QuickerTek Whip Antenna (external for PowerBook) 2002
$79.00 USD, **** (four stars out of five)
http://www.quickertek.com/

Review by
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Description (what's it do?): External antenna designed to maximize poor signal and/or reception when using AirPort cards, specifically in Titanium PowerBooks

Well, like so many people who are dedicated PowerBook users, my mission to find a solution for my reception woes with my Titanium PowerBook 500 have ranged from third party products (that haven't worked up until this point) to near readiness to call that psychic guy on TV. After hearing about the QuickerTek antennas (they have a PCIMCIA slot model as well) in the news channels, I had to find out if this wa just the magic I was looking for.

I travel a good amount for business and enjoy being able to find a WIFI "bubble" in various cities and hotels, not to mention Internet cafe's and the occassional little coffee places that now offer wireless service. The frustration of seeing iBook users and, dare I say those "other brands" of computers, zipping along online with full signal strength while I sat by with one or two bars of signal and patiently writing as I crav along the 'Net.

Well, crawl no more! After about a seven minute installation (that was no more difficult than installing my AirPort card, itself), I found that my usual one or two bars of signal jumped up to the full five bars! After opening my trusty "MacStumbler" to check signal strength differences and RF noise, I was stunned to find that not only did I have full strength reception; I have FIVE neighbors who all sport WIFI setups as well! was getting nearly 30 dB signal strength from each of them in addition to my own AirPort base station (now loaded with the new v3.0.4 software update from Apple).

Given the rather steep 79.00 price tag, it is worth every penny given these results for those of us with our wonderful TiBooks. After driving around to my usual open networks (used by permission, of course!), I was finding nearly three times the strength and some "bubbles" that I'd never even known existed. Outstanding, consistent results after a full day of use in a variety of conditions from indoors to out and close proximity to nearly 300 feet away.

On the down side, given that you need to use the opening reserved for the add on card, the cable is a little annoying. A small pop-in jack would be helpful if it could sit more securely and stationary. Hopefully in a new edition. Secondly, the cable is a good size but isn't the "tangle-free" variety which I'd imagine helps with the already relatively high price tag on this model. I'd like to see a simple way to secure the cable along the base of the screen or something simple like that. I have used a very small amount of mounting clay that is removable with good success thus far.

How easy was it to install?: Mid level and not too tough at all.

How clear were the instructions? Somewhat unclear but satisfactory. They don't "seem" like they were made on a Mac, if you know what I mean...<g> No images (but indication of where they SHOULD have been in the documentation)

Describe the appearance: Clean design, small; simple black mini-whip; cable is very thin and light gauge but satisfactory

Likes? Small enough, amazing performance, cool software to test your results
thrown in

What were your dislikes? Cable, cable hanging, pricey item (but worth it)

How does it compare to the alternatives available that serve this purpose? They make a 39.00 internal model that sits in the other open slot but the results are not as good by most reports thus far.

Would you recommend this product to a friend? YES

Testing equipment: Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500

Final thoughts: Don't leave home without it (if you have a TiBook!)