

Accessories, mystic and musical as well

In my relentless search of effective and affordable accessories I want to introduce to you two spectacular products from the Amsterdam based “expert” for electromagnetic problems Ron Kemp. The mystic names these product have suggest something very special that, in my opinion, is fully true. But let’s wait a while and let me emphasize the fundamental importance of accessories.

Accessories: very important

I often come across the opinion that when it comes to the composition of an excellent home-cinema or stereo-set, mainly the quality of the components is what counts. The amplifier, the loudspeakers, the LCD-screen. Accessories which are meant to enhance the listening- and viewing pleasure are fine of course, but no more than a finishing touch. I have a different opinion in this, based upon my own stereo set in my living room. When, around the year 2000, I put my relatively new and precious components in the new living room, the sound wasn’t any good. Biggest problem: acoustics. Many meters of extra curtains had to be placed, and eventually tube-traps (bass-traps) too. After that, I was busy trying ever better cables, all kinds of soundboards, and – in particular – with many mains-related products. 8 years later the sound is extremely spacey, and free from booming bass and sharp high frequencies, the background is simply quiet, and listening has become a pleasure instead of a source of irritation. Maybe half of this result is because of a broad collection of effective accessories. Of course, good components are essential, but in my opinion, things are only starting then. The meaning of accessories cannot be under-estimated.

Tackle that mains!

For a serious set, the quality of the mains is a serious restriction. We encounter high-frequency pollution, spikes, voltage drops under heavy load etc. I live in a complex where electrical cookers, elevators and mechanical ventilation-systems ruin my fun. This complex is surrounded by office-buildings full of computers. And it must be said: nearly every new power cord or filter contributed positively to my set. Presently, I use for my main system numerous shunt-filters, three large passive filters, two regenerators, and a screened direct connection to the meter cupboard together with “miles“ of high-grade mains cables. When I was requested to test two small mains-related products by Kemp Elektroniks, I wasn’t very enthusiast from the start. I have so much of this stuff already, is this really something new? And would the effect be audible, without first stripping my set from all filters I have now? Well, send them in. Funny!

Quantum-mechanics applied?

First, I tried the Quantum Approach Plug (QA). This one looks like just another shunt-filter, like an adapter without a cord.

The Kemp Elektroniks site tells me, this product can be combined with any other mains-related product, because the way it functions is truly different. The way the QA functions is based on... the insights of the quantum-mechanics! This is what I first got tired from a little... you should know, I've studied theoretical physics and I now know what it is about. In short, quantum physics is a fundamental part of modern physics that can be applied only for the smallest parts in the world, electrons and so on. This theory is very mathematical and abstract, and is unfortunately often misused by certain people who claim that according to modern physics, some ideology is ideal. On the internet, you will find „quantum“-remedies for all your sicknesses. And indeed, several audio- and video-accessories are, according to their makers, based on QRT, which stands for Quantum Resonance Technology. Ron Kemp didn't want to explain everything, all he wanted to reveal is that the QA doesn't actually do anything to the mains, instead of that, it uses a small amount of energy from the mains to manipulate the listening-room in a positive way. On the internet it is stated, that QRT contributes to the arrangement of the electromagnetic field and of currents and voltages, carrying information. More mystic than this nearly is impossible, such information I can do without. Here's my proposal: let's forget about my skepticism and give Ron a fair chance by just listening to it.

Listening to the effects of the QA-plug

I plugged the QA-plug into the first power strip of the main system. I immediately noticed that “something“ happened I couldn't identify. This time, I decided to follow the user manual and let it settle for an hour first. When I came back, the effect was immediately clear, and strong! Soundstage had become a little wider and, in particular, much deeper. During listening to a SACD with the Messiah (Dunedin Consort, Linn) I noticed the vocalists were more upfront, the melody of the pushed back lower string players was easier to follow, where previously the way of playing was more noticeable. Low frequencies clearly were deeper now, the subwoofer had more work to do. Furthermore, a good part of sharpness had gone. With every improvement, I think that all sharpness has gone from the system by now, the QA proved me wrong and once again turned the sound into an even softer one. Volume could be raised unlimited now, without any irritation. Timbre of the instruments became more natural and more realistic, and especially, warmer. Maybe a little too warm, but, as the system was on the warm side already, we don't blame the QA-plug for that. All in all, a surprisingly good effect from such a tiny “filter” (after all, it isn't a filter). All things considered, the QA just works equally or better than many real power line products, costing much more! My conclusion is clear: The QA-plug is “ein Hammer” as the Germans would say, a very useful product with an excellent price/performance ratio. With an already warm-sounding system, it might be a little too much, but with any system that tends to the analytic side, this plug is a must have! Don't ask why, just do it!

