lost in the melody and tap along to the rhythm. You can hear every breath in detail from the singers as the song reaches its final minute and breaks into a choir.

These do lean towards being a bit mid-forward in my opinion. These emphasise the vocals a wee bit too much for my liking, and compared to my Apple AirPods Max, it's apparent. But it doesn't lose any of the finesse or the emotions in Conor Mason's voice in *Impossible* by Nothing But Thieves. Everything sounds energetic and fun.



1 Foldin' slumbers

Wear the thing next to the Sony XM5 and you'll need Sherlock's wits to find the difference. The Sony WH-1000XM6 have slightly softer edges on the cups and a wider headband, which offers overall better comfort.

2 Love is the snug

I wore them for a measly one-and-a-half-hour flight to Goa, and the headphones were not fatiguing. They have plenty of swivel and rotation of the hinges, and don't make any creaking or unpleasant sounds, even if you sleep with them.

3 Astral tweaks

The Sony's place the backup singers and the percussion instruments in The River of Dreams with precision, clarity and detail, and does that without colouring Billy Joel's falsetto and spiritual candour. There's immaculate cohesion.

4 Employ the silence

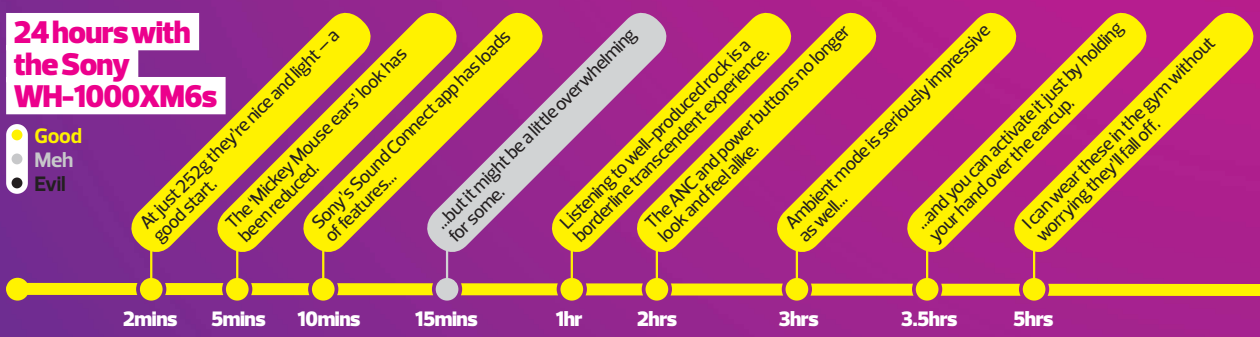
We took a flight to Goa and never even heard the plane rumble once. Where some sounds of chatty folks around you would seep in on the XM5, the XM6 targets those as well and shuts them out. Crying babies and uncles too.

5 Sprawl my life

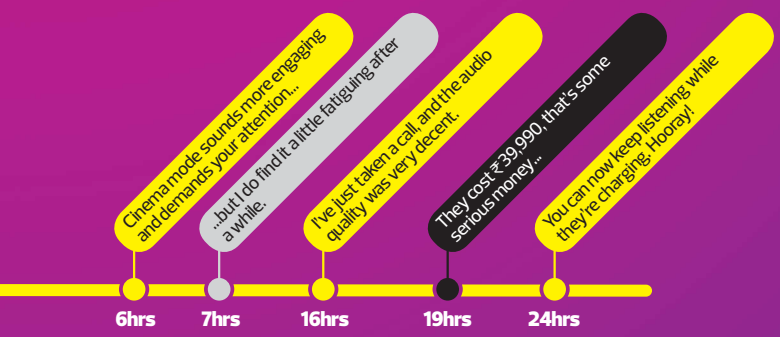
Sony's claimed 30hrs of use with ANC on seems accurate, and should be enough for even the most painful of long-haul journeys. Throw in a 3min quick charge for an impressive 3hrs of playback, and I don't see battery life being an issue for anyone.

24 hours with the Sony WH-1000XM6s

Good
Meh
Evil







Tech specs

Drivers 30mm dynamic
ANC Yes **Codecs** SBC, AAC, LDAC
Connectivity Bluetooth 5.3, 3.5mm, USB-C
Battery life 30hrs (ANC on)
Weight 252g

A star is worn

It's evolution rather than revolution when it comes to the cans' design, but what exactly are they like to wear?



