Universal Audio 1176LN Classic Limiting Amplifier

OWNER'S MANUAL

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Letter From Bill Putnam, Jr.

Thank you for purchasing the 1176LN Classic Limiting Amplifier.

My father designed the original 1176 back in 1966, and he was very pleased with his accomplishment. He was also very gratified by its reception by his peers in both the recording and broadcast industries. As a recording engineer, the 1176 was a device he himself used extensively. In making our version of this legendary piece of gear, we have taken great care to build a compressor/limiter my father would have been proud of. Throughout the development of this product, our philosophy has remained clear: Stay true to the original. There are good reasons why certain pieces of gear have become classics, and we wanted to make sure that we captured the feel and sound of the original 1176LN accurately.

Many versions of the 1176 were produced throughout the years. This reissue is patterned on the highly recognizable blackface sound of the D/E versions, which were characterized by the transformer input stage, LN circuitry, and a Class A (1108 style) output stage. Later versions replaced the Class A output stage with a push-pull Class AB output stage, and eventually replaced the transformer input with a differential op-amp circuit, but most engineers agree that the D/E versions best represent the treasured "vintage" sound.

Most of us at Universal Audio are musicians, recording engineers, or both. We love the recording process, and we really get inspired when tracks are beautifully recorded. Our design goal for the 1176LN was to build a compressor/limiter that we would be delighted to use ourselves—one that induces that "a-ha" feeling you get when hearing music recorded in its most natural, inspired form.

Developing the 1176LN—and Universal Audio's entire product line—has been a very special experience for me and for all who have been involved. On the surface, rebuilding UA has been a business endeavor, but it's really been equal parts sentimental and technical adventure.

We thank you, and we thank my father, Bill Putnam.

Sincerely,



Bill Putnam, Jr.

Quick Start

Follow these steps to set up your 1176LN:

1. Ensure the input voltage selector switch on the rear panel is set correctly for the AC voltage in your region. See ***Changing the Input Voltage & Fuse*** for details.
2. Connect the included IEC power cable to the rear panel AC power input and mute your speakers.
3. Connect the 1176LN audio input and output to your audio gear with balanced XLR cables. See ***Terminal Strip Connections*** for related details.
4. To power on the unit, engage the +4, +8, or GR **Meter** button. The front panel meter is lit when the unit is on.

Quick Tips

- As a general starting point, set all four knobs to their straight up (noon) positions.
- **Attack** and **Release** times are *faster* with clockwise knob rotation, and *slower* when rotated counterclockwise.
- For signal coloration without compression, set **Attack** to **OFF** (click to minimum position).
- To power down the unit, engage the **OFF Meter button**.

Overview

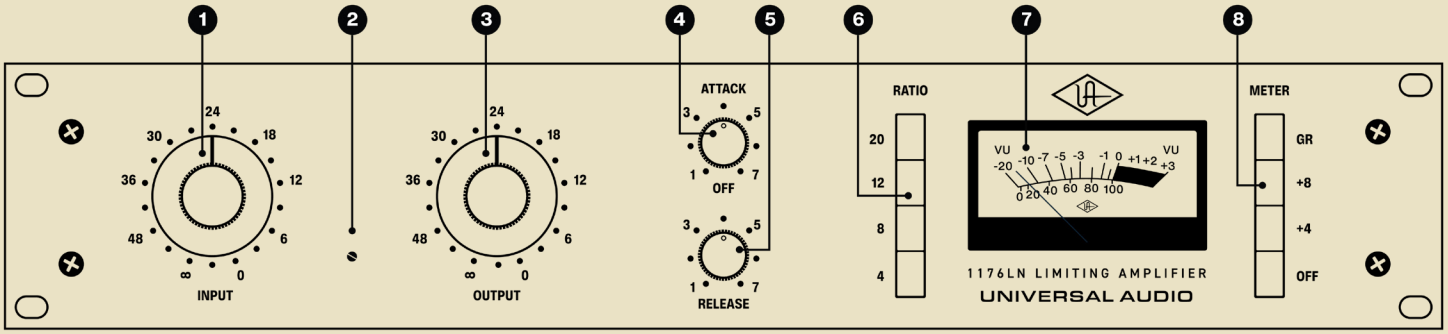
The Universal Audio 1176LN Classic Limiting Amplifier is a single-channel line-level audio compressor/limiter with discrete solid-state circuitry and an all-analog signal path. The 1176LN (LN for “Low Noise”) produces results ranging from subtle, near-transparent compression to all-out drive and distortion. Its response and tonal characteristics distinguish it from later compressor designs.

