

Intel Wants to Replace Headphone Jacks With USB-C!

Written by Marco Attard
13. May 2016

The humble 3.5mm headphone jack appears to have an enemy in Intel-- a report discovered by AnandTech shows an Intel proposal to "remove the 3.5mm audio jack from audio sources."



But what does Chipzilla have against headphone connectors? First off, is the issue of its analog nature. In technological terms the headphone connector is outright ancient. The original 6.35mm favoured by high-end audio equipment was invented in 1878, while the two-conductor miniature 3.5mm connector has been around by the 1960s. The technology has evolved since then (with the addition of microphone support and remote control) but modern devices require more sophisticated interconnectors with higher data rates.

Secondly, modern devices also demand slimmer designs, necessitating the need for an all-in-one connector instead of multiple ports. But what makes such a universal connector? According to Intel, the answer lies in USB Type-C.

USB-C not only offers higher data transfer speeds than previous USB generations, it also provides enough power to charge devices as large as a laptops. Meanwhile its digital connectivity allows headphone makers to integrate digital-to-analog converters, amplifiers and even health tracking capabilities into headphones, all without need for external batteries.

According to AnandTech Intel is already updating the USB Audio Device Class 2.0 specification to add USB-C support, as well as improve power management and simplify device discovery and configuration. The company also suggests the building of headsets with built-in multi-function processing units (MPUs) able to handle beam forming, noise suppression, acoustic echo suppression (AES), acoustic echo cancellation (AEC), non-linear processing and even HDCP functionality.

Intel Wants to Replace Headphone Jacks With USB-C!

Written by Marco Attard

13. May 2016

Of course, such sophisticated headphones come with a caveat-- higher prices. However Intel says mainstream adoption of USB-C headphones would lead to larger volumes and eventual cost reductions.

Will Chipzilla manage to bring an end to the headphone jack? A similar precedent has already happened in the AV industry, where analog video cables have been replaced with HDMI, so something of the sort might happen with mobile device and PC audio. Android 5.0 already supports USB DAC devices, and recently Chinese smartphone maker LeEco released 3 smartphones lacking a headphone jack, marking first steps towards such a future.

Go [Intel Proposes to Use USB-C Digital Audio Technology \(AnandTech\)](#)