Schumann resonance

Next up was the Schumann Resonance Plug. It resembles the QA-plug, now fitted with a wire and the same knob as can be found on the QA. This knob is used to adjust the

strength of the effect, while the wire acts as an... antenna! I never heard of Schumann Resonance before, it turns out to be a physical phenomenon that's even mentioned in my old study book (Jackson, Classical Electrodynamics) and was thoroughly investigated for the first time by physicist W. O. Schumann in 1952. In short, the cavity between the earth and ionosphere acts as a resonator for electromagnetic waves. There is a resonance at certain, extremely low frequencies, the lowest one is at about 8Hz (wave length about 24,000 Miles!) On the internet I found another device that, according to the site, is based upon Schumann resonance too. This company states that man-made waves are harmful to nature, including humanity, because they interfere with the Schumann Resonance. Devices generating and transmitting the Schumann frequencies, will have a positive effect evidently on the reproduction of music. Again, some strange story, and Ron Kemp isn't willing to reveal all secrets of his inventions and to discuss them endlessly. Let's listen.

Listening to the effects of the SR-plug

I plugged the SR-plug into the power strip of the preamp and the sources. The 10 ft. wire antenna was placed along the wall as a loop. After the obliged hour I was amazed once again. The effects of the SR-plug are totally different from the ones of the QA-plug. The effect is more in the area of clarity, damping, purity, and the total suppression of noise. A cleaner, more analytical sound with more details, without a shrinking of the soundstage. After a few days of settling, the combined effects of both plugs have become even more noticeable. The sound has become more natural, it simply sounds more like real music. For example, with the excellent CD by Patrizia Ciofi (Vivaldi, Motets, Veritas) the definition of the strings is unprecedented. Less sharpness and harshness, more timbre and expression, with a quieter background. Best results are yielded with the knob around the middle position. Maximum effect seems to hollow the sound, because the timbre of the instruments is affected by the complete absence of noise. Of course, this depends on your personal preferences and the sensitivity of the system. It seems improbable that an audiophile having a good system won't hear these effects. The combined effects of both plugs cannot be overseen in the picture of my Philips pixel plus television too. Colors are richer and more differentiated. In particular, anything that seemed blue, now contains many shades of green. Overall picture quality is more intense and even the sound of the home cinema set reveals more detail. For example, in the irritating start-tune of the news on television more details are noticeable. A very impressive achievement!

Listening to the effects of the SNS-plug

Due to the positive experiences with these new plugs, I ordered an older plug by Kemp Elektronik, the good old SNS-plug (Shunt Noise Suppressor). Finally, a product I can understand the principles of. The SNS-plug is a 5 stage shunt filter with a very extended frequency range. As I have numerous filters of this kind already, I would regard it as a remarkable performance if I would notice even the slightest difference. Well, the effect wasn't even minor. Clearly audible, the addition of the SNS-plug brought better dynamics and precision, especially in the midrange. The voice of Anne Sofie von Otter

(The Artist's Album) clearly got more power and expression. This way, I got the proof that this SNS-plug is far more effective than many similar products from brands I won't list now. In my opinion, the plugs do complement each other very well. Summarized, SNS enhances dynamics, QA will enhance softness and timbre, SR will enhance precision and timbre.

Conclusion

I have been well impressed by these remarkable products. Regarding the QA- and SR-plugs I don't know the theory behind them. I think, Kemp Elektroniks has the potential to have an international breakthrough with these products. It should be possible to sell thousands of plugs in the US. Still, there's the very interesting aspect that these two plugs are in fact no mains related products like a filter. For that reason, their application is not restricted to audio and video sets, they could easily make it into the concert hall! Ron Kemp said, first experiments have been carried out already and visitors as well as musicians have experienced a positive effect on the timbre of the musical instruments. I hope I'm able to investigate this myself soon.

SNS and QA-plugs have been around for a while, they sell for 15 and 10 Euros respectively, the new SR-plug sells for 12 Euros.

As Ron Kemp is always in search of the best, I almost expect product enhancements and fine tuning. I'll keep a sharp eye on that.

Highly recommended, especially in combination.