Operation is simple. Adjust the **Input** knob to simultaneously set the signal input level and the compression threshold. Use the **Output** knob to adjust makeup gain to compensate for gain reduction. Then, adjust the **Attack** and **Release** knobs to taste, or **set Attack to OFF** for coloration without compression. The **Ratio** buttons define the compression slope; select a lower value for compression, or a higher value for limiting. Engage all Ratio buttons for the classic “All Button” harmonic saturation.

Internally, a field-effect transistor (FET) acts as a voltage-controlled variable resistor to perform the gain reduction, while the sidechain detector taps the signal after the FET and feeds a control voltage back to its gate. This feedback topology—paired with the FET’s inherently fast response—yields attack times as short as 20 microseconds and a program-dependent response that adapts naturally to the source. The Class A output stage employs a custom transformer enclosed in the amplifier’s negative-feedback loop to deliver low distortion, and together these elements give the 1176LN a sonic signature that is present even when the unit is not compressing.

Front Panel

Knob label values are somewhat arbitrary and not calibrated to specific dB or time values.



❶ Input

Adjusts both the input signal level and relative compression threshold. Rotate clockwise to increase gain reduction. As Input is increased, a corresponding increase of Output is generally needed for makeup gain.

The compression threshold also depends on the selected ratio; the higher the ratio, the higher the threshold. Note that increasing Input also increases distortion, and when set to minimum, signals can still pass and be compressed.

❷ Meter Calibration

The VU meter may occasionally need to be calibrated by adjusting this trim pot. See the **Maintenance** chapter for procedure.

❸ Output

Adjusts the output signal level. Increase Output to compensate for the gain reduction caused by compression. To monitor the output signal level, set the Meter Function to +8 or +4. Output does not affect the amount of compression, but increasing the output level may increase distortion.

❹ Attack

Sets the time before gain reduction is applied to the signal. Rotate clockwise for faster attack. Extremely fast times are available, ranging from 20 microseconds to 800 microseconds (0.02 milliseconds to 0.8 milliseconds).

With faster attack times, gain reduction kicks in almost immediately and catches transient signals of very brief duration, reducing transient levels and thus "softening" the sound. Slower attack times allow transients (or partial transients) to pass before limiting or compression begins on the rest of the signal. The actual attack time varies slightly based on the selected ratio; lower ratios maintain the fastest attack times.

Attack Off

When Attack is in the OFF position (fully counterclockwise, with a click), the input and output amplifiers remain active, but the compression circuit is bypassed. This setting adds signal color without any dynamic processing.

❺ Release

Sets the time before the signal returns to its initial (pre-gain reduction) level. Rotate clockwise for faster release. The available range is from 50 milliseconds to 1.1 seconds. Release times can vary depending on the program material.

When the release time is fast, "pumping" and "breathing" effects can occur, due to the rapid rise of background noise as the gain is restored. When the release time is slow, however, a loud section of the program may cause gain reduction that persists through a soft section, making the softer section difficult to hear. Adjust Release gradually to achieve the desired effect; small adjustments can make a significant difference.

Program-Dependent Release

Like many classic UA compressor designs, the 1176LN features a program-dependent release mechanism. After a transient, compression is released quickly to avoid level drops. However, if there is a continued state of heavy compression, release time is longer to reduce pumping and compression distortion caused by repetitive attack/release cycles.

❻ Ratio

These four latching buttons set the active compression ratio. Ratios of 20:1, 12:1, 8:1, and 4:1 are available. Higher ratios compress the sound more, and also increase the threshold.

20:1 and 12:1 are typically used when peak limiting is desired, while the lower ratios are typically used for general dynamic range compression.

All Button Mode

Engaging all four Ratio buttons simultaneously yields an extreme form of compression. Engineers often use All Button mode on drums or on ambience or room mics. This can also make a bass or guitar sound "dirty" or push vocals up front. In All Button mode (also known as British mode), compression distortion increases radically due to lag time on the attack of initial transients.

In All Button mode, the ratio shifts dynamically between 12:1 and 20:1, and the bias points change throughout the circuit, which yields variable attack and release times as well. The unique, constantly shifting compression response produces the overdriven tone that is characteristic of All Button mode. Other interesting sounds and behaviors can be achieved with other ratio combinations.

One simple trick that's especially pronounced in All Button mode is to set Attack and Release to their fastest settings, where minute level fluctuations sound like distortion. This creates a gritty compression effect that is especially useful on bass and aggressive lead vocals, where you might need compression and distortion at the same time.

❼ VU Meter

Displays either the amount of gain reduction or the output level, depending on the Meter Function selection. The VU Meter may require occasional calibration (see ***Maintenance***).

