

Blackberry Aurora Review in Russia

[<https://blackberries.ru/obzor-blackberry-aurora/>]

This week, we first met the new BlackBerry Aurora device. Despite the fact that sales of the Aurora started in early March, this smartphone was released only for the Indonesian market, in accordance with the license granted to the BlackBerry joint venture BB Merah Putih, and there it finally went a long way to get into our hands.



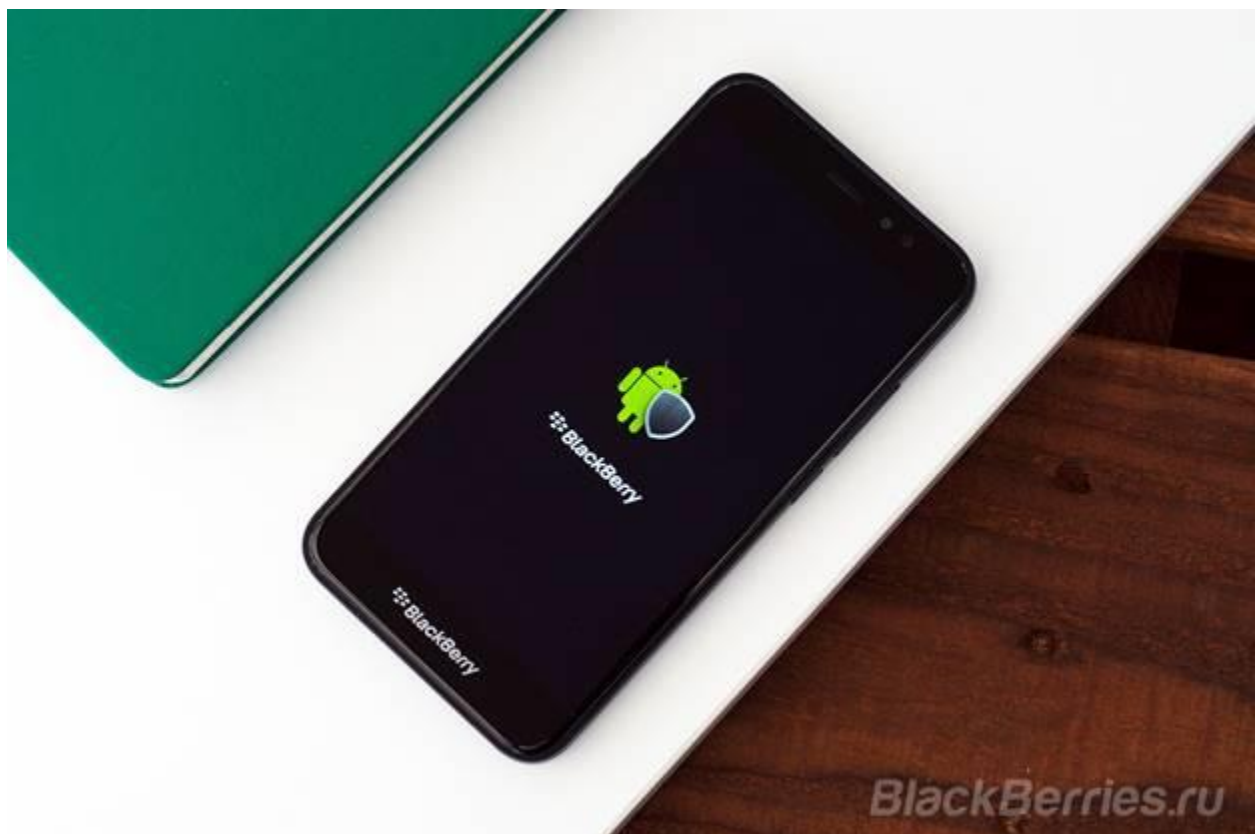
In many respects, the design features and specifications of Aurora has the looks and distinct feels to match exactly to that of the people of Indonesia. This archipelago nation has a population of over 255 million people, makes it the fourth largest population on Earth (after China, India and the United States). Indonesians are very social, ranking fourth in the world in using Facebook, and the fifth in Twitter. (Jakarta was recently ranked first in tweet-producing cities.) It's a young country, with at least 50% of the population under the age of 30, it's also a tech-savvy market, with 93 million Internet users and 52 million smartphone users.

