

LIGHTSPEED ZULU HEADSET REVIEW



I have flown with and used many different kinds of headsets over the years and I can safely say that the Lightspeed Zulu is one of if not the best ANR headset available today. When I started flying in the early 1970's 99.9 percent of the time I never wore a headset of any kind nor even ear plugs for that matter. I wasn't alone because none of the people I trained with or any instructor that I had even once suggested that I use a headset. The roar of the engines in everything from Cubs to Cessna 310's was a part of my early aviation experience. It wasn't until I went into the Air Force that a headset became a vital part of my aviation attire. Even then the standard military issue headsets weren't much better than nothing at all (we weren't fortunate enough to get David Clarks in those days). Most of the time I had to use ear plugs along with the headsets just to make the trips bearable, and the clamping force from the headband left me with some rather severe headaches on occasions.

After I reentered civilian life the first headset that I really wanted was a David Clark, but my budget could not handle it and I had to settle for a Flightcom 4 DLX which served me faithfully for many years. It was an OK headset and I kept it going by changing out the pads and ear seals from time to time. At least it seemed one hundred percent better than my military headset. As time went on I owned a couple of different headset models from Flightcom, a Softcom headset and one of Lightspeed's passive headsets, but I kept going back to the old DLX because it fit like a glove and I decided the only way I was going to give it up was to buy one of the new ANR models that were becoming so popular. I still had a craving for a good David Clark headset, but after reading some reviews and shopping around I decided to buy a Stratus 50 Digital headset from Telex. I made the mistake of not looking at it first and purchased one sight unseen from Aircraft Spruce. I used it for about 30 minutes before I decided it was not the headset for me. It was very quiet, but it was huge and bulky. One look in the mirror convinced me it just didn't look or feel right. I returned the Stratus and this time went to Aircraft Spruce's store in Atlanta and actually tried every ANR headset they had on display. The Zulu was not

available yet so it was not an option. I narrowed my choice down to the Flightcom Denali or the David Clark X11. I really liked the feel and weight of the X11 plus after all it was a David Clark too. I must also admit that the Bose headset crossed my mind, but I really did not like its style and the price seemed too high plus the David Clark seemed more comfortable and stylish. I bit the bullet and laid down a big chunk of change for the X11 and immediately starting using it. After using the X11 for a couple of flights I really started to feel like I might have made a mistake. The headset was so light that you could hardly tell it was on and I loved the style and compact design, but the battery life was not anywhere near what a friend of mine had with his Bose. The real killer though was that it had an awful problem with leaking ear seals. If you had hair or wore glasses you could forget getting a good seal. It was annoying, but I lived with it flying around 50 hours before I saw an ad for the new Lightspeed Zulu headset.

The Zulu looked great. It had a rugged metal aviation look to it. It was built like a precision instrument. Every attention was given to the details. The aluminum housings were solid and not plastic. The ear seals were large and comfortable and didn't get slippery with sweat on a hot day. The Bluetooth setup was a nice addition, but to be honest I didn't even consider that as a major selling feature. I just flat out liked the look of the headset and it didn't seem to be heavy on my head either. I sold my X11 and applied that money toward the purchase of a new Zulu from Aircraft Spruce. Since that day I have put 60 plus hours on it including a grueling 30 hours trip around the United States. It never once gave me any problems. It was always quiet and I never had a problem with clamping pressure. Even wearing sunglasses and having plenty of hair around my ears didn't prevent me from getting a tight seal. One really amazing thing is the battery life. I don't know exactly how long the two AA batteries last, but I have only replaced them twice in over 60 hours of operation. The last time I replaced them wasn't because they were dead it was just because they had been going for so long I didn't think they could possibility last much longer. I do have XM radio in my Cherokee and the sound through the headset is incredible. I don't know if it is the FRC (Front Row Center) feature of the headset or not, but I can tell you that it sounds great. Of course I don't really get to hear myself on the other side of the radio, but people tell me that the transmissions are always clear and crisp. I really don't have anything bad to say about the headset. Lightspeed made a winner when they created the Zulu. It may not be any better than the Bose as far as sound quality and noise reduction, but it sure looks better to me and it does cost a little less. If you are really serious about flying and want one of the best headsets out there, you don't have to look any further than the Lightspeed Zulu. It is a great unit and delivers everything that it promises. More information can be obtained at www.lightspeedaviation.com.

Mike