❽ Meter Function

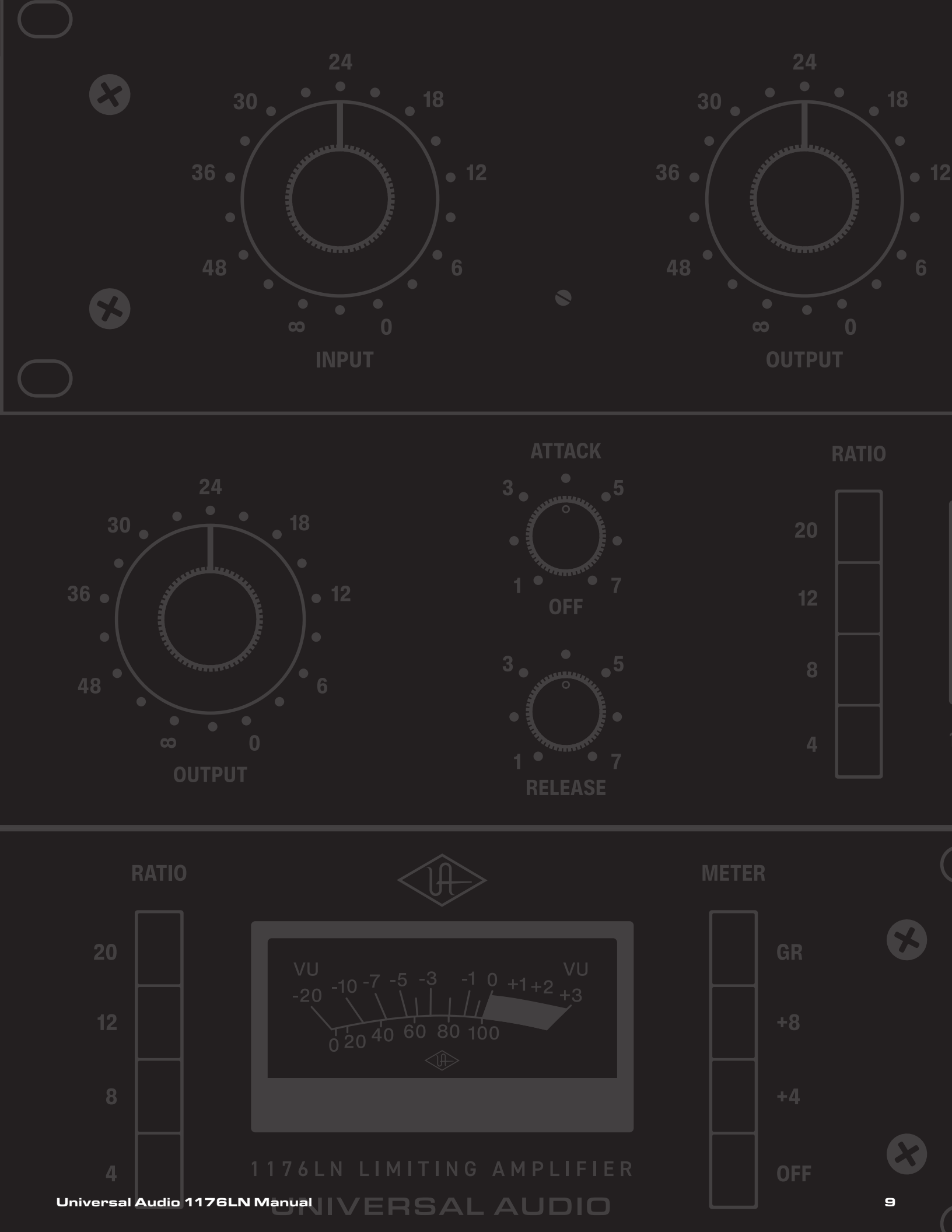
These four latching buttons determine the VU Meter mode, and whether the unit is powered on or off.

When GR (Gain Reduction) is engaged, the meter indicates the amount of gain reduction in dB. When in GR mode and multiple Ratio buttons are engaged, the VU Meter can behave wildly; this behavior is expected and does not harm the unit.

