



Mister Roger Poulussen

## Akiko Audio Tuning Stick AC, RCA and XLR

**A few years ago I was introduced to Akiko Audio. Back then it was only a small company and had only just been founded by a few hobbyists with a strange idea. They had brought out a tweak that was most reminiscent of home craft, in the form of a little wooden box, named GEM. After extensive testing this box turned out to be more of a treasure chest than first anticipated. After being introduced to it, this product has never left my set up. Instead it still plays there, to my full satisfaction.**

In the meantime Akiko has grown and become more serious. So much even, that one can speak of a worthy audio company and producer of different tweaks, known all over the world. Hence why Akiko Audio generates 90% of its income via export. Apart from that Akiko Audio has also expanded its product line to include deals with Furutech, WBT, Aktyna, Zilplex, Kemp Electronics, Meicord and WA Quantum. Very impressive for a company that has broken new ground only a few years ago.

### Tuning Sticks

Now, the wooden box has been replaced with a tight and modern design, in the form of a round carbon tube, named the "Tuning Stick". There is also an upgraded version of the wooden box, designed with the help of A. J. van de Hul. It has a tighter design and is bigger and, most importantly, is still available. Besides that, Akiko also has its own line of power cables, strips and Squeezebox power supplies.

As said before, I am very content with the GEM1 tweak. This was partly the reason to check out some of the other Tuning Sticks. I had already read a number of reviews and all of them praised the company. This of course asks for a home test. The best thing is that the owners themselves approached me. Thus I received the Tuning Stick AC, RCA and XLR.

Honesty first however, due to circumstances and corresponding busyness, I waited a long time before doing this review. Thus I must apologize to the gentlemen at Akiko Audio and thank them for their patience.



### Listening

With a bit of planning and finally having the whole house to myself I was able to start. I first tried out the Tuning Stick AC. I put on a track and listened. Then listened again and after that plugged in the AC in a wall socket. After listening again I was disappointed, I couldn't hear any results. I tried another track, but still nothing much happened.

Then, after about 15 minutes, the soundstage opened up. The longer I listened the more it opened. I had never experienced my speakers to be veiled, but with the Tuning Sticks it seemed as if something had covered them all this time. Edges and details become significantly (or should I say "audibly") clearer. Apparently the signal/noise ratio becomes better. The rendering also gains more drive. There's simply more energy.

When unplugging the Tuning Stick AC everything immediately collapses. Back to square one. Disappointing, so the Stick is plugged in again. When removed for only a short while, the Tuning Stick works right away again, but when left out for several hours, it takes a while before working properly again. Luckily that time is relatively short, 15 minutes tops.

Next up, the Tuning Stick RCA. It looks the same, with the only difference being a male RCA plug. Whether it works differently internally cannot be deferred. The RCA plug is a bit disappointing, as it is a low budget plastic/metal plug. I'd rather seen something sound, although it needn't be of Furutech or WBT quality. According to the gentlemen at Akiko Audio however, this plug gave the best result. A deliberate choice. Why use a fancy plug just for the looks? In the end it's all about the results.

With the Tuning Stick RCA added to the set, it definitely produced more detail. The instruments seemed more pinpointed and the stage became bigger. The enhancement seemed smaller than with the AC though.

My set contains XLR in and outputs. As such I could also test the Tuning Stick XLR. Unfortunately not everybody has that luxury, simply because they don't have such connections.

In case you are able to fit this Tuning Stick, I most certainly recommend you do. It behaves exactly the same as the RCA, but much clearer. The detail increases, the stage became bigger and the pinpointing exceeded even my expectations, after having tried the RCA first. Adding the Tuning Stick RCA to this combination didn't increase the results any more, as far as I could perceive.

However, I don't decide about these things overnight. So I decided to try the RCA and AC at a friend's. For this we used the set listed as 'set 2' at the end of this article. The Tuning Sticks also performed well in that set. The owner enjoyed the improvements, as his eyes lit up. Better stage and stereo image, more detail and especially more emotion and involvement. His remark "even my cd player now sound analogue" says it all.

## Conclusion

**The Tuning Sticks can definitely be recommended to anyone who loves an organic sound, with which I of course mean that they create a more natural, detailed, analogue and dynamic sound, leading to more emotion in the music.**

**I recommend trying and combining several different types. Akiko Audio guarantees satisfaction, so if it doesn't work out you can always get your money back. This makes trying them out at home incredibly easy, although I dare to say that once you've found your fit, the Sticks won't be returned.**

## Prices:

|                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| Tuning Stick AC        | €119,- |
| Tuning Stick RCA       | €129,- |
| Tuning Stick XLR       | €129,- |
| Tuning Stick Universal | € 99,- |

More information available at: [www.akikoaudio.com](http://www.akikoaudio.com)



**What was used:**

## Set1:

- Transrotor Fatbob S/SME3500/Benz Micro Wood L2
- Ayre CX-7eMP
- Ayre K-3-RP
- Mimetism 45.2
- Sonus Faber Guarneri Homage
- Bekabeling: Sign@udio, NBS, Heavens Gate.

## Set2:

- Thorens TD166MkII/Linn LV-X/Goldring GX1042
- Myryad T-10
- Audio Analogue Bellini
- Audio Analogue Donizetti
- Magnepan SMGa
- Bekabeling: Prefer, Wireworld

**Playlist:**

- Kenny Burrell - Midnight Blue (LP)
- Balthazar - Rats (LP)
- Catawba River Fox - Self Titled (LP)
- Calexico - Hot Rail (LP)
- The Coral - Butterfly House (LP)
- Basia Bulat – Tall Tall Shadow (LP)
- Ane Brun – It All Starts With One (LP)
- Danger Mouse & Daniele Luppi - Rome (CD)
- Calexico - Tool Box (CD)
- Bluezeum – Portrait Of A Groove (CD)
- Morphine – Cure For Pain (CD)
- Otis Taylor – Truth Is Not Fiction (CD)
- Nits – Ting (CD)
- Bettie Serveert – Palomine (CD)

This is the English translation of the original review.