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**PHILEWEB** JAPAN

## Review Akiko Audio *(Text by Saburo Ikugata)*

*Akiko Audio: a Dutch accessories brand for tweaking products used in recording studios and at home.*

**Remove the noise in your sound, simply by plugging the Akiko Audio Stick into an unused socket or by wrapping it around a cable. In this review we discuss the effects of the Akiko Audio Tuning Stick series: the Triple AC Enhancer, E-Tuning Gold, Tuning Stick Universal, XLR, RCA and USB Tuning.**

Akiko Audio's "Tuning Stick series" is a collection of easy to use and effective products. Your sound can be improved simply by adding these products to devices in your system, or by installing them in the power supply. They are branded as tuning products that suppress noise through the use of a virtual grounding. The Dutch brand is gaining more and more attention.

Their effects have already been measured in professional studios in Japan and abroad, and the company has built up a solid track record of new introductions. The newest versions have been introduced to Japan at a revised sales price, making them even more affordable. In this article, two authors will review the six models that have won the "Audio Accessory Excellence Award", describing their effects and explaining why we are so charmed by Akiko Audio's tuning products.

### **Product features and their installation in a sound system**

*Removes noise at every connection point*

The Tuning Stick series, made by Akiko Audio in The Netherlands, has won the Sound Quality Improvement Accessories Category Awards. And rightfully so, as it is a product that has been put to use in professional music production studios. What makes it such an attractive product is its exclusive focus on removing and reducing background noise without negatively impacting the sound otherwise. This in contrast to accessories from other brands which change the sound, making it difficult to truly speak of an increase in quality.





An overview of the Dutch Akiko Audio Tuning products, which work through the use of a virtual grounding

Six types are available. (1) "Triple AC Enhancer" , (2) "E-Tuning Gold mkII" , (3) "Stick Tuning Universal Stick MkIII" , (4) "Tuning Stick XLR mkIII" , (5) "Tuning Stick RCA mkIII" , (6) "USB TUNING"

As the name clearly indicates, the accessories have the cylindrical form of a stick. There are six types available. Four of them - the Triple AC Enhancer, XLR, RCA and USB - connect to an unused input through a cable connected to the black aluminium housing. The other two - the E-Tuning Gold and the Universal - can be wrapped around power cables, various analogue-digital interlinks, antenna cables, etc.

All products have a black anodised aluminium housing which is filled with a mix of active materials and stabilised with black resin. All connectors in this series are exclusively connected to the earthing of the power supply or equipment. The electromagnetic noise is thus fed into the stick and the active minerals lower the noise floor without the need for a conventional filter or any other electronic parts.

Let us introduce the effects in the reviews for each product.

### **Triple AC Enhancer**

*Improved S/N and larger spatial expression!*

This was Akiko's first product to launch and gain popularity in Japan. We connected the Triple AC Enhancer to a free socket in the power strip that held the pre amp, which in turn was connected to the CD player. This improved the S/N and increased the scale of spatial expression. At the same time warping and digital artefacts were suppressed and rough edges in the rendering of the vocals became more pleasant and quieter. The sound at ultra low bass frequencies also improved and the circumference and pitch of the bass instrument can be heard more clearly.

After connecting the Triple AC Enhancer to the power supply that feeds the main amp, the feeling of energy in the low frequency expanded even more: the sense of business and warping is all but eliminated and the musical expression is passed on in a more natural way.



Triple AC Enhancer • Carbon housing length: 160 mm • Total length: 330 mm • Mass: 650 g • Compatibel with 100V to 250V

### **E-Tuning Gold mkII**

*Improve the rendering with more detail and power!*

When I wrapped the E-Tuning Gold around the power cable for the pre amp the music stream became more supple and the sense of power scaled up enormously. The precision of the spatial rendering increased and the voices and instruments gained more body and were rendered more powerfully.