Most importantly, Indonesia is in the first place in the adoption of mobile devices, with 93% of people having access to the Internet through a smartphone. Indonesians are seriously very receptive to technology, in addition to activities in chat rooms, they are also enthusiastic mobile gamers and mobile buyers. This means that the vast majority of Indonesians first get to know the Internet from their mobile device and have never used a computer.

Packaging and Bundling of BlackBerry Aurora



In my opinion, the packaging of BlackBerry Aurora is more intended for the Asian market. I expected to see the inscription "Assembled in China" but to my surprise, Aurora is really made in and by Indonesian. The bundle is quite simple. Besides the phone itself, the box contains some documentations, a charger, a cord to connect to a computer, and a headphones.



BlackBerry Aurora Design



I do not consider myself a fan of the BlackBerry Z10, but those who like it, should appreciate the BlackBerry Aurora. On tactile sensation Aurora is very similar to that of Z10. The back panel of the device is made of textured plastic, with a "rubbery" coating. Very nice and addictive to hold. Just like the back cover of the Z10. The best thing about it is that this material doesn't attract smudges of fingerprints.

In the center of the back is the BlackBerry logo. There is a microphone and the noise cancellation system on the upper part, a camera module and a two-tone LED flash. At the bottom is a wide slid that makes the speaker.



At the top of the front panel is a front camera with LED flash, sensors, RGB LED for indication, and speaker grill. At the bottom, BlackBerry logo. The bezel is quite wide, but thanks to the protective glass of 2.5D they look quite organic. At the bottom, there is a Micro USB connector. On the left is the power off / lock key. On the right, the volume rocker and the programmable key.





Aurora rear panel is completely removable, along with the lateral edging. Despite the removable back panel, the battery itself is not. The upper part, on top of the battery, are the two slots for two SIM cards and a memory card. Yes, the Aurora design is quite archaic, but it's good that its developers have abandoned the tendency to provide the user with a difficult choice of what to use - two SIM cards or a SIM card and a memory card.



BlackBerry Aurora Specifications:

| | |
|--|--|
| Operating system | Android 7.0 Nougat |
| Dimensions | 152 x 76.8 x 8.55 mm |
| Weight | 178 grams |
| Model Number | BBC100-1 |
| Processor | Quad-core 64-bit Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ 425 processor with a clock speed of 1.4 GHz |
| The graphics processor | Adreno 308 |
| Memory | 4GB RAM 32GB ROM |
| MicroSD slot | (up to 256GB) |
| Display | Diagonal Display 5.5 " |
| Resolution | 1280 x 720 pixels |
| Density | 268 DPI |
| Touch screen | 10-point multi-touch |
| Keys | Volume up / down keys, lock (to turn on / off the power), customizable BlackBerry key (can be used as a mute key when there is an active call or to open the camera) |
| Main camera | 13MP camera with autofocus Recording video with a resolution of 1080p at a rate of 30 frames per second Phased Autofocus (PDAF) Two-tone flash 4x digital zoom Panorama, continuous shooting, live filters |
| Front camera | 8MP camera with fixed focus Recording video with a resolution of 1080p HD with a frequency of 30 frames per second LED Flash |
| Connecting | a 3.5mm Stereo Headset Notifications Sound, vibration, RGB LED indicator; All notifications can be customized by the user Ports / Connections Micro USB 2.0 |
| Battery | 3000 mAh non-removable lithium-ion battery |
| Network | LTE B1 (2100MHz), B3 (1800MHz), B5 (850MHz), B7 (2600MHz), B8 (900MHz), B26 (850MHz), B40 (2300MHz), WCDMA 850/900 / 2100MHz; GSM 900 / 1800MHz |
| WiFi | 802.11 b / g / n 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi Direct |
| Bluetooth | Bluetooth |
| Navigation Assisted, autonomous and simultaneous GPS | |
| Preloaded Google Maps | |

Sensors Accelerometer, magnetometer, gyroscope, proximity sensor, diffused light, Hall sensor