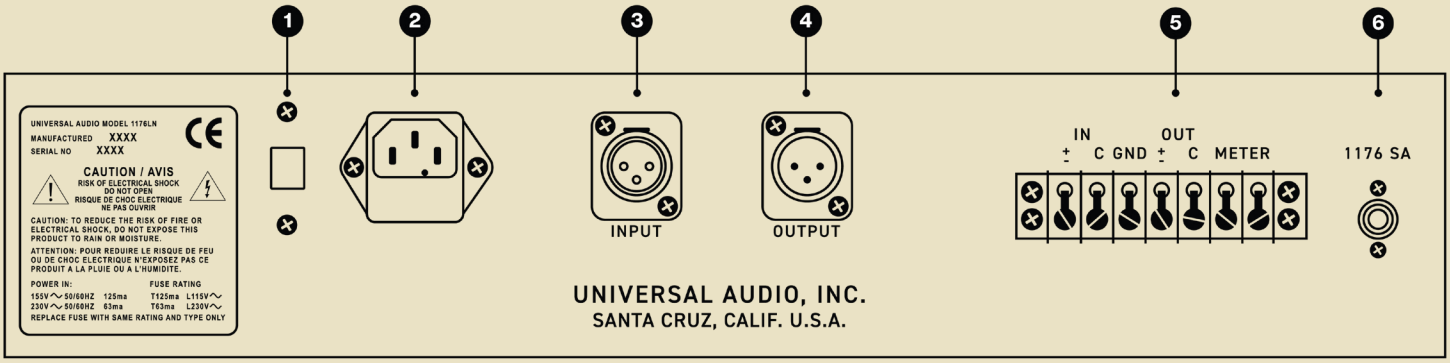
When +8 or +4 are engaged, the meter displays the signal output level. When set to +8, a meter value of 0 corresponds to an output level of +8 dBm. When set to +4, a meter value of 0 indicates an output level of +4 dBm. Note that the two output level positions (but not GR) can introduce a bit of distortion.

Meter Off

When OFF is engaged, the unit is powered down and the VU Meter is unlit.


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OUTPUT
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18
36
12
48
6
8
0
OUTPUT
ATTACK
3
5
1
7
OFF
3
5
1
7
RELEASE
RATIO
20
12
8
4
RATIO
20
12
8
4
VU
VU
-20
-10
-7
-5
-3
-1
0
+1
+2
+3
0
20
40
60
80
100
METER
GR
+8
+4
OFF
1176LN LIMITING AMPLIFIER
UNIVERSAL AUDIO

Rear Panel


1
2
3
4
5
6
UNIVERSAL AUDIO MODEL 1176LN
MANUFACTURED XXXX
SERIAL NO XXXX
CAUTION / AVIS
RISK OF ELECTRICAL SHOCK DO NOT OPEN
RISQUE DE CHOC ELECTRIQUE NE PAS OUVRIR
CAUTION: TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FIRE OR ELECTRICAL SHOCK, DO NOT EXPOSE THIS PRODUCT TO RAIN OR MOISTURE.
ATTENTION: POUR REDUIRE LE RISQUE DE FEU OU DE CHOC ELECTRIQUE N'EXPOSEZ PAS CE PRODUIT A LA PLUIE OU A L'HUMIDITE.
POWER IN:
FUSE RATING
155V~ 50/60HZ 125ma T125ma L115V~
230V~ 50/60HZ 63ma T63ma L230V~
REPLACE FUSE WITH SAME RATING AND TYPE ONLY
INPUT
OUTPUT
IN
OUT
+ - C GND + - C METER
1176 SA
UNIVERSAL AUDIO, INC.
SANTA CRUZ, CALIF. U.S.A.

❶ Input Voltage Selector

Sets the AC operating voltage for your region. When changing the input voltage, be sure to change the fuse value to match the voltage. See ***Changing the Input Voltage & Fuse*** for important details.

❷ AC Power Input & Fuse Tray

Connect the supplied detachable standard IEC power cable here. The fuse tray is located beneath the IEC port.

❸ Audio Input

Connect the line-level audio output signal from your other audio gear to this balanced female XLR connector. Pin 2 is wired positive (hot).

❹ Audio Output

Connect this balanced male XLR connector to the line-level audio input of your other audio gear. Pin 2 is wired positive (hot).

❺ Terminal Strip

The barrier terminal strip is provided for audio input and output connections using wire lugs instead of XLR connectors. See **Terminal Strip Connections** for details.

❻ Stereo Adapter Port

To link two 1176LN units together for stereo signals, connect the optional Model 1176-SA Stereo Adapter accessory here. See **Stereo Setup & Operation** for details.

Changing the Input Voltage & Fuse

Caution: Failure to select the correct voltage and fuse value can damage the unit. When switching the input voltage, the matching fuse value must also be installed. Disconnect the IEC power cable before changing the input voltage or fuse. Confirm the correct voltage is selected and the matching fuse value is installed before reconnecting the power cable.

Voltage selection

The 1176LN can operate with an AC power input voltage of 115V or 230V. The AC voltage is set at the factory for the region at the original point of sale.

1. Remove the AC power input cable.
2. Locate the voltage selector switch adjacent to the AC power input.
3. Using a small standard screwdriver, gently slide the switch to the position at which the desired operating voltage is visible.

