

## **What's the difference between the various Li'l Beaver versions?**

As far as the circuit goes, nothing. They all have the exact same number of resistors, capacitors, and transistors, in the exact same configuration. But these different versions all use different value resistors and capacitors, and different transistors. These different component values give each version its own subtly unique tone.

The NYC version has the most gain, the most compression, the smoothest distortion, and most bass response. Of all the versions, this one probably comes the closest to EHX's claims of "violin-like sustain" rather than the massive fuzz that it really is. While it may not seem as exotic as the Russian, Triangle, or Ram's Head versions, it is IMHO, the quintessential muff sound. If Mike Matthews had a sound in his head of what he thought the Big Muff Pi should sound like, I personally think this is the version that comes the closest to that vision. If you heard a muff on a 90's recording, it was probably an NYC version.

The Russian version would be the farthest in the opposite direction of the NYC version. As far as muffs go, it has a very open pick attack and a rough in-your-face texture to the distortion. The resistor values configure it for the least amount of gain, but it uses the highest gain transistors of all the versions, so those not only compensate for the lower gain, but they also give it a nice bit of treble bite as well. Because of its punchy attack, the Russian version is very popular with bass players as well as regular 6 string players.

In the middle of the tonal spectrum, you have the Triangle and Ram's Head versions. While the NYC version is the most popular in terms of ubiquity, the Triangle and Ram's Head versions are by far the most popular among vintage collectors, boutique cloners, DIYers, and anyone who actually cares about which version of the muff they are using. This is, no doubt, in large part due to the number of high profile guitarists who use(d) the Triangle and Ram's Head versions and the outrageously high price of vintage units. But I think this is also because the Triangle and Ram's Head versions are in the middle of muff road, so they are going to appeal to more people. The NYC might be a little too compressed and creamy for some, while the Russian's hard pick attack and rough texture might be a little too much for others. If that sounds like you, then either the Ram's Head or Triangle versions might be what you're looking for, with the Ram's Head version being slightly more like the NYC version and the Triangle version being slightly more like the Russian version.

All that being said, keep in mind that this is just my opinion based on what I hear with my own ears. If you poke around on guitar effect forums and blogs, you are guaranteed to run into another opinion that would describe the various muff variants in complete reverse of what I just have. Also keep in mind that while the way I have just described the NYC and Russian versions makes it seem like they sound radically different, the reality is that they still actually sound very similar. To some people there's not much of a difference between the various versions. To some people, the difference is huge. But a muff is still a muff. If I were to listen to random sound samples of all 4 versions, I probably wouldn't be able to differentiate them with any degree of accuracy. I can only really discern any distinguishable tonal characteristics when I'm directly A/B'ing the pedals. I'm simply splitting hairs here the way that only someone who is obsessed with gear and tone does...I'm sure you understand what I mean.

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