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AUDIO REVIEWS

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MAY 2008



THE ACOUSTIC REVIVE CHRONICLES

CHAPTER 3: RGC-24, SIP-8F & QR-8

Reviewer: Jeff Day

Digital: Apple MacBook with Airport Express, iPhone, Sony PlayStation 1 SCPH-1001 with Furutech G-320Ag-18F8 power cord, Oppo DV981HD universal player

Analog: *Vintage Thorens 124 turntable, Rega RB300 tonearm with Pete Riggle Audio VTAF and counterweight, Denon 103 MC cartridge* [vinyl front end on short term loan from the vintage collection of Pete Riggle - thanks Pete!]; Auditorium 23 step-up transformer for Denon 103 MC cartridge, and Fi phono stage.

Preamplifiers: Leben RS28CX full function vacuum tube preamplifier (with phono stage)

Integrated amplifiers: Leben CS600 with Furutech G-320Ag-18 IEC power cord, Leben CS300X Limited, Almarro A205A Mk1 & Mk2

Amplifiers: Fi 2A3 monos, Leben CS-660P, *Pass XA30.5* [on loan]

Speakers: Harbeth Super HL5 with 18" Skylan stands, Merrill Zigmahornets

Headphones: Shure SE530PTH

Cables: *Acoustic Revive PCOCC-A oval single core interconnects* [in for review], Auditorium 23 speaker cable; various SilverFi interconnects, digital interfaces & speaker cables; White Lightning Moonshine DIY interconnects & speaker cables; Nirvana interconnects & speaker cables; Audio Tekne ARSP-500 speaker cables and ARC-500 interconnects

Stands: McKinnon Bellevue Symphony walnut media cabinet, *Skylan isolation platform* [in for review]

Music Makers: Indian Rosewood & Spruce Larrivee parlor guitar, Adirondack Spruce & Brazilian Rosewood Gibson Advanced Jumbo guitar, Eastman Uptown AR910CE arch top jazz guitar & Henrikson Jazz Amp & Analysis Plus Yellow Flex Oval guitar cable.

Room and system tuning: *Acoustic Revive REM-8 EMF Cancellor, RCI-3 Cable Insulator, RD-3 Demagnetizer, RGC-24 Ground Conditioner, RIO-5 II Minus Ion Generator, Ultra Low-Frequency Pulse Generator R-77, Acoustic Conditioner RWL-3, Pure Smokey Quartz Insulator RIQ-5010 & Pure Quartz Insulator RIQ-5010W, Shorting Plugs SIP-8F, RPT-2 Ultimate & RPT-4 Ultimate Power Supply Boxes, CB-1DB Receptacle Base Plate, CFRP-1F Carbon Fiber Receptacle Plate, Power Max II Power Cable, CS-2F Outlet Stabilizer* [all in for review]

Listening Rooms: Room 1 - 20' L x 17' W x 17' H, sheet rock walls & cathedral ceiling, concrete slab floor (carpeted), open to a kitchen & dining room of similar size on rear wall, and open to an entry way on the right side wall; Room 2 - 11' L x 11' W x 9' H, sheet rock walls with flat ceiling, concrete slab floor (carpeted).

Price: Acoustic Revive RGC-24 Ground Conditioner \$450; Acoustic Revive SIP-8F RCA Input Shorting Plugs \$225 (set of 8); Acoustic Revive QR-8 Quartz Resonators \$125 (set of 8).



In case you've missed the Acoustic Revive profile I did in [Chapter 2](#) of the Acoustic Revive Chronicles, let me introduce Mr. Ken Ishiguro as the designer behind the innovative Acoustic Revive products. Ken's goal for his products is to reproduce the music on a recording so that it sounds naturally life-like, and "not as though it is being played back over an electrical device." Ken says, "only by listening to natural sound without electronic artifice can you hear what the artists intended." I couldn't agree more!