Fuse replacement

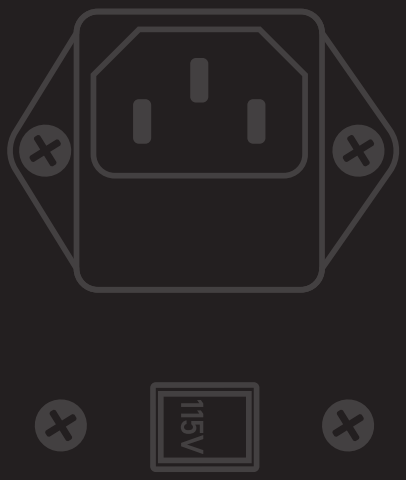
The fuse tray is located directly beneath the IEC connector.

1. Remove the AC power input cable.
2. Using a small standard screwdriver, gently pry out the fuse tray.
3. Install the correct fuse value for the input voltage in your region.

115V: T 125 mA L time delay (slow blow)

230V: T 63 mA L time delay (slow blow)

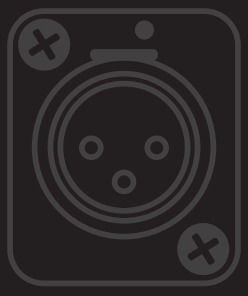




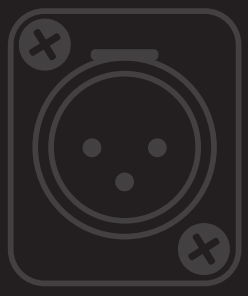


INPU

UNIVE
SANT



INPUT



OUTPUT



UNIVERSAL AUDIO, INC.
SANTA CRUZ, CALIF. U.S.A.



TPUT



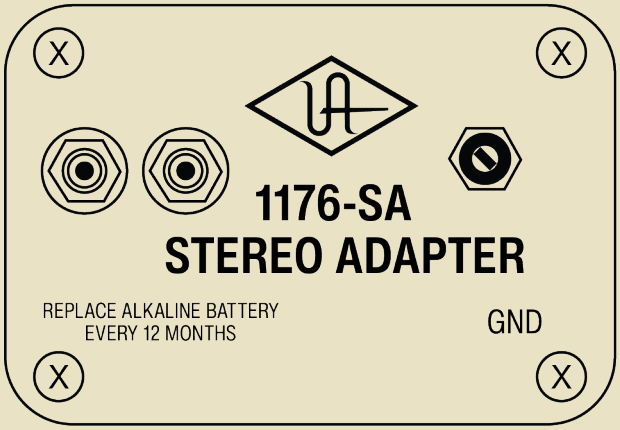
1176 SA



, INC.
U.S.A.

Stereo Setup & Operation

With the optional Model 1176-SA Stereo Adapter, you can connect two 1176LN units together for true stereo operation.



Stereo Connections

Connect the two RCA jacks on the top panel of the 1176-SA to the single RCA jack on each 1176LN unit with two shielded RCA cables. The left/right channel ordering of these connections is unimportant.

Stereo Calibration

To calibrate the 1176-SA stereo adapter:

1. Remove audio signals from both 1176LN units.
2. Engage the GR pushbutton on both 1176LN units.
3. Confirm the 1176-SA is connected to both 1176LN units.
4. Rotate Attack on both units fully counterclockwise to their OFF position.
5. Adjust the potentiometer on the top panel of the 1176-SA until both meters read 0 dB.

Note: If 0 dB cannot be achieved on both meters, reverse the 1176-SA connections and repeat step 5.

Stereo Operation

- During normal stereo operation, both 1176LN units should be set to the same **Ratio**, and similar **Input/Output** levels.
- When connected in stereo, the **Attack** and **Release** controls on the 1176LN units interact. Changing the Attack or Release times on either device changes those settings on both units.
- When connected in stereo, the fastest attack time is doubled. For example, an attack time of 20 microseconds with one unit becomes 40 microseconds when using the 1176-SA.

Terminal Strip Connections

The barrier terminal strip is provided for line-level audio input and output connections using wire lugs instead of XLR connectors. A remote sidechain meter may also be connected here.

Important: To avoid induced noise, make only one audio input connection type (either XLR or terminal strip) to the unit. If the input impedance of the devices connected to the 1176LN outputs is equal to or greater than the 1176LN output impedance, both 1176LN audio outputs (XLR and terminal strip) may be used simultaneously.

