

Heil Pro 7 communications headset

It feels like Bob Heil, K9EID at Heil Sound virtually invented the market for communications headsets for amateur radio. Go to any SSB Field Day site or contesting station and you might be struck by the number of amateurs using headsets bearing his name. And the latest addition to the Heil Sound range may boost their use further in the amateur world.

The new Heil Sound Pro 7 communications headset is being promoted as “the most comfortable to wear – ever”. It builds on Bob’s earlier designs and features an adjustable stainless steel headband and a one-inch thick six-section foam headband for maximum comfort. Two thumbscrews allow you to adjust the headband size and you can adjust the pressure of the earpads by applying pressure to the headband.

It also has specially-designed foam gel pads to provide 26dB of external passive noise reduction (PNR) – very useful in noisy multi-operator shacks and special event stations. The ear pads also have removable cotton “booties” that cover the ear pads to aid comfort and enable a quick and easy replacement.

FEATURES. The list of features goes on and on, including 40mm high-response speakers, acoustically-tuned speaker enclosures and a balance control. Strangely, the balance only adjusts the volume in one ear. To get the balance you want you have to juggle the balance control and the main volume on your radio.

The ear cup enclosures are apparently tuned to the “free air cone resonance of the speaker cone, so providing very low distortion with maximum voice articulation”. Another feature is a phase-reversal switch to help you dig out weak signals. This acoustically moves the signals forward and creates a “spatial widening of the sound field”.

The microphone element is interchangeable and you can choose an HC7 “articulate” dynamic insert or a Heil type C condenser (electret). As supplied it came with the iC electret (1500Ω impedance) option, designed to match Icom radios.

Other radios might be better suited to the HC-7 (600Ω) insert, which Heil Sound claims is one of the best microphone elements for speech articulation. Replacement involves removing two flat-head screws that hold the element to the microphone boom and swapping the elements over.

Although the review model was supplied in black, it is also available in funky red,

blue or pink! These last three are available as a special order from Waters and Stanton.

IN THE BOX.

So what else do you get in the box? The replaceable washable earpads come in a small ziplock plastic bag, along with the main four-foot ‘curly’ cable, which features a six-pin mini XLR connector that fits into the headset. The cable is split at a small junction box into two 3.5mm stereo jacks.

An adaptor is provided to convert one of these to the requisite quarter inch socket for your radio’s headphone output socket if needed.

The other goes into the Heil headphone adaptor (which should be specified when you buy the headset), which in turn plugs into the microphone socket on your radio.

You also get an alternative lighter 2.5-foot ‘straight’ cable that plugs into the headset. I found this rather less bulky and less prone to getting caught up in your clothing – at least you get the choice of which one to use.

A separate soft touch PTT button is supplied, along with a 24-inch cable, which plugs into the adaptor or you can use the rig’s VOX facility.

Heil Sound has colour coded these so you can see at a glance which one you have fitted – red for Kenwood, Alinco and Elecraft; yellow for Yaesu/Flex; blue for Icom, black for Ten Tec; white for Collins and grey for Drake. This could help a lot in multi-operator stations, especially if you are using different makes of radios.

The company really has thought of everything as the instructions even have suggested DSP settings for your transmitted audio, including bass, treble and audio frequency notch/boost settings for various makes of radio. This could save a lot of on air testing and gets you in the ball park right away.

PERFORMANCE. So how did the headset perform on air? The headset eliminates extraneous noise extremely effectively and the received audio is superb, with more emphasis on treble than you get from commercial Hi-Fi headphones that often get pushed into amateur radio service.



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The phase switch also worked as it should and introduced a different (wider) audio experience in the ‘out’ position.

The headset is rather large and hefty (482g/17oz), but remains comfortable, once you get the headband pressure adjusted correctly to suit your head. Once set up, I think you would find it comfortable for extended use. The supplied PTT switch is also easily held in the hand and includes a clip that enables you to place it on your clothing.

I adjusted my Icom radio’s Tx audio settings as suggested and audio reports were very complimentary indeed, on a range of QSOs from around the UK to DX.

In all, if you are looking for a quality headset, for general use, contesting or special events, the Heil Pro 7 should be high on your short list.

The Heil Pro7 headset costs £249.95. The connecting lead for Yaesu/Kenwood/8-pin or modular costs £19.95 and should be specified at time of purchase. The Icom version with the iC electret insert costs £269.95, which includes the ADI-iC eight-pin adapter cable.

Our thanks to Waters and Stanton for the supply of the review model – see <http://wsplc.com/> or call 01702 206 835.