
CQ Reviews:

Arlan Communications RadioSport RS60-CF Deluxe Boom Mic/Headset

BY CQ STAFF

A quality boom microphone/headset combo belongs in almost every modern hamshack, for a number of reasons. First off, we seem to have less space on our desks than ever before now that computer keyboards, mice, and other accessories have taken over part of the tabletop. Secondly, computers and other pieces of gear generate fan noise that can make it hard to hear signals delivered to a speaker from your radio, which today can dig out weak signals better than ever. It would be a shame for rare DX to be covered up by noise from a fan!

Arlan Communications produces a line of top-quality headsets for the amateur radio and professional communications markets. Some are “listen-only” models, while others, such as the *RadioSport RS60-CF* model being reviewed here, include a microphone mounted on a boom, allowing the hands-free phone operation that is so important to DX, contest, and emergency communications operators.

The RadioSport RS60-CF is a high-end headset/boom mic that features stereo reception with diversity capability, a specified 24 dB of passive noise reduction for the headphones, interchangeable dynamic and electret condenser mic elements mounted on a rugged, flexible/rotatable boom, and a stainless steel headband with a soft, padded cover. The earpads have form-fitting gel ear cushions, and are supplied with cloth covers to keep the operator's ears cool.

The first thing one notices upon opening the box and picking up the RS60CF is that it feels very rugged and well-built. The earphone enclosures have a beautiful carbon-fiber finish, and the entire headset clearly is built to last. There's a bright red PTT (push-to-talk) button on the left headphone cover for those occasions when VOX (voice-operated switching) transmit/receive control is not desired.

Putting on the headphones, the quieting of the background noise is startling! The degree of quieting is less than that provided by “aviation” headsets used in cockpits, but at the same time the ear pressure inflicted by the RS60CF is *much* less, so you won't get a headache after a half hour of operation; some aviation headsets will do that! Audio quality recovered through the earpieces is crisp and clear, with plenty of drive from every transceiver model tested across a wide range of brands. If your receiver puts out stereo receive (independent output from its “main” and “sub” receivers), the RS60-CF is fully compatible. Adjustment of the headband length is quick and easy, requiring no tools.

The standard microphone element for the RS60-CF is a dynamic type, with a low-frequency roll-off at 300 Hz for good SSB clarity. Many modern transceivers have “equalizers” on board that allow you to enhance high or low frequencies, as desired, and the RS60-CF's flat response between 300 Hz and 8000 Hz makes audio “tweaks” simple, depending on



your preferences. If your rig requires more mic element output, the optional model M350-ADJ electret condenser element has a similar frequency response. Typically, though, the stock element will easily drive most any modern transceiver. And changing mic elements, should it ever be necessary, requires no soldering: just remove a couple of screws, unplug the old element, and plug in the replacement! Optional interconnection cables permit interfacing to most all transceivers, and the cables and their connectors are *very* robust, for high reliability.

On the air, the RS60-CF is a real pleasure to use. In a Field Day environment with other operators nearby, there was no problem at all hearing the incoming signals. When a rain storm hit during a DXpedition trial, the roar of the rain hitting the roof of the cabana/hamshack essentially disappeared. Signal-quality reports received were uniformly excellent, and no RFI/feedback problems were observed.

The RadioSport RS60-CF is available from Arlan Communications, PO Box 1610, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406-1610 (805-504-3944); <www.arlancommunications.com>. List price: \$269.00. Optional headset-to-radio cables are required for different radio makes and models; see the Arlan website for more information.