The terminal strip signals, from left to right, are as follows:

1. **IN** ±
2. **IN C** (Common)
3. **GND** (Chassis Ground)
4. **OUT** ±
5. **OUT C** (Common)
6. **METER** (two terminals, polarized; inner METER terminal connects to meter plus and outer METER terminal to meter minus)



Unbalanced Input

- Connect HOT cable lead (TS tip) to IN ±
- Connect GROUND (shield braid) to IN C

Unbalanced Output

- Connect HOT cable lead (TS tip) to OUT ±
- Connect GROUND (shield braid) to OUT C

Balanced Input

- Connect HOT cable lead (TRS tip or XLR pin 2) to IN ±
- Connect NEUTRAL cable lead (TRS ring or XLR pin 3) to IN C
- Optional: If hum is problematic, connect GROUND (shield braid or XLR pin 1) to GND

Balanced Output

- Connect HOT cable lead (TRS tip or XLR pin 2) to OUT ±
- Connect NEUTRAL cable lead (TRS ring or XLR pin 3) to OUT C
- Connect GROUND (shield braid or XLR pin 1) to GND
  Note: If hum results, ground may remain disconnected

External Meter

The meter terminals provide a series insert tap to the 1176LN meter side-chain circuitry, for connecting to an external meter. To connect an external meter:

1. Remove the shorting clip.
2. Connect the inner METER terminal (closest to OUT C) to external meter positive input.
3. Connect the rightmost METER terminal to the meter negative input.

Maintenance

Caution: Calibrations and repairs should only be performed by qualified service personnel. There are no user serviceable parts inside the 1176LN.

Cleaning

Before cleaning, power off the 1176 and disconnect its power cord and all audio cables. Wipe the exterior of the unit with a soft, lint-free cloth. For stubborn marks, lightly dampen the cloth with water and wring it out thoroughly. Do not spray or pour liquid directly onto the unit, and do not allow moisture to enter the ventilation openings, controls, or connectors. Make sure the unit is completely dry before reconnecting power.

Important: To prevent damage, do not use solvents, alcohol, ammonia-based cleaners, metal polish, or abrasive materials on any part of the unit.

About the 1176's chassis finish

By design, your 1176 uses the same chassis finish as vintage units from the 1960s through the 1980s. This finish is not sealed, so it will oxidize and develop a patina with age and handling. This is expected and is not a defect. The patina is consistent with the appearance of original units and is part of the character of owning a genuine 1176.

Calibration Procedures

VU Meter Zero Set

The 1176LN meter may occasionally need to be calibrated by adjusting the Zero Set potentiometer, which is located through the small hole on the front panel between the Input and Output knobs.

1. Power on the 1176LN for at least 10 minutes.
2. Set the **Meter** to **GR** and **Ratio** to 20:1.
3. Rotate **Input** fully counterclockwise.
4. Rotate **Attack** fully counterclockwise to OFF (make sure it clicks).
5. Rotate **Release** fully clockwise.
6. Using a small screwdriver, slowly adjust the Zero Set screw until the meter reads 0 dB. Allow some time for the meter to settle before completing the calibration.

Note: Do not rotate the screw on the meter itself. The meter is factory set and should not be altered.

Q Bias

The compression threshold is set using R59. Under normal circumstances, this control does not need adjustment. Recalibration is necessary if the VVR FET (Q1) is changed, because the threshold is dependent upon the specific characteristics of Q1.

1. Select either +4 or +8 output metering.
2. Rotate R59 fully counterclockwise.
3. Apply a sine wave signal to the audio input.
4. Adjust the **Input** and **Output** controls for 0 dB output.
5. Slowly rotate R59 clockwise until the output decreases by 1.0 dB.

Meter Driver Null

This procedure requires a multimeter.

1. Disconnect any input and output connections on the 1176LN.
2. Set your multimeter to measure DC volts.
3. Set the Meter to GR.
4. Adjust the Zero Set potentiometer R71 (the Meter Zero Set screw on front panel) so that the meter reads near 0 dB.
5. Connect the multimeter across R74.
6. Adjust R75 for a minimum voltage reading.
7. Disconnect the multimeter.
8. Readjust the Zero Set potentiometer R71 so that the meter reads 0 dB.