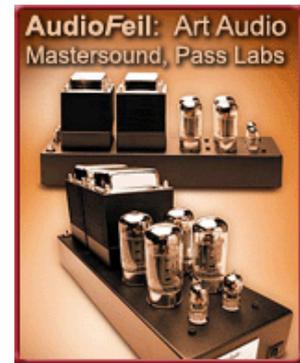
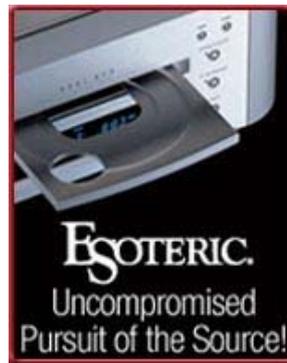
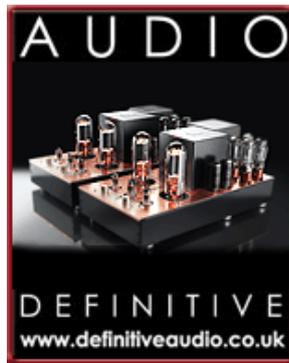
In Chapter 1 I introduced the [RR-77 Schumann Frequency Generator](#) ; in Chapter 2 I introduced the [RIQ-5010 & RIQ-5010W Quartz Insulators](#) and the [QR-8 Quartz Resonators](#) and now in Chapter 3 I'd like to introduce the RGC-24 Ground Conditioner, the SIP-8F RCA Input Shorting Plug and talk to you about some other applications of the QR-8 Quartz Resonators. My beloved Leben RS28CX full function vacuum tube preamplifier (with phono stage) served as my test bed to run the Acoustic Revive gear through the paces for this review.



The RGC-24 Ground Conditioner

The RGC-24 Ground Conditioner attaches to a component at its grounding connection and according to Ken serves as

a "virtual ground". The RGC-24 package includes the following pieces: A virtual earth ground assembly that consists of beautifully crafted Duralumin casework with a matte black Alumite finish and a gold-plated brass plate for a base. Inside the container is a blend of tourmaline and other (i.e. proprietary blend) piezoelectric crystals that serve as the grounding medium. A solid core cable is provided to connect the grounding assembly to a chassis mounting point. If I'm not mistaken, the connector cable is a section of the same PCOCC (annealed single crystal) cable used in the Acoustic Revive Power Reference power cables, which uses a natural silk buffer material and Teflon-coated flexible copper and carbon mesh tubing as a covering. A rhodium-plated RBN-1 banana plug is used to connect to the RGC-24 and a gold plated Y-connector is used for connecting to the equipment grounding point. If your preamplifier doesn't have a standard grounding connection, the RGC-24 includes a special RCA plug that can screw down on the Y-connector and be inserted into an empty RCA input to serve as a grounding connection. The RGC-24 positively exudes quality in its construction and materials.



Ken says that he has done tests with a *Radiation Technology* electric field strength testing meter (the ELF-100E) to measure the strength of the electric field of a component before and after attaching an RGC-24. For example, on a component that measured 900V/m before attaching a RGC-24, the field strength dropped to 750V/m after connecting RGC-24. The decrease in electrical noise is repeatable across a wide variety of components when attaching an RGC-24, says Ken.

Like all of the Acoustic Revive products I have tried so far, the grounding conditioner is an innovative product that performs very well, as I'll describe in a moment. I was intrigued by the concept of using a grounding device that is essentially a component in itself and I was curious what gave Ken the idea to develop it. As it turns out, there was no mystery as in Japan, the AC power supply does not have a ground. It is a "two-conductor unbalanced wiring" arrangement, says Ken. So if you want a high-quality ground in Japan, you have to take a DIY approach. Either you can have discrete grounding done during the construction work or added to an existing structure - which is very expensive in Japan and somewhat unpredictable with respect to ground loop and hum noise. Ken wanted to develop something that would improve the sound quality of a HiFi rig like a proper earth ground but be less expensive and easy to implement. So for people without a traditional earth ground, the RGC-24 is an answer to an audio prayer. All you have to do is hook it up to a component's grounding point and voilà - you have an earth ground!



But you might wonder -- as I did -- what use the RGC-24 would have on a HiFi rig in a country like the US where earth grounds are already part of the normal electrical grid. If the results I had with my Leben RS28CX preamplifier and also the Leben CS300X & CS600 integrated amplifiers are typical, I would say the RGC-24 grounding conditioner contributes a considerable amount of benefit even in the presence of a grounded electrical supply.

SIP-8F RCA Input Shorting Plug

The Acoustic Revive shorting plugs come in two models: the SIP-8F for RCA inputs and the BSIP-2F for XLR connectors. My Leben preamplifier uses RCA connectors so I didn't get a chance to try the XLR versions.

