



# Lindell LiN2A

*A new take on classic tube Opto-compression*

## REVIEW BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Lindell Audio is a Swedish company owned by Rad Global Distribution, working closely with renowned Mixer/Producer Tobias Lindell. Over the past decade, the company has brought to market a broad range of analog processors (preamps, compressors and equalizers) in conventional and 500 Series formats. Today we are looking at the company's take on classic tube-based opto-compression—the LiN2A.

### The 2A-style

The LiN2A is the Lindell Audio rendition of the classic Teletronix LA-2A. From its introduction in the early 1960s to its ceasing production in 1969 (and reissued by Universal Audio in 1999), the Teletronix LA-2A Leveling Amplifier is one of the most famous compressors of all time. Its sound is so coveted that many companies have strived to craft their own, often more affordable, version of this classic.

### The Black Lion T4BLA

At the heart of every optical compressor is the gain reduction circuit, which gives this style of compression its name—the T4 opto cell. The Lindell LiN2A uses the Black Lion Audio T4BLA, which was invented for use in the hybrid FET/Opto Black Lion B172A compressor. At the time, Black Lion could not find a current T4 opto cell that lived up to both vintage specs and the company's own expectations. Being famous as a mod company, Black Lion designed and built its own opto cell. Since Black Lion and Lindell Audio fall tightly under the Rad

Distribution umbrella, the T4BLA now powers the LiN2A.

### Meet the LiN2A

The LiN2A is a mono-tube-based optical compressor housed in a 2U 19" enclosure. The LiN2A is designed in Sweden and built in the Pacific Rim for cost considerations. This gives the LiN2A a mass-produced look and feel, yet the quality is quite good. The knobs, switches, meters and jacks all feel well-built and solid.

### Across the Face

The unit starts with a chunky 2-position Limit/Compress toggle switch. Compression is roughly 3:1, while Limit is a more aggressive ∞:1 ratio. Next is a pair of classic large, matching Gain and Peak Reduction knobs flanking an analog needle-based VU meter selectable with a three-position rotary switch (Output +10/Gain Reduction/Output +4). The last control is a master power toggle.

Rather than the fully variable throw of a classic unit, the Gain and Peak Reduction knobs here are gently stepped, which helps nicely with recall.

### Connected

Around the back, the LiN2A has a pair of 1/4 TRS balanced inputs and a power socket. The LiN2A is perhaps the first pro audio processor I have encountered in years that eschews the use of XLR-based I/O, so I needed to dig out some appropriate adaptors for my set-up. The remaining options on the back are the IEC power socket, and a meter adjustment set screw. I wish this were on the front, as based on my studio's set-up, there is no way to climb behind my racks and adjust the screw while looking at the meter.

One curious omission from the LiN2A is the lack of an R37 screw—what has come to be known as the Pre-Emphasis control. This function altered the threshold, making the compression less sensitive to specific frequencies.

In the olden days, this was a set-it-once and move-on control. It did not become "a thing" until LA-2A plugins offered this as an easy-to-use and store in a preset option. As much as it seems like I am making a big deal about it here, I have a mid-2000s-era UA LA-2A reissue, and I have never touched this control... ever!

### Tubes and T4

As mentioned, internally the LiN2A sports a shiny new Black Lion T4BLA (\$100 on its own). The unit also uses two transformers (both CineMag) and four tubes like the original Teletronix LA-2A.

## Sonic Reaction

Ask six people what they think an LA-2A sounds like, and you will get six different interpretations. To some, it's warm and slow. To others, it's creamy with a great grab and rounding when hit hard. I have always found it smooth and rich yet animated with a dusty high fidelity that just sounds, well, like an LA-2A.

Most important to its sound are the built-in ratios, attack and release—how it reacts is what makes an LA-2A an LA-2A. That attack is actually reasonably fast and grabby, with a slower release. Most of us find opto-compressors, such as this, slow because when driven hard, the attack is overpowered by the slow release and often never has the chance to get back to zero in a dense musical passage.

The choice by Lindell to use the Black Lion T4BLA is a wise one, as its reaction times and authenticity are impressive—it just “feels” correct.

## Use

One interesting thing about the LiN2A is that it is less sensitive than my reissue. I usually get 10-15 dB of compression with my Gain Reduction set at 30 on the dial.

I initially thought the LiN2A had a malfunctioning meter because nothing happened at matched settings. I quickly realized the LiN2A has a broader throw. For instance, gain reduction of 30 on my LA-2A was equal to Gain Reduction of 60 on the Lindell. Once I matched the meters and levels, the LiN2A was cooking along just fine.

Lindell notes: This is because most LA-2A designs have a “magic” zone where the unit's threshold kicks in for a particular source and signal level. The LiN2A is specifically calibrated with the T4BLA to have a much wider sweet spot and work optimally over a wider range. Plus the knee is shaped more naturally this way.

Vocals, acoustic guitar, bass and electric guitar (pretty much everywhere I usually use an LA-2A) sounded really lovely, with the LiN2A exhibiting the spongy snap and hold that I like in an optical-tube compressor.

## But...

The big question is, how close does the LiN2A get to an LA-2A? The Lindell is a touch more tight and clean, and perhaps less “dusty” sounding than my reissue. All in all—the “gear-snob” in me can't believe

I am saying this—it's darn close and dang it, I am really impressed. Black Lion nailed its opto cell, and Lindell did a great job in its design and chosen components to take it the rest of the way home. While not 100% the same, this is the first LA-2A inspiration that I would have no qualms using in a mix or tracking session alongside my reissue. Although, I have friends who will argue my reissue is not a 100% match to a vintage 60s unit.

## The Clamp Down

Lindell Audio has really surprised me with its LiN2A. Despite being less than a fourth of the price of a reissue, the LiN2A is currently the most expensive piece in the Lindell line. The Lindell Audio LiN2A is well worth it if you are craving the classic tube-opto sound.

The Lindell Audio LiN2A is truly as close as I have heard in an LA-2A-type compressor, and it's my first Lindell experience in general. I can't wait to check out more from Lindell Audio, and luckily the Lin76 is next on the docket. 🎧

Price: \$699

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