

Review: Black Lion Audio Bluey

Bluey is a replica of the famous 1176 FET style compressor, inspired by an exceptional Bluestripe model.

by Jan Wilking

Although Black Lion Audio already has an 1176 clone in its range with Seventeen, it is based on the later Blackface model. Bluey, on the other hand, is unmistakably inspired by the first, particularly rarer series of cult compressors. And from this series, a very special unit was chosen as a model, namely the Bluestripe, modified several times by the well-known audio engineer Chris Lord-Alge (who also worked on the CLA series from Waves).

Excellent Build Quality and Feel

No costs were cut during its development. The design, which is closely based on the original, has a silver front made of brushed aluminium including the characteristic blue stripe; and it weighs a good 8 kilograms. The large knobs with a pleasant turning resistance leave an expensive feel. The large VU meter shows either the level reduction or the output volume, the switches are used to adjust the VU meter display and protect its needles.

On the rear panel, there are inputs and outputs for the audio signal to be processed in the form of two screwed XLR sockets. All connections are balanced, so everything is in the professional range. A pleasant feature is that two units can be linked via a sync socket for stereo processing. Power is supplied by the internal power supply unit with a large toroidal transformer, connected via a power cord.

All Functions of the Original

On the front side of the 19" rack unit are the well-known controls. Connoisseurs of the 1176 or one of the replicas or plug-in emulations will quickly find their way around; otherwise, there's a certain rethinking needed compared to the average compressor. This is because Bluey, like the original, has no threshold control. The threshold is fixed and the input level is driven to this limit with the help of the large input control. The



Even though Bluey shines especially when processing vocals and is therefore mostly used on mono tracks, the stereo link jack for connecting two copies is a welcome addition.

higher the input is turned up, the more the input signal is compressed. Output controls the output volume and gives the signal back the level it has lost due to compression. Attack and Release determine how fast the compressor starts working when the threshold is exceeded and how fast it stops working when it falls below the threshold.

All-Buttons-In

When setting the ratio, {i.e. the amount of compression), there are no special features at first. You can choose between 4:1, 8:1, 12:1 and 20:1 via a button. Like the original, the Bluey also masters the „All-Buttons-In“ trick. If you press all buttons simultaneously, you force the compressor into an extreme setting. The input signal is then squeezed and saturated heavily, which is often used to bring vocals to the front and make bass or drums, including room tone, super thick. This is especially interesting for parallel compression, which Bluey, unlike the original, handles without additional gear thanks to the newly added Dry/Wet control. Less known is the option to press two or three buttons at the same time for less extreme compression.

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Musical and Versatile

In the sound test, Bluey showed all the strengths of the original, albeit with somewhat more midrange and less high-frequency sound. This may also be due to the modified CLA unit that served as a model. At a moderate setting, Bluey effectively reduced the level peaks on vocals and made it easier to sit vocals in the mix. At the same time, the compressor also provided a pleasant musical saturation. Noise and unpleasant distortion are not an issue. With more extreme settings, Bluey brings drums, for example, really far forward and, if necessary, provides them with a good deal of harmonic distortion. This compressor can also make bass sound fat.

Verdict

Bluey offers a convincing reimagining of an early model of the 1176 compressor. The feel and finish is a real treat for hands damaged by plastic USB controllers. And the saturation and harmonic distortion that make up the character of the original Bluestripes? Bluey also delivers those a little bit more authentically than comparable plug-ins or cheap hardware compressors. Bluey always sounds transparent and a bit softer than the original and is, therefore, a real recommendation - especially for vocal processing. ::



More Info

Features

- FET Compressor
- Parallel Compression
- Stereo Link
- Attack: 20 µS to 800µS
- Release: 50mS to 1200mS
- Format: 19" / 2 HE
- Case Depth: 25 cm
- Weight: 8 kg

Facts

Developer: Black Lion Audio
Web: blacklionaudio.com
Distr.: audiowerk.eu
Price: 975 Euro

- ▲ Great Feel
- ▲ Character Sound
- ▲ Analog Saturation
- ▲ Wet/Dry Control
- ▲ Stereo Link

Processing: ██████████
Sound: ██████████
Price/Perf: ██████████
Total: ██████████

Alternatives

Klark Teknik 76-KT
218 Euro
www.klarktechnik.com

Warm Audio WA76
544 Euro
www.warmaudio.com

WES Audio Beta 76
1,300 Euro
www.wesaudio.com