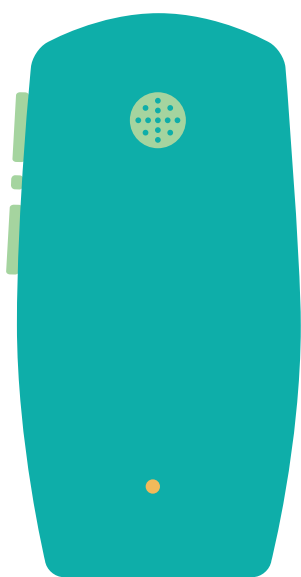


My Mighty Mini Mic

Voilà! Suddenly I could hear perfectly.

By Stephen O. Frazier



Standard hearing aid microphones face a steep dropoff in clarity when a speaker is more than six to eight feet away. A remote mic completely bypasses this physical limitation.

I recall reading that some hearing aid manufacturers were offering small remote microphones designed to extend the distance at which a hearing aid user could clearly hear and understand someone speaking. At my next appointment I asked my provider whether anything like that was available for my hearing aids.

“Yes,” he said. “We offer two versions for your brand of hearing aids. One is simply a microphone. The other includes a built-in telecoil so people whose hearing aids don’t have telecoils can still connect to a hearing loop. Either one sends sound to the user’s hearing aids via Bluetooth.”

Both types of mic were offered by my hearing care provider at \$239 for the mini variety and \$329 for the one with a telecoil. Some are also available from Amazon and from many of the online hearing aid sellers like Soundly or Hearing Direct. Prices range from \$220 to \$260 for the mini variety and \$300 to \$350 for the telecoil-equipped models.

Since my hearing aids already had telecoils, I chose the smaller mic without the telecoil. It didn’t take long to find the perfect opportunity to test it.

I had arranged a meeting with management at the Albuquerque International Sunport to discuss installing hearing loops throughout the airport terminal to help travelers with hearing loss. We met in a room with a very long conference table, and several staff members were seated at the far end. Even with my hearing aid volume turned up, I couldn’t clearly make out some of their questions.

Then I remembered the new remote mic I had brought along for a “just in case” situation. I switched it on, walked it down to the far end of the table, set it in front of the staffers, returned to my seat, and asked again if there were any questions.

Voilà! Suddenly I could hear perfectly. The next question came through loud and clear: “Exactly what is a hearing loop?”

Later, as I told friends about my new remote mic, I discovered that many had never heard of this remarkable little accessory. I explained how, when clipped to a shirt pocket, it helped me hear my dinner companion in a noisy restaurant. In

Going Universal: The Public Space Revolution

While remote mics solve the micro-challenges of dinner tables and cars, the new wireless standard Auracast is quietly transforming theaters, airports, and stadiums worldwide.

For decades, venues have relied on a patchwork of assistive listening technologies—hearing loops, FM, and infrared systems—to help patrons with hearing loss experience live events. While each system meets some needs, none has been a universally user-friendly solution.

That landscape is now shifting. With the arrival of Bluetooth LE Audio and Auracast broadcast audio, public venues are on the cusp of the most significant upgrade to assistive listening since the introduction of hearing loops.

Auracast promises something long imagined but never fully realized: a standardized, open broadcast that allows audience members to receive high-quality audio directly in their own hearing aids, earbuds, or smartphones. This happens without venue-specific hardware, checkout counters, or the stigma of borrowed devices.

Not Traditional Bluetooth

Unlike traditional Bluetooth pairing—which allows only a single, one-to-one device connection—Auracast enables a one-to-many audio stream.

A review of global deployments highlights a remarkable surge in early installations, particularly within cultural and travel hubs.

Theaters and the arts: Following the 2025 adoption of Auracast in Australia’s Sydney Opera complex, landmark spaces have followed suit.

These include the La Criée National Theatre in France, the Nissay Theatre in Tokyo, and the ROHM Theatre in Kyoto, which successfully blanketed a four-balcony auditorium using a single transmitter.

In the U.S., Illinois’s Marriott Theatre and Metropolis Performing Arts Centre are leading the charge.

Transit hubs: The international airport in Frankfurt, Germany, installed transmitters at departure gates as a pilot test, and Bristol Temple Meads railway station in the U.K. now transmits live announcements via Auracast.

Worship and education: Houses of worship worldwide are beginning to install transmitters, allowing congregants to access sermons without venue-specific hardware. Similarly, universities are upgrading lecture halls so professors can broadcast directly to students’ personal devices.

Sports stadiums: In New Zealand rugby fans at Stadium Taranaki can now hear announcements over the roar of the crowd—a precedent likely to be followed by massive venues like New York’s Yankee Stadium.

Becoming Mainstream by Omission

A detailed magazine article on the recent renovation of the Austin, Texas, airport failed to mention the hearing loops installed during the project. Similarly, an article detailing improvements to the newest Amtrak trains omitted the fact that passenger cars now feature built-in loops.

The same sort of omission is beginning to happen with Auracast. This makes researching these installations problematic, as many go unreported. However, it also underscores how *this technology is becoming so mainstream that it no longer requires a special callout*. And that is worth noting!

The plethora of capable products now available positions Auracast as the default assistive listening standard of the next decade, making public accessibility easier, more dignified, and entirely future-ready. —S.O.F.

As I told friends about my new remote mic, I discovered that many had never heard of this remarkable little accessory. I explained how, when clipped to a shirt pocket, it helped me hear my dinner companion in a noisy restaurant. In that situation I turn off the mics in my hearing aids so the remote mic can pick up mostly the voice I want to hear rather than all of the surrounding chatter.

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I described using it at home to hear people at the far end of my dining table. I even told of asking the presenter at a health insurance seminar to place my mini mic near him so I could follow the details of upcoming coverage changes while sitting toward the back of the room.

My hard-of-hearing doctor once mentioned that his wife complained he turned the TV volume up too high. I encouraged him to install a hearing loop in his living room, but he said he didn't need to—he simply places his remote mic near the TV speaker and listens through his hearing aids via Bluetooth. Then he can also adjust the volume in his hearing aids.

His situation demonstrated the fact that hearing aid mics do not work as well when more than six to eight feet away from the person speaking, but a remote mic easily overcomes that shortcoming. He added that he also uses it in the car: If a backseat passenger clips the mic to their collar, he can hear him or her easily while he is driving.

There are times when I'm at a disadvantage when compared with people with typical hearing but, with my remote mic I've found that I actually sometimes have an advantage over them! —



Staff writer Stephen O. Frazier was trained as a hearing loss support specialist by the Hearing Loss Association of America. Having devoted the past 25 years to advocacy for people with hearing loss, he has facilitated the passage of numerous regulations in New Mexico, where he lives,

that strengthen protection and services for people with hearing loss. Frazier has presented workshops on hearing loss and assistive technology at the local and national level and has also written extensively on various topics related to hearing loss and assistive technology. For more, see sofnabq.com and loopnm.com/Auracast.html, which covers the latest on Auracast technology.

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