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Iqua 603 SUN Bluetooth headset

Can the sun drive your headset?

by Chris Hall published on 2 September 2008

There are possibly more Bluetooth headsets currently on the market than I've had hot meals, so each new model needs to have a unique proposition. With a device that is relatively common-place and straight-forward we've seen them get smaller, thinner, covered in gold. But Iqua think they have a greener solution.

As the name suggests, the 603 SUN can draw its power from the sun. I say can because it has a small solar panel on the front surface that purports to charge the battery from sunlight. But is this eco step a convincing enough move to challenge the likes of Jabra and Jawbone?

The small device (50 x 25 x 12.5mm) comes in at about average size for a modern Bluetooth headset, if a little on the large side, and comes with a change of rubbers for the ear plug and detachable ear loop. We found that the earpiece was fairly uncomfortable, even after changing the rubbers, which offered little by way of variety, it all just seemed too big.

The guide suggests a 2 hours charging of the battery before you get going which can be done via the Mini-USB connector - both a cable and charger are supplied for this purpose. Also in the box you get a neat neck strap that plugs into the Mini-USB which is a tidy solution.

Control is divided via two main sets of buttons - a multifunction button and volume control. The multifunction button is actually the front of the device, so you just press on the solar panel. This acts as the power on/off as well as your answer or end call option. Volume down doubles up as voice-dialling, if your phone supports it, whilst volume up also acts as last number redial.

Beyond that, things are a little more complicated. Reject is a double-tap, which is ok, but mute is a simultaneous pressing of volume up and the



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multifunction button. Hmm. Switch between phone and headset is volume down and the multi button. Hmm. That just doesn't work.

In our tests, we just couldn't get these functions to work, and unfortunately if you are in a call, you may either adjust the volume or cut off the caller - not the desired result. But you have to ask yourself whether you are going to use these functions, and the answer is possibly not.

But for its main purpose of making and receiving calls, we have no complaints about the Iqua 603 SUN. Callers were clear and reported no problems with the clarity of the conversation.

So what about that solar panel? Well, the accompanying paperwork says that standby time is infinite depending on ambient light and talk time could be up to 12 hours, again, depending on ambient light. Testing these claims, however, is difficult. We used an initial charge on the device and then returned to it over a month later and still found that it would turn on - in the interim period it mostly sat on a window ledge or in a cupboard.

However, there is no way of gauging what is actually happening as there is no battery indicator to give you the charge level. When plugged into the charger you get a red LED to indicate charging and when fully charged this goes out. We left the 603 SUN out in bright sunshine but again there was no way of knowing if anything was actually happening.

VERDICT

Aside from some fiddly controls and an earplug that won't suit all users, the Iqua 603 SUN is a perfectly good Bluetooth headset for your average user looking to make and receive calls.

But the unique selling point, the solar panel, doesn't give enough feedback to convince. Certainly it seemed like something was happening with a long standby time, but there was no way of knowing for sure.

At a glance

What is it?

Bluetooth headset

Good

Solar charging (perhaps), neck strap

Bad

Uncomfortable in the ear, little on the large side

Verdict

The solar panel doesn't give enough feedback to convince, but aside from some fiddly controls and an earplug that won't suit all users, the Iqua 603 SUN is a perfectly good Bluetooth headset

Price £49.99

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10

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And with that said, at £49.99, it falls into prime Bluetooth headset territory with lots of good performers competing for your cash. But perhaps Iqua should be commended for offering an eco solution, rather than just coating it in semi-precious metal.