Specifications

Frequency Response	20 Hz – 20 kHz, ±1 dB
Total Harmonic Distortion	Less than 0.5%, 50 Hz to 15 kHz with limiting, at 1.1 seconds release setting and +22.5 dBu output
Signal-to-Noise Ratio	Greater than 81 dB, 30 Hz – 18 kHz with input signal at threshold of limiting
Maximum Input Level	+30 dBu
Input Impedance	600 Ω, bridged T-control, floating
Maximum Output Level	+24 dBu
Output Impedance	600 Ω, transformer-balanced, floating
Gain	45 dB, ±1 dB
Attack Time (adjustable)	20 to 800 microseconds
Release Time (adjustable)	50 milliseconds to 1.1 seconds
Audio Connectors	XLR and barrier terminal strip
Stereo Interconnection (two 1176LN units)	Via optional 1176-SA accessory
AC Power Requirements	115V or 230V (switchable)
Maximum Power Consumption	13 Watts
Power Input Connection	Standard detachable IEC
Fuse	115V: T 125 mA L time delay (slow blow) 230V: T 63 mA L time delay (slow blow)
Dimensions (2U rackmount chassis)	19" W x 3.5" H x 12.25" D
Weight	11 lbs (bare unit) 14.5 lbs (shipping)

Specifications are subject to change without notice.

Technical Support

Universal Audio Knowledge Base

The UA Knowledge Base is your complete technical resource for configuring, operating, troubleshooting, and repairing UA products.

You can watch helpful support videos, search the Knowledge Base for answers, get updated technical information that may not be available elsewhere, and more.

help.uaudio.com

Universal Audio YouTube Channel

The Universal Audio YouTube Channel at youtube.com includes helpful support videos for setting up and using UA products.

www.youtube.com/@UniversalAudio

Universal Audio Community Forums

The unofficial UA discussion forums are a valuable resource for all Universal Audio product users. This website is independently owned and operated.

www.uadforum.com

Customer Care

To contact UA support staff for technical or repair assistance, please visit:

help.uaudio.com

Notices

⚠ Important Safety Information

1. Read these safety instructions and the instruction manual of the product.
2. Keep these safety instructions and the instruction manual of the product. Always include all instructions when providing the product to other parties.
3. Heed all warnings.
4. Follow all instructions.
5. Do not use this apparatus near water.
6. Only clean the product when it is not connected to the power supply system. Clean only with a dry cloth.
7. Do not block any ventilation openings. Install in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
8. Do not install near any heat sources such as radiators, heat registers, stoves, or other apparatus (including amplifiers) that produce heat.
9. Only operate the product from the type of power source indicated on the power supply unit.
10. Protect the power cord from being walked on or pinched, particularly at plugs, convenience receptacles, and the point where it enters into and/or exits from the apparatus.
11. Only use attachments/accessories specified by the manufacturer.
12. Unplug this apparatus during lightning storms or when unused for long periods of time.
13. Refer all servicing to qualified service personnel. Servicing is required when the apparatus has been damaged in any way, such as when the power supply cord or plug is damaged, liquid has been spilled into or objects have fallen into the apparatus, or when the apparatus has been exposed to rain or moisture, does not operate normally, or has been dropped.
14. **Warning:** To reduce the risk of fire or electric shock, do not expose this apparatus to rain or moisture. Objects filled with liquids, such as vases, should not be placed on this apparatus.
15. To completely disconnect this apparatus from the AC mains, disconnect the power supply cord plug from the AC receptacle.
16. The mains plug of the power supply cord shall remain readily accessible.
17. Do not attempt to open the product housing. The warranty is voided for products opened by the customer.
18. Let the product reach ambient temperature before switching it on.
19. **Caution:** High signal levels can damage your hearing and your loudspeakers. Reduce the volume on the connected audio devices before switching on the product; this will also help prevent acoustic feedback.
20. Intended use. The product is designed for indoor use. The product can be used for commercial purposes. It is considered improper use when the product is used for any application not named in the corresponding instruction manual. Universal Audio does not accept liability for damage arising from improper use or misuse of this product and its attachments/accessories. Before putting the product into operation, please observe the respective country-specific regulations.


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INPUT
OUTPUT
ATTACK
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RELEASE
RATIO
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4
VU
-20
1176L
UN
METER
GR
+8
+4
OFF
-10
-7
-5
-3
-1
0
+1
+2
+3
40
60
80
100
1176LN LIMITING AMPLIFIER
UNIVERSAL AUDIO

Manufacturer's Declarations

Warranty

The product is covered by a limited warranty. For the current terms of such warranty, please visit: www.uaudio.com/eula

Maintenance



CAUTION: To reduce the risk of electric shock, do not open the unit. This product does not contain user-replaceable parts. The unit is internally calibrated at the factory. No internal adjustments are available without qualified service personnel.

Repair Service

If you are having hardware issues, first check all system setups, connections, and operating instructions. If that doesn't help, contact our customer care team. To learn about repair service, or for UA Customer Care, please visit: help.uaudio.com

Notes on Disposal

In compliance with WEEE-DIRECTIVE (2012/19/EU):



The symbol of the crossed-out wheeled bin on the product, the battery/rechargeable battery (if applicable), and/or the packaging indicates that these products must not be disposed of with normal household waste, but must be disposed of separately at the end of their operational lifetime. For packaging disposal, please observe the legal regulations on waste segregation applicable in your country.

