

## Experiences with the Leeuwerik noise gate/filter

My hearing loss is substantial. I don't really enjoy listening to music with my hearing aids in. For those who realise what this entails, I have a Fletcher-average of L/H 55/67 dBHL on the right, and L/H 72 /80 dBHL on the left. My speech comprehension with hearing aids in a one on one situation without background noise lies between 85 and 95%. It's understandable that music sounds somewhat distorted to me. On top of this, I suffer from tinnitus (ringing of the ears) in different frequencies and various intensities. I always say, "I have four different sounds that take turns in telling me how important they want to be". The intensity of the sounds depends on how tired and stressed I am.

I had the opportunity to test the Leeuwerik. The first thing I did was to connect it to my MP3-player, which I started up at night while getting into bed. Due to the power outlet, it was positioned about two metres from my head. This was no great success. I heard almost nothing because of my hearing loss. I placed it right next to my bed the following night. I could set the volume much lower and aimed it directly at my good ear. What a difference! It sounded like music, even with my hearing loss and the customary distortion of sound! This actually kept me awake, and I found myself lying there enjoying the music.

I then decided to connect the Leeuwerik to the TV by using the headphone jack. This can be adjusted independently to allow the TV speakers to continue to function. I was pretty tired at the time and due to my tinnitus, I could barely make out what was being said on TV in the evenings. The sound was too sharp and distorted, and it had a great deal of ruckus running through it. I then removed my hearing aids and connected the box to see what it could do. Things calmed down. I expected not to understand a word being spoken, but due to the calmness and the 'clarity' of the sound, the only way I can describe it, the effects of my tinnitus decreased. It took much less effort to understand what was being said. Did my tinnitus calm down because it took less effort to hear or was the nature of the sound different? I don't know.

I hooked up my stereo to the TV a couple of day's later and removed my hearing aids to see if I could notice a difference, as the amplification is different than when using TV speakers directly. The result: the sound was different, harder, but not clearly understandable. At one point I just turned off the stereo, because it was more irritating than useful. I connected the Leeuwerik again and indeed, my hearing improved and my tinnitus calmed down.

In the past, when my tinnitus got too loud and annoying at night, I tried to cover it up with sounds and frequencies identical to my tinnitus, or 'sounds of nature'. It didn't work and only made me impatient. This of course, only made my tinnitus worse instead of alleviating my condition. So I use the TV to help filter out my tinnitus. I watch the Discovery or Animal Planet channels. I turn the sound up just enough to

just hear what is being said and that works for me. Using the Leeuwerik means I can turn the sound down quite a bit; the neighbours are happy! After about an hour, the TV shuts off automatically and the box doesn't bother me then.

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