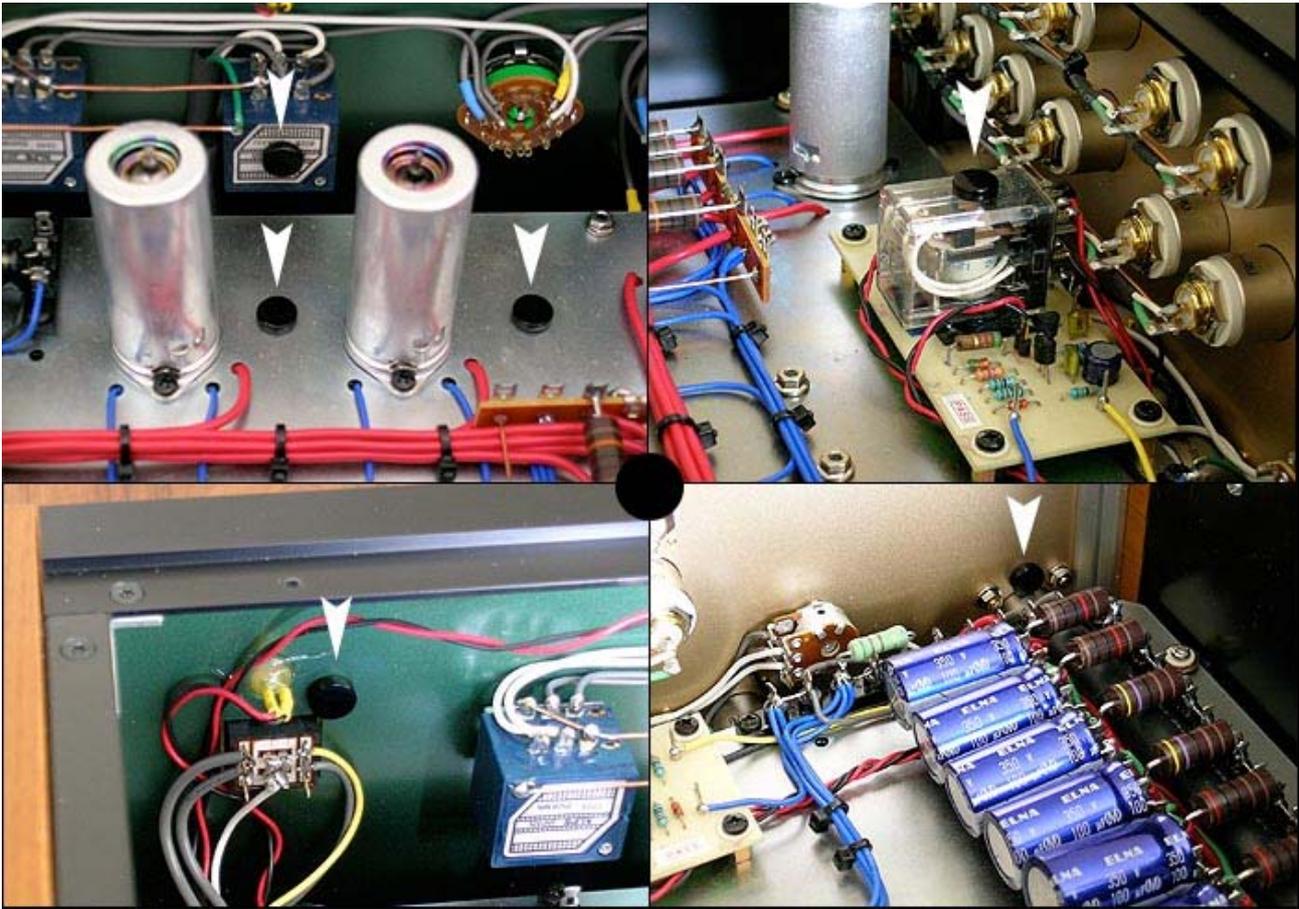


Ken says, "The shorting plugs are not just a cover for vacant RCA inputs. By inserting these plugs, they will short-circuit the input circuit board and stop any RF noise from getting inside the equipment. By having the shorting plugs inserted, you will improve the S/N ratio and reduce the circuit boards' movement from vibration, which leads to dramatic improvement in sound quality."

To further elaborate, Ken says, "The SIP-8F and BSIP-2F shorting plugs are made from a combination of 2017S Duralumin and brass which aid in vibration control, so by inserting the shorting plugs it will strengthen the back panel of the equipment, which gives a sound quality improvement. You can check our website to find out the superb vibration decreasing characteristics of 2017S Duralumin + brass."