Pad play

Oh, the earpads are now replaceable. It's locked in place with plastic hooks, which are not as easily removable as the Apple AirPod Max's magnetic earpads, but I will take this option over the XM5.



Charlie, mic

The beamforming mics placed outside also have a metal grille to improve wind noise reduction. That, and the Integrated Processor V2 uses AI to keep the plosives and tinny sounds in check.



Tap map

All the touch controls are on the right earcup like before, and now they have a slightly smoother and faster touch response compared to the previous generation. I would still prefer physical buttons.



Case grace

Sony has gone back to the foldable style design for the XM6 after taking feedback from people who didn't prefer the non-foldable design of the XM5. This is good because it makes the case smaller.



Sony has taken the already brilliant XM5s, listened to the grumbles, and delivered a sequel that's less *The Godfather Part III* and more *The Empire Strikes Back*. The audio quality is sublime, delivering a level of detail and expression that'll have you rediscovering your favourite albums and the ANC is so ridiculously effective, AGAIN! *@khumailthakur*

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Superb sound, jaw-dropping ANC and the return of foldability... yep, they've made them even better



PS5 / playstation.com

Ghost of Yotei

Ghost of Tsushima was a proper stunner, a beautiful game that had us all living out our best samurai fantasies. But what if we told you its successor is, somehow, even better?

The biggest and best upgrade? Our new hero, Atsu. She's no Jin Sakai, and that's a massive compliment. Where Jin was often a bit of a philosophical wet blanket during his hot springs musings, Atsu is a whirlwind of conviction, driven by pure hate and vengeance from the moment she makes her hero's entrance.

This is a revenge tale at its core, as Atsu hunts down the 'Yotei Six' gang who wronged her family, but it sidesteps the usual tired tropes for a story that feels fresh and compelling. This cinematic feel is dialled up to eleven with camera work straight out of a Spaghetti Western for folks who haven't grown up watching Akira Kurosawa's movies. We're talking dramatic face close-ups and ultra-wide, cowboy-style showdowns that feel like they've been lifted from The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. It's a unique, quirky style that no other game is doing right now.

The game unfolds across the sprawling island of Ezo (modern-day Hokkaido), and it's a proper jaw-dropper. From grasslands and seaside cliffs to snowy peaks and marshlands, this is a world you'll want to get lost in. You'll probably spend as much time in photo mode as you do in combat.

The world is packed with meaningful things to do, but it never feels cluttered. Even bounty hunting missions feel fresh, and there are clever survival mechanics, like blizzards in the snowy region that chip away at your health, forcing you to find shelter.

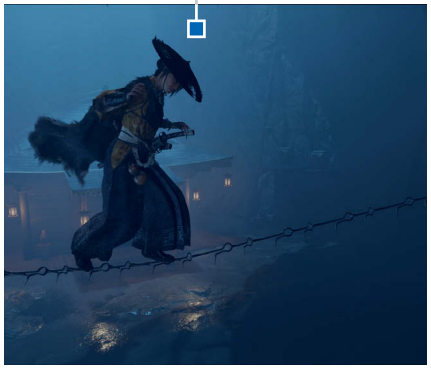
This is an easy recommendation. It doesn't try to reinvent the wheel, but it refines everything, resulting in a game with more soul, a much better story, and a world that's a joy to get lost in. It's a proper video game that's worth your time and money.

Khumail Thakur

STUFF SAYS A must-play sequel that surpasses the original in every way ★★★★★



"If I tip toe on this metal rope, no one will hear me, right?"



Digital Cherry Blossoms are also very pretty, just like the real deal.





Sharp blade and sharper skills

Combat has had a serious glow-up. The old stances from Tsushima have been swapped out for five distinct weapon types: the Katana, Dual Katana, Spear, Odachi, and Kusarigama. These work in a sort of rock-paper-scissors system against different enemy weapons, but the game isn't a strict headmaster. If you want to create a dual katana build and stick with it, you absolutely can.

It's all about flow, blending stealth, your supernatural 'onryo' abilities, weapon skills, and various consumables to become a whirling dervish of death. The only fly in the ointment is the camera, which sits quite close to Atsu. This means you can lose track of off-screen enemies when you're surrounded, which can be a bit of a faff.

Beyond the blade, there are heaps of cool little additions. You can play a shamisen (a Japanese lute), and new songs help you find secrets, with the music directing the wind to points of interest. You can also do Sumi-e paintings with the DualSense touchpad, throw your empty sake bottle at a goon's head, and even lob a fallen enemy's weapon right back at them.