Further information on the recycling of these products can be obtained from your municipal administration or from the municipal collection points. The separate collection of waste electrical and electronic equipment, batteries/rechargeable batteries (if applicable) and packaging, is used to promote the reuse and recycling and to prevent negative effects caused by e.g., potentially hazardous substances contained in these products. Herewith, you can make an important contribution to the protection of the environment and public health.

Compliance

EU Declaration of Conformity

CE

RoHS-Directive (2015/863/EU)
Low Voltage Directive (2014/35/EU)
EMC Directive (2014/30/EU)
REACH Directive (EC1907/2006)

Safety

The product fulfills the requirements of
EN IEC 62368:1-2024+A11:2024
CSA/UL 62368-1:2025 issued July 31, 2025
J62368-1(2023)
AS/NZS 62368.1:2026
SN EN IEC 62368-1:2024+A11:2024
UL 62368-1:2025
CSA C22.2 No. 62368-1:2025

The product fulfills the requirements of
EN 62368-1:2014+A11:2017
EN 62368-1:2014
CSA/UL 62368-1:2014
CEI EN 62368-1:2016
J62368-1(2020)
AS/NZS 62368.1:2018

The product fulfills the requirements of
EN IEC 62368-1:2020+A11:2020
CSA/UL 62368-1:2019
J62368-1(2023)
AS/NZS 62368.1:2022
SASO-IEC 62368-1

EMC

The product fulfills the requirements of
FCC Part 15 Subpart B, ICES 003 Issue 7 Class B
EN 55032:2015+A11:2020
CISPR 32:2015+A1:2019
AS/NZS CISPR 32
VCCI CISPR 32
EN 55035:2017+A11:2020
CISPR 35:2016

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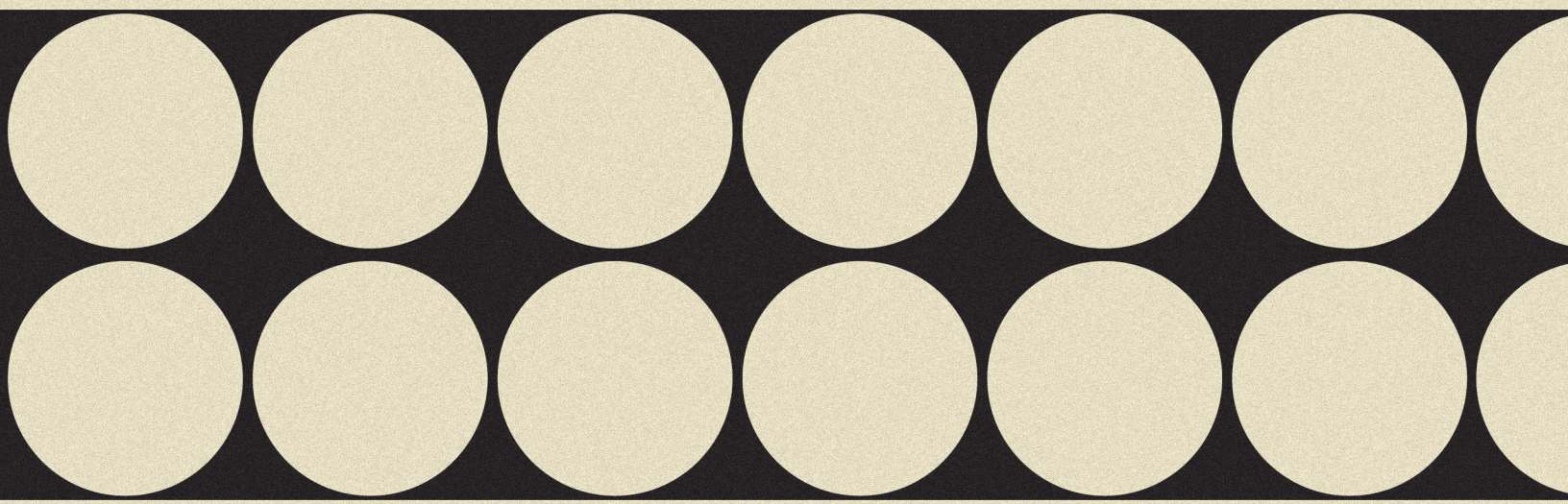
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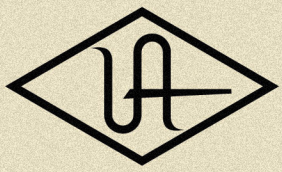
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