Preinstalled BlackBerry applications

BlackBerry® Keyboard, BlackBerry® Hub, BlackBerry® Calendar, Contacts by BlackBerry®, Notes by BlackBerry®, Tasks by BlackBerry®, BBM®, DTEK™ by BlackBerry®, BlackBerry® Device Search, BlackBerry® Launcher, BlackBerry® Services, BlackBerry® ® Help, BlackBerry® Password Keeper, BlackBerry® Content Transfer, BlackBerry® Productivity Edge, BlackBerry® Toolbox

Android apps

Gmail™, Hangouts™, Google Chrome™, Google Drive™, Google Maps™, YouTube®, Google Play™, Google Photos, Messenger (SMS), Android Device Manager

BlackBerry Aurora Performance

BlackBerry Aurora runs on the base of chipset Qualcomm Snapdragon 425 - this is the youngest model among the simultaneously presented BlackBerry Androids that come with chipsets 625 and 435, specifically intended for mobile devices of budget class. The chipset consists of a processor with four 64-bit cores Cortex A53 running at 1.4GHz, a new graphics chip Adreno 308, and a new X6 LTE modem.

The performance of the graphics chip is enough for recording and playback of Full HD video, as well as for processing the interface with HD resolution with a refresh rate of 60FPS. Snapdragon 425 supports the same communication and communication standards as its predecessors - Bluetooth 4.1, USB 2.0, Wi-Fi 802.11ac, etc.

Interestingly, if you compare the performance of the BlackBerry Aurora with the BlackBerry PRIV and DTEK50, then it still bypasses them for a number of indicators, in particular for the speed of the interface, processor and memory, second only to the processing speed of 3D. This is quite logical, given that the Aurora's PPI display is significantly lower than KEYone and PRIV, and therefore does not require large processing power.

| ← Detail Score KEYone | ← Detail Score PRIV | ← Detail Score Aurora | ← Detail Score DTEK50 |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 888100-3 | 87V100-4 | 88C100-1 | 87H100-2 |
| 62811 | 51145 | 36849 | 35583 |
| 3D: 12423 | 3D: 18183 | 3D: 2495 | 3D: 7401 |
| UX: 24286 | UX: 16117 | UX: 15930 | UX: 12697 |
| CPU: 20814 | CPU: 12237 | CPU: 13337 | CPU: 10818 |
| RAM: 5788 | RAM: 4608 | RAM: 5087 | RAM: 4667 |



Operating System



BlackBerry Aurora is the first BlackBerry phone to run the Android 7.0 Nougat operating system, and even before the release of the BlackBerry KEYone, has received many fine improvements to the Android operating system. This version provides new functions and is based on existing functions. We will not fully describe the capabilities of the Android operating system, but will only tell you about the main differences that have become available with the release of Android Nougat.

Multi-tasking with screen sharing



Do you want to play video on YouTube while responding to a text message or email? With Android Nougat, your device supports multitasking with a split screen. The easiest way to enable this feature is by long pressing the "Last application" button in a supported application. It should be noted that unlike the BlackBerry KEYone, on Aurora, multitasking with screen sharing is convenient to use not only in vertical, but also in horizontal orientation. The application will reduce its size to half the screen, which will allow you to run another application under or next to it.





Fast Application Switching

On BlackBerry Aurora, you can quickly switch between the two recently opened applications by double-clicking the "Last Apps" button. The feels of doing this is almost akin to pressing Alt+Tab to switch between to running applications on a desktop computer. This is a quick way to save time by moving back and forth between two applications without having to open the entire list of open applications. If you need to navigate between two applications to move or copy information between them, this is a handy add-on that appeared in Android Nougat, and which you can use in the BlackBerry Aurora.

Quick Responses in System Notifications



Notifications in Android Nougat are now grouped by type, so you have more options for organizing different incoming notifications. In addition, the operating system has built-in support for a quick response, which means that you can send quick response messages to your contacts without having to run the application completely.



When you receive notifications, you will see a text area under the notification, where you can easily add your answer and click send. This is a huge time saving, and it's great that it is completely consistent with the interface.

The downside is that the notification tray - took the standard form for the Android 7.0 Nougat operating system, which means that it became less like the BBOS notification tray.

