

Product Review:

Schuberth's C3 Rider Communication System

By Bill Shaw

I WAS IMPRESSED enough after reading Tom Austin's product review of the Schuberth C3 helmet (Spring 2011) that I ordered one in silver with a fully integrated communication system, also known as the Schuberth Rider Communication System (SRCS). In brief, the SRCS is a plug-and-play Bluetooth communications system that's integrated into the helmet's collar. It only took me about 15 minutes to replace the standard collar with the SRCS, which fits seamlessly with the design of the C3.

It's best to think of the SRCS as an independently functioning system. It can be removed easily if the helmet is damaged or needs to be replaced, paired with a GPS, smartphone, or other Bluetooth device, and the system firmware, located in the acoustic collar, can be upgraded through Schuberth's web site (but it's Windows compliant only and can't be updated through a Mac). The function buttons are nearly flush with the surface of the SRCS collar on the left, clutch hand side, which can be difficult to find when wearing thick gloves. But it doesn't take long to memorize their location.

The primary features of the SRCS include:

- Mobile phone (with voice command), A2DP-capable MP3 player, and GPS connectivity
- Bike-to-bike intercom conference mode for three riders (up to 300m), as well as rider-to-pillion intercom
- Integrated VHG radio with RDS

The SRCS system gives first priority to the cell phone and GPS, then the intercom, then the built-in FM radio, and lastly the line-in port, if used. Even with earplugs and traveling 75 mph, I found the decibel level and speed-sensi-



tive feature more than adequate for my needs, given the acoustic environment. This didn't surprise me as Schuberth helmets have a reputation for low noise levels, mainly because the collar prevents a lot of wind from entering the helmet. The SRCS system doesn't reach the volume output or the sound quality of a J&M system, but then, you don't have to deal with J&M's technical customer service department, which doesn't have the best reputation within the industry. Conversely, Schuberth's customer service

ranks up there with Garmin, which, in my experience, is one of the best.

The FM radio worked well once I programmed in my pre-sets. But between my XM radio, audio books, and MP3 music loaded on my Zumo, I didn't use it much. Schuberth also designed the SRCS to work with other SRCS and Cardo intercoms, reportedly up to 300 meters. It should be noted that the SRCS is the same system as the Cardo Scala Rider G4, just in a different package. Because I ride mostly alone and don't know anyone with either set-up, I couldn't confirm compatibility with other Bluetooth systems. According to a number of rider forums on the Internet, however, the actual operating intercom distance is more like 200 meters on straight roads without other interference.

Through repeated testing, I found the

SRCS's tiny, unobtrusive, and rechargeable battery lasted for about 12 hours when in continuous "listening only" mode and, depending on the number and length of the calls, a little less when the cell phone is used. Although a longer battery life would be desirable for LD riders, you can easily charge the SRCS while riding by connecting it to a \$10.99 USB adapter from Radio Shack. Unfortunately, the system does shut down during the charging process, but an hour's charge is good for about four hours of use. I also found that if I didn't use my C3 for a couple of weeks, I didn't have to recharge the SRCS before using it — there's very little parasitic discharge.

I did have an initial compatibility "glitch," for lack of a better term, with my SRCS-Zumo 665-iPhone combination. If I answered a call while listening to music, the music would not return after the call was terminated. Since this didn't happen when my iPhone and SRCS were paired (music always resumed if I used the phone), I concluded the problem was with my Zumo. A call to Garmin support fixed the problem. A service technician walked me through restoring my GPS to the factory settings, removing and then reinstalling the Bluetooth software, and finally installing Garmin's latest WebUpdater and Downloads Software programs.

I also found through trial and error that I have to pair these devices in the proper sequence or the system won't work as designed, i.e., the SRCS is turned on first, followed by the GPS, and then the iPhone last.

This leads me to one of my favorite features of the SRCS system—its ability to work independently of the GPS as a communication "hub." For example, when I pair just the iPhone to the SRCS, I can still receive calls, use the iPhone's built-in voice activated command program, and can bring music with me regardless of which bike I'm riding.

Though I had never been a big fan of Bluetooth communication systems, Schuberth has made me a convert. And because the technology is evolving so rapidly, I think it will only be a short time before the battery life of the SRCS is extended (the only shortcoming I can see for LD riding). At \$399.00 list, it isn't cheap. But in my case, the features outweigh the few shortcomings. www.schuberth.com



Iron Butt Association
WORLD'S TOUGHEST MOTORCYCLE RIDERS

eSTORE
www.ibaestore.com
Gear for the World's Toughest Motorcycle Riders

From mugs, keychains and hats, to t-shirts and books, it can be found at the IBA eSTORE

The premier magazine for motorcycle touring and travel.

- touring articles
- complete travel info
- tankbag maps
- GPS files
- motorcycle and product tests

Subscribe today
at www.roadrunner.travel
or call 866-343-7623



www.RoadRUNNER.travel

ROADCRAFTER

AEROSTICH RIDERWEAR

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY RIDERS' CLOTHING

WEATHERPROOF
Seam-sealed GORE-TEX® fabric
COOLER Cordura® Nylon
ABRASION Proven Protection

- Removable **TP** impact pads
- Fast, easy entry design
- 25 sizes & 18 colors
- Fully lined & machine washable
- Order factory direct
- Expert fitting service
- 100% money back guarantee

ONE PIECE SUIT \$847 TWO PIECE SUIT \$897 Made in USA

FREE 228 PAGE
RIDERWEARHOUSE CATALOG
218 722 1927 / 800 222 1994

www.aerostich.com

©2011