QR-8 Quartz Resonators

I've found a couple of applications for the QR-8 quartz resonators that have worked out really well after writing about them in the Acoustic Revive Chapter 2 installment so I thought I'd share them with you now as they fit well into this article. The QR-8 quartz resonators are about the size of an aspirin tablet and utilize quartz's energy transforming piezoelectric effects for system tuning and resonance control (see Chapter 2). The QR-8's come eight to a package, have a thin adhesive film on one side and are intended to be used as resonators by sticking them strategically on vibrating surfaces. Ken says, "There are places that resonate a lot and by sticking a QR-8 there it will change the vibrational mode and eliminate the resonance."



The instruction sheet suggests all kinds of potential applications for the little resonators: on the top, bottom, front or rear panels of equipment, positioned either in the center or in each of the four corners; positioned on the surfaces of loudspeaker cabinets; on driver mounts of loudspeakers; on listening room walls, ceilings or floors; on CD transports; on power switches; and inside electronics on vibration points like transformers, capacitors or even DAC chips. The take-home message is that only your imagination is the limit as to where to apply QR-8 resonators.

Tricking Out the Leben RS28CX Vacuum Tube Preamp with the Full Acoustic Revive Treatment

My reference Leben RS28CX full function vacuum tube preamplifier certainly doesn't need any help to sound fantastic. It pretty much blew me away straight out of the box with its excellent sonics and beguiling musicality. I figured the über-performing Leben preamplifier would be a good test of the latest Acoustic Revive goodies under review because if they could improve on its formidable level of performance, then they'd certainly have my vote.

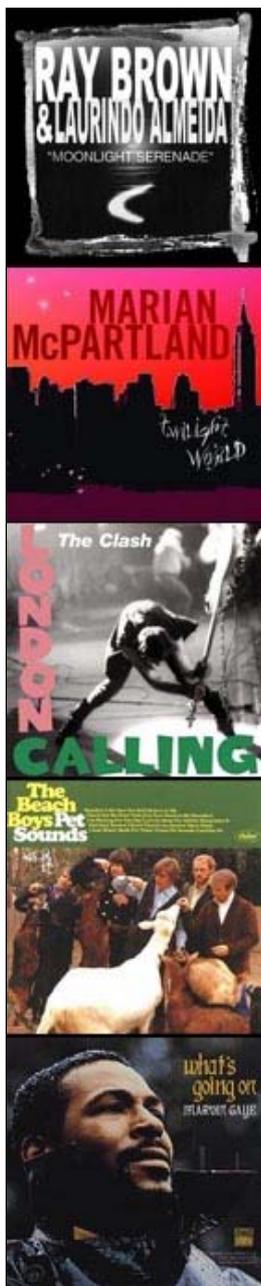
The Leben RS28CX preamplifier has a dedicated ground connection on its back panel that makes hooking up the Acoustic Revive RGC-24 ground conditioner as easy as can be. Ken says that after attaching the RGC-24, to locate its main body underneath the preamplifier's transformers for an additional benefit. That doesn't work with the Leben RS28CS though as its power supply -- and thus transformers -- are housed in a separate chassis (but you should give it a try on your preamp if it's laid out with trannies in the main chassis). So with the Leben RS28CX preamplifier I just left the RGC-24 sitting next to it which worked just fine.

Installing the Acoustic Revive SIP-8F RCA shorting plugs into the Leben's RCA inputs couldn't be easier: All you do is plug in the SIP-8F shorting plugs into any empty RCA inputs and you're good to go. I treated the inside of the Leben RS28CX preamplifier according to Ken's suggestions with the QR-8 quartz resonators: I placed one on the chassis back panel directly over the power receptacle for the Leben's power supply (the black dot between the two bolts in the upper photo montage; one next to the front panel power switch and warm up indicator light; one between each tube on the mounting plate in the triplet of tubes at the front of the Leben's chassis; one on the back of the volume pot; one on what appears to be a small isolation transformer for the Leben's phono stage; and one in the center of the top

cover of the preamp - whew! Oh yeah, I also put one on the back of each shorting plug.

Does this Acoustic Revive stuff work?