Doze off on the go

Doze mode reduces power consumption, stopping the background work of the processor and network activity of applications when the device is not used for a long time. This means that your device is always working to minimize background tasks and extend battery life. You do not need to interact with the new feature, but it's a noticeable advantage that you will enjoy when using BlackBerry Aurora on the latest version of Android 7.0 Nougat. There is another option to save battery power, which you can open in the device settings to further optimize it, and increase battery life.

New Settings



The updated layout and user interface in the Android Nougat settings menu allows you to not only use the default list in the menu that you already know, but also use the sidebar on the left to make the navigation in the settings much less tedious. For example, if you are at the bottom of the settings application, you can open the side menu and go directly to the next section that you need. This is a small detail that really makes navigation on the BlackBerry Aurora really fast, allowing you to go to almost any setting in just four steps.

BlackBerry Launcher



The BlackBerry Launcher is an application from the BlackBerry that leaves the appearance of the stock Android. It's almost unchanged and adds a lot of functionality that came from both the BlackBerry 10 and BBOS. Brings a vision of productivity that the BlackBerry has always been famous for.

On the BlackBerry KEYone, due to the design features of the display, the swipe up from the bottom of the display did not work. But on the Aurora, gestures control is all in perfect order. You can also customize them according to your preferences.



Performance Tab



With the "Performance" tab, you can quickly see all the important information from any screen. Simply swipe to the center of the edge of the screen next to the thin tab on the edge of the screen and you can see all your recent messages, upcoming appointments, to-do list and favorite contacts. You have full control over the positioning, so you can put it on either side or adjust the transparency.

Active Notifications

You can go directly to actions using shortcuts embedded in notifications. Thus, you can reply to a text message without going into the Messaging application, or immediately share a screenshot.

