

BLACK LION AUDIO

Auteur MkIII 2-channel Microphone Preamp



When it comes to recording, one buzzword is always “preamp.” With Black Lion Audio’s Auteur MKIII mic preamp, a small format studio can now really deliver a robust and clear signal to any DAW.

It’s a two-channel unit with each channel sporting the same options, with XLR in, as well as a 1/4” connection for audio, and 1/4” outputs. The control panel covers gain, phantom power, polarity reverse, and a 10dB pad. At a 1/2 rack unit design it’s a perfect pair for 2-channel interfaces. With 62dB of gain on tap there’s no lacking for power, regardless of the mic type. Its solid-state IC design on the front end makes for capturing fast attacks clearly, and the output side uses a Cinemag transformer, which adds in vintage color and warmth.

Running some tried and true mics into the Black Lion, it certainly livened things with SM57’s on a guitar cabinet. It certainly has a vintage tinge to the color, but nothing soft and squishy. Connecting some more vocal centric mics like the neat King Bee II and a Mojave MA-37 again brought in a nice snappy attack.

Running guitars and basses in DI on their own with no speaker sims sounded really clear and natural. This is usually a make-or-

break point with a mic pre. Snap and clarity sat nicely with rhythm parts with no “oh it’s a direct instrument” noticeability. Tracking with a Strymon Iridium, really warmed things up a lot regardless of guitar type. For bass guitars, fuhgeddaboudit, as they say. Tell the bassist to leave their rig at home. A simple J-bass setup maintained its growl and punch, with plenty of bottom end.

The secret sauce is the Cinemag Transformer. It’s the type of component that gets used in high-end audio, from microphones to amplifiers, and every time it’s applied to a piece of gear, it takes things up a notch or two. Another great feature is the lack of fiddling needed, within minutes the pre was set to give enough signal to the DAW and start tracking. This could be “my first preamp” for a lot of users, and it’s certainly not an amateur piece of kit.

Mic pre’s were usually only the domain of more production-based studios, but the size and price are scaled nicely for the user who isn’t running (or doesn’t need) mega channel systems. It won’t take up a lot of space on a desk, and the simple controls make it a “set and forget” kind of device. For a small home/project studio this is the missing link that pairs nicely with every mic.

Chris Devine

PROS

Easy to use, excellent inexpensive mic pre

CONS

None

STREET PRICE

\$419