The answer is an emphatic yes. Better than I would have guessed in my wildest dreams. While listening to Marian McPartland's new CD *Twilight World*, I was totally blown away by the huge increase in the recording acoustic and by a huge billowing soundspace that just reached out and filled up my listening room to an unprecedented degree. More low-level detail was in

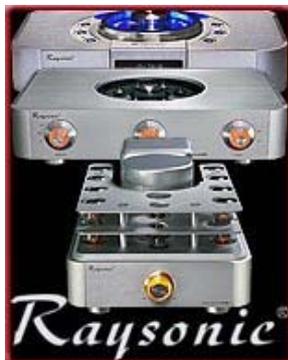
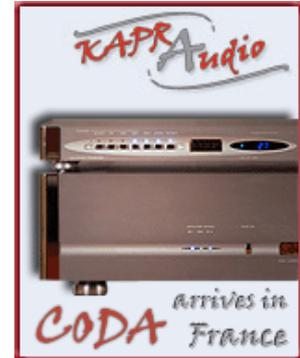


evidence - but without any penalty of sounding more analytical. If anything, the overall character sounded more natural and less electronic; more like the real thing. On the Ray Brown & Laurindo Almeida album *Moonlight Serenade* the decay and bloom of notes increased but more importantly, the music just opened up and began to breathe like a living creature. Or should I say like *two* living creatures playing music together? The tone color of Ray's bass and Laurindo's guitar became even more ravishing, and the level of musical involvement was stepped up a couple of notches.

While the above description is a reference to all the Acoustic Revive gear in place on my Leben RS28CX preamplifier, I did also listen to each of the products separately. However, there is a lot of additive effect by using the products together and I would recommend going for the whole treatment. It's definitely worth it.

The biggest difference among the components reviewed was provided by the RGC-24 grounding conditioner. For those who have been reading the other Acoustic Revive articles, the RGC-24's contribution was a couple of multiples of the magnitude provided by the RR-77 Schumann resonance generator (i.e. a *big-assed* effect). One of *Rolling Stone's* greatest rock albums of all time, the Beatles *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, showed how powerfully the RGC-24 could affect the music. "With a Little Help From My Friends" had more detail, more space, better imaging and more musical communication. *Lonely Hearts* -- like most Beatles albums -- is cursed by average mastering (where's Steve Hoffman when you need him?) but the RGC-24 does help produce a more natural, less electronic, less sterile sound to create a more natural presentation that serves the music well. In my HiFi rig, the overall effect was dramatic enough that I'm not hesitating for a moment to nominate the RGC-24 grounding conditioner a Blue Moon Award - it's the real deal.

The Acoustic Revive SIP-8F RCA shorting plugs and the QR-8 quartz resonators both had a significant effect as well but of a smaller magnitude than the RGC-24. If the RGC-24 scored an imaginary 10 for its increase, then I would award the shorting plugs an increase on the level of 4 and the quartz resonators a 3. Mathematically that would add up to an increase of 17 but because of synergy effects, the total is something more like 25. One interesting note: putting a quartz resonator on the end of each shorting plug made for a nice difference with the way notes decay and bloom. This resulted in a more nuanced presentation and a more natural portrayal of the music.



Summing Up

Whether I was listening to the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, or The Clash's *London Calling*, the result of applying the Acoustic Revive RGC-24 Ground Conditioner, SIO-8F Shorting Plugs and QR-8 Quartz Resonators to my Leben preamplifier was always an impressive improvement. The soundstage opened up, there was a more billowing sound space, there was more low-level detail and a more natural and less electronic sounding presentation - just better sound all around. The portrayal of the musical content of recordings also improved with more life-like tone color, longer decay and greater bloom of notes. The interplay of melody, harmony, and rhythm came across as more convincingly musical, more life-like and emotive and as a result, the musicians' musical virtuosity and expressiveness became more evident. The Acoustic Revive RGC-24 Ground Conditioner, SIO-8F Shorting Plugs, and QR-8 Quartz Resonators are very effective and innovative products capable of taking a component and system to the next level of sonics and musical expression. In particular, I found the RGC-24 Ground Conditioner to be quite amazing - as in, you only find something this good once in a blue moon. But really, if you are tweaking a component, you should use them *all* as there is a very nice additive effect when used together. Very highly recommended.



FOR:

SIGNIFICANT COST-EFFECTIVE IMPROVEMENTS
• FROM SUPERIOR COMPONENT GROUNDING •

Quality of packing: Excellent.

Condition of components received: Perfect.

Completeness of delivery: Complete.

Quality of owner's manual: Owners manual is a small pamphlet written in Japanese but it includes helpful and easy to understand diagrams.

Website comments: Decent website. It's a little hard to follow some of the

Jeff Day

Japanese to English translations but I **got the idea**.

Warranty: No warranty information included.

Human interactions: Yoshi Hontani (Acoustic Revive exporter) is the best person to work with I can imagine. He is expedient, courteous and helpful. The same goes for Aki Monobe of Acoustic Revive and US importer Joe Cohen of the Lotus Group. A class act all the way around!



Acoustic Revive [website](#)
US importer's [website](#)



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