Pop-up Widgets

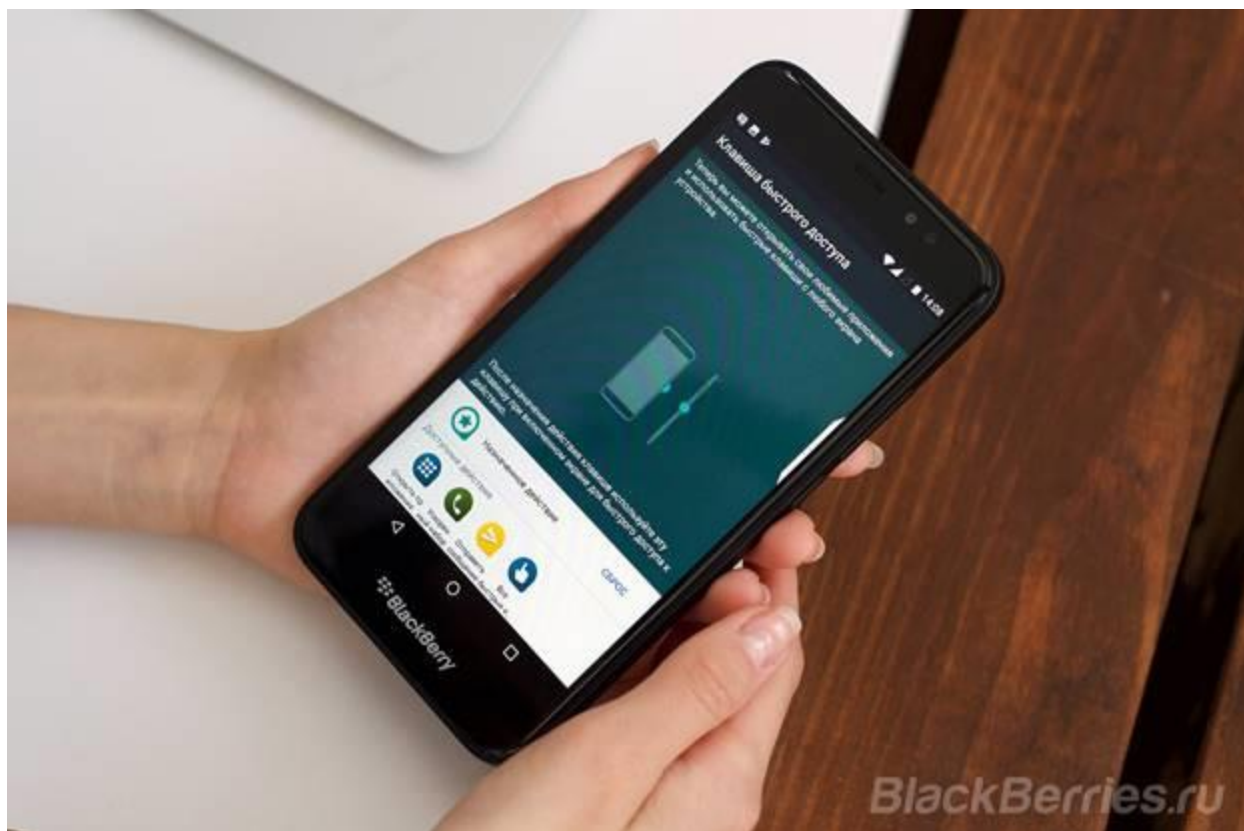


Each icon on the main screen with three dots below it, offers a preview without opening the application. Simply moving down or up the icon, for a while, opens the standard Android widget for this application. This allows you to easily use the basic functions without cluttering up your home screen with widgets. More information about pop-up widgets can be found [here](#).

Shortcuts



The ability to interact with applications using widgets is convenient, but for the most common tasks, this can still require many repetitions. BlackBerry Aurora offers another class of functions on the main screen - shortcuts. They offer an additional level of functionality for many applications. For example, instead of a simple miniature view of your calendar, you can immediately launch a shortcut to create a new calendar item.