"E-Tuning Gold mkII" • Used with a power cable • Measurements: 50 mmφ × 150 mm

### **Tuning Stick Universal mkIII**

*Increase your room in a natural and finer way*

When I wrapped the Tuning Stick Universal around the XLR Interconnect cables, which are connected to the CD player on the pre amp, I realised that the sound spread across the room more evenly. Moreover, the rough edges when striking an instrument became more fluent and turned into a more delicate and quieter sound. Compared to the XLR and RCA types this Tuning Stick provides a more subtle and natural way of tuning.



Tuning Stick Universal mkIII 18 • Used with speakers, digital, analogue, power supply, antenne cable • Measurements: 22 mmφ×150 mm

### **Tuning Stick XLR mkIII**

*Delicate sound information becomes audible*

Connecting the Tuning Stick XLR to a free input on the pre amp caused the render to produce more delicate sound information from the music source, which thus far was difficult to hear due to the higher noise floor. In a large orchestra the violin or piano player's hand becomes clearer and it's as if I can hear independent musicians. The resonance in the concert hall can be heard more clearly and at the same time the tone of the instrument shines brilliantly whilst the voice of the soloist becomes remarkably clear.



Tuning Stick XLR mkIII • Measurements: 22 mmφ × 150 mm • Male version also available

### **Tuning Stick RCA mkIII**

*Improved energy in the low*

The effect of connecting the Tuning Stick RCA to a free input on the pre amp was similar to that of the XLR type, but when I connected it to a free input on the main amp the energy improvement in the low frequency was way more audible. Tuning based on the use case of the goal device seems most effective.



Tuning Stick RCA mkIII • Measurements: 22 mmφ×150 mm

## **USB Tuning**

*Improves the three dimensional sense and real world feeling of sound images*

I connected the USB Tuning to a free USB input on my laptop, which in turn was connected to a SACD player via USB to play the sound source in high resolution. The three dimensional sense of the instruments and voices increased and the scale of the entire sound image also grew a size. The S/N improved, but instead of a simple clearness I could comfortably enjoy a real world feeling because the sound was amplified in an extremely natural way.



"USB Tuning" • Measurements body: 22 mmφ ×55 mm • Connection: USB TypeA and TypeB both available

## **Saburo Ikugata's evaluation**

*Akiko Audio Tuning products from this series improve the natural sound of the render and activate a sense of musical feeling that is very attractive.*

Generally speaking, the Akiko Audio Tuning series contains attractive accessories which all have a positive effect on the rendering of your sound. I would especially advise the Tuning Stick Universal if you are looking for a more natural sound, and a model with a connector and connection cable if you want a more powerful effect that activates the tonal feeling. Both types are suitable to comfortably play high quality music.

### “Triple AC Enhancer” Test

*Reproducibility of small details improves and complex tones and delicate shadows become audible.*

*(Text by Yutaka Suzuki)*

I had the honour of trying out the Triple AC Enhancer, but exactly how this cylindrical unit filled with active minerals and substances functions is difficult to grasp. Akiko Audio has been developing its own formula for years now. Similar tuning companies in the market also use crystals and minerals, and have a similar approach to the noise problem, but Akiko Audio has unique features. Especially the Triple AC Enhancer can be seen as a very powerful virtual ground unit with beneficial influences on the power supply of your music installation.



Triple AC Enhancer • Body Length: 160 mm • Total length: 330 mm • Mass: 650 g • Compatible with 100V to 250V

The most important effect is how well it lowers the noise floor, making the sound more powerful and improving the reproducibility of small details in the music rendering. The sound also stops clamping to the speakers, which creates room for a delicate nuance that was originally hidden in the music recording to come to the foreground.

Besides this, the depth and size of the sound image seemed to go on forever which gave the rendering a more relaxed sound in a very natural way and also made the stereo effect more pleasant. It became possible to recognise every individual part in that session. The soloist's vocals, the choir and the complex tones of an acoustic guitar. This is a product I can wholeheartedly recommend to anybody who prefers a more natural sound!



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