

Software Makes the Difference

By Pat Fournier BC-HIS

We carry six brands of hearing aids at The Hearing Place. That's more than anyone else in the area. We do that for a reason. Our goal is to find the right hearing aid for you. The big difference amongst hearing aids is not the computer chips with millions of transistors, it's the software. It's the software that makes the technology come alive.

Let me showcase two of our brands, Siemens and Rexton, so you can see what I'm talking about. Both Siemens and Rexton brand hearing aids use the same computer chip in their hearing aids. (Rexton is wholly owned by Siemens Inc.) Rexton and Siemens simply produce different hearing aids designed for different markets.



Figure 1

Siemens is a world leader in electronic and medical equipment. Traditionally, Siemens marketed their hearing aids through doctor offices and clinics. Their focus has been on the highest quality sound that could possibly be produced. The software that their engineers designed is sophisticated and complex. It's like tuning a fine racecar. They make top of the line instruments and they're priced like it. Those engineers expect the clinician who fits the hearing aid to be highly trained and adept at their technical approach. There are very few Siemens dealers in Montana. We're the only one in our area who carries Siemens.

Siemens wanted more market reach. They acquired Rexton and gave them one job. Make an inexpensive hearing aid and mass market it. Rexton engineers took the Siemens chip and designed simple software for it. It's quick and easy to fit a Rexton, but you can't extract the best potential from the hearing aid chip either. This can make a big difference, especially with a hard to fit hearing loss. **Figures 1 & 2** show programming screens we use. **Fig.1** shows Rexton's loudness control screen. **Fig.2** shows Siemens' compression (loudness control) screen. Rexton's is easy to use! Siemens does a better job! Siemens has more and more precise programming screens compared to Rexton. But you have to know how to use them.

We have budget hearing aids, we have sophisticated hearing aids. We have the widest choices available anywhere. Every person is different. Our job is to find the best hearing aid and the best value for you. Don't over-pay, but get the performance you need. The old adage still holds "you get what you pay for".

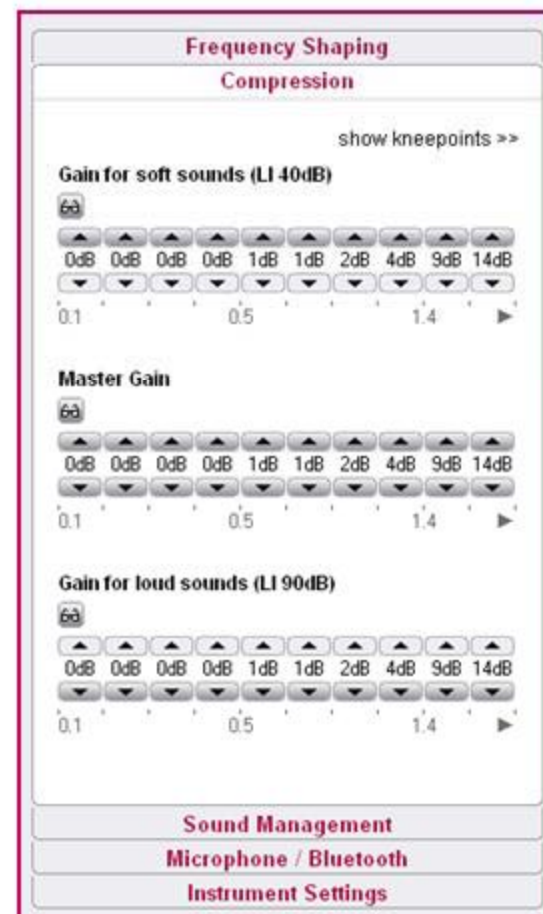


Figure 2