

IAN SEAGER TAKES TO THE AIR WITH FOUR TOP-OF-THE-RANGE ANR HEADSETS

# ANR Headsets – loud and clear

**T**he idea of spending between £700 and the best part of £1,000 on an ANR headset can seem a bit extreme. While there's no getting away from the fact that you can pay for a decent chunk of flying for that kind of money, particularly if you're going to be buying two or even four headsets, it's equally true that nothing spoils a flight more than a dodgy headset and the resulting noise. Apart

from the dangers to your hearing – ever wonder why so many of the older pilots, who did a lot of flying before intercoms and headsets were the norm, are deaf? Bad audio quality on a long flight will make you tired quicker and can add stress. So if you think of a high-quality headset as something that enhances the flight and then factor in its use over many years, it all starts to make a little more sense.

For many years Bose dominated the market with the Bose X, but at Oshkosh last year that was replaced, after 12 years in service, with the Bose A20. The Lightspeed Zulu, which had quietly built a reputation for quality and comfort, recently became Lightspeed Zulu.2 and in April this year Beyerdynamic introduced the HS800. While we were preparing to put all three up against each other we heard rumours of something new from Sennheiser who kindly supplied us with a





pre-production model to evaluate, so we've included it in the group test, although we've been told that there will be some minor changes when it goes into production.

All four ANR headsets are pitched at the top end of the ANR range, all of them come with battery/control boxes and all of them have options to work with the aircraft's power supply. Apart from Beyerdynamic's HS800, all also come complete with Bluetooth, either built-in

(Lightspeed and Sennheiser) or as an option (Bose). Thankfully, all of the headsets have an 'auto off' function that will save the forgetful among us from needing a pair of new AA batteries each time we want to use them.

### Comfort

While the sound-reduction qualities may provide the headline grabbing numbers, it's the combination of comfort and noise attenuation

that delivers the real value. The good news is that all of the headsets tested are pretty comfortable, but there are differences. Anyone with slightly large ears (and they don't have to be in Prince Charles's league) will be happy that the A20 from Bose enjoys larger ear cups than its predecessor, although this doesn't mean that they're too big for anyone with 'normal' sized ears. Of all the headsets tested, the Bose has the lowest clamping force, making it one of the most



**Lightspeed Zulu.2**

