

My Personal Soundscape: Navigating Life with Hearing Assistive Technology

By Andrew Hugill

Living with a complex combination of hearing challenges, including severe unbalanced loss, wild tinnitus, and hyperacusis (sound sensitivity) means I've had to become something of a sound engineer for my own life. The tools I use are varied, often combined in inventive ways, and constantly adjusted to meet the demands of each situation.

At the heart of my setup are my **GNResound hearing aids**, which I can fine-tune using various built-in settings. They connect via Bluetooth to a **multi-mic**, a small but powerful device that can either sit discreetly on a tabletop or be worn around someone's neck. This is invaluable in one-on-one conversations or small groups.

For larger meetings, especially those involving more than half a dozen people, which I frequently have to chair or participate in, I rely on my **Phonak Roger system**. This includes the **Roger On, Pass-Around Mic, Table Mic Twin Pack, Touchscreen Mic**, and **X 02 Band**. Together, these create a network of sound capture that allows me to follow discussions that would otherwise be completely inaccessible.

But amplifying sound is only part of the story. Because of my hyperacusis, I often need to *reduce* sound input. That's where my **Bose Comfort noise-cancelling headphones** come in. These help block out overwhelming background noise and, remarkably, can even be worn *over* my hearing aids and multi-mic in especially noisy environments. It's a bit of a homespun solution, but the combination of direct audio feed and noise suppression works brilliantly in places like busy cafés or bustling public spaces.

In situations like concerts, where sudden applause or crowd noise can be painful, I turn to **Loop Earplugs**. These clever devices reduce sound levels without shutting me off entirely from what's going on - a crucial feature for someone who still wants to enjoy live performance.

Finally, I have to tackle diplacusis, where I hear two different pitches with the two ears. There is no technological solution for this, unfortunately, beyond reducing the sound as much as possible, so once again I tend to use earplugs for that when attending concerts.

None of this technology offers a complete solution on its own. Instead, it's the constant balancing, combining, and adjusting of these tools that allows me to navigate the soundscape of daily life. My kit might look like a travelling sound lab, but thanks to these devices, I can stay connected to the world around me.