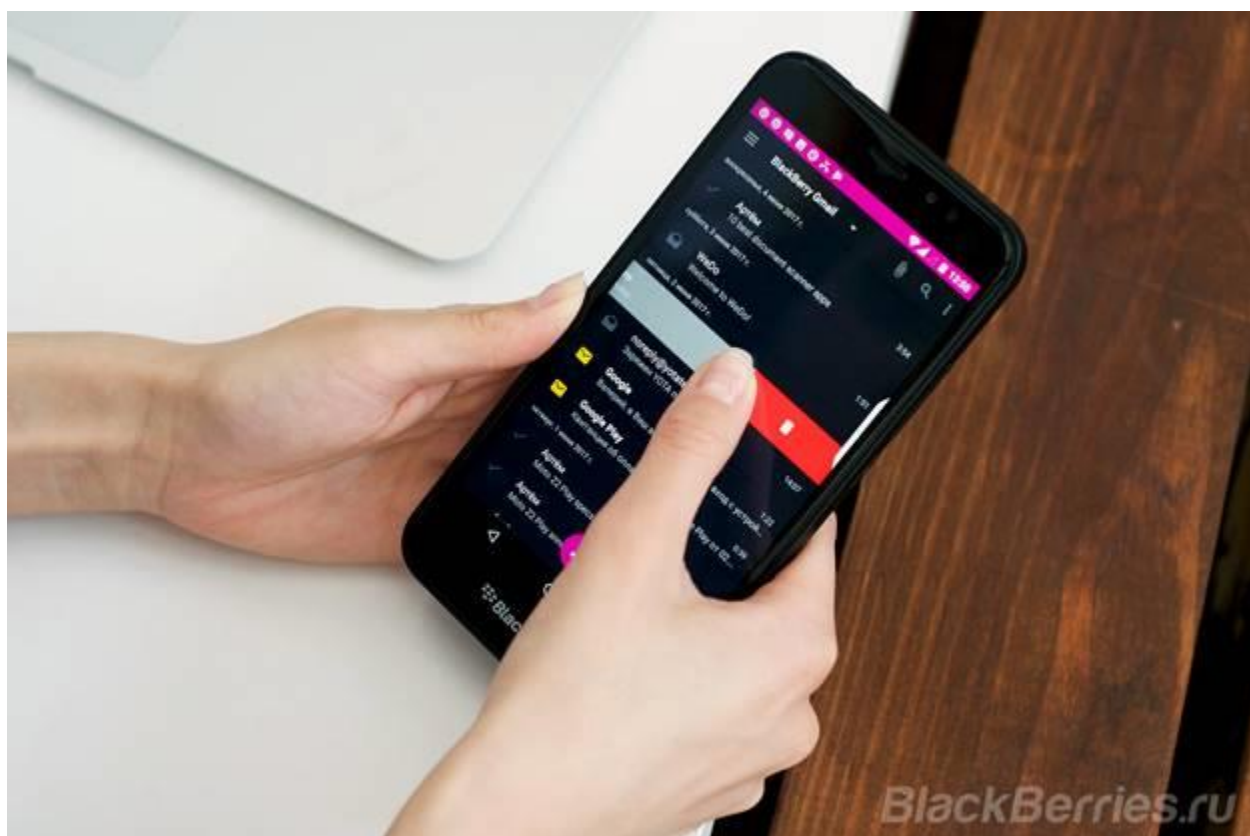
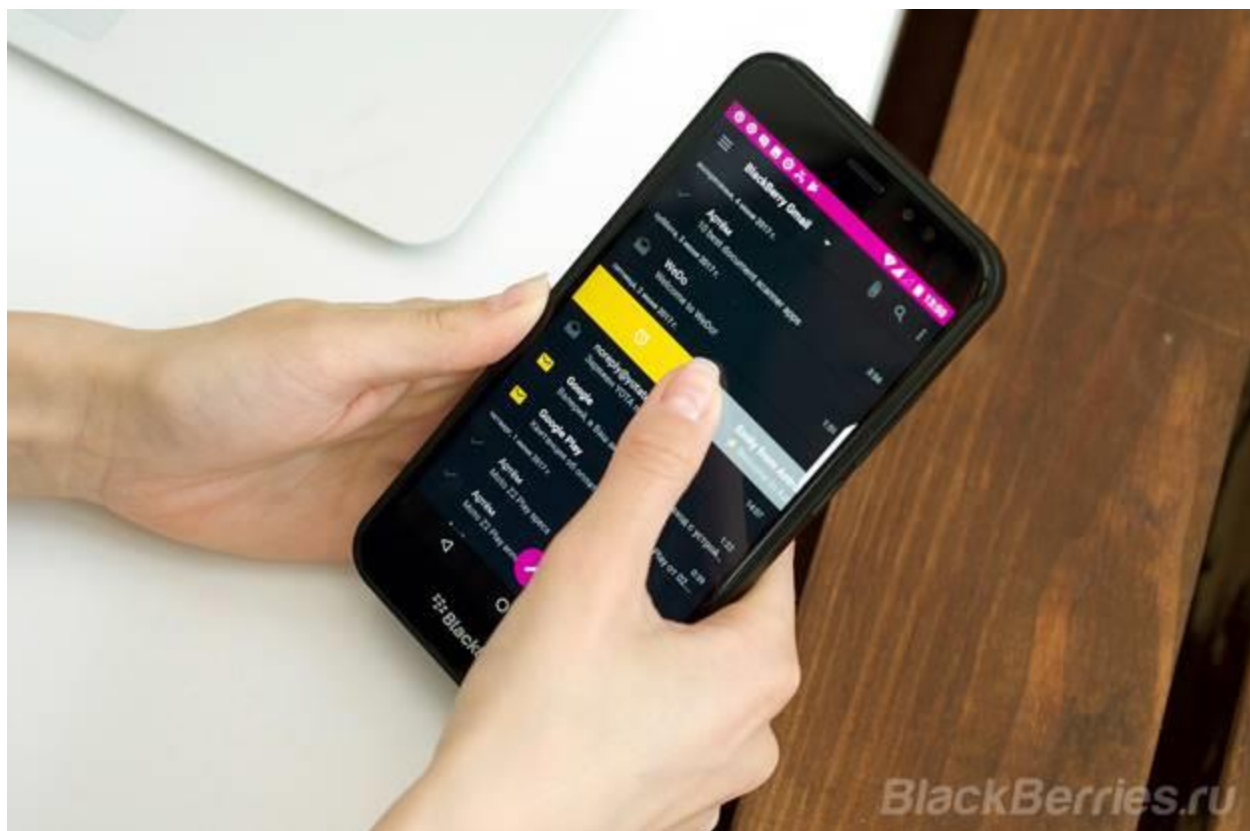


These shortcuts cover contact management, multimedia management, device utilities and much more. Labels can be activated using icons on the main screen, gestures or an additional customizable key.

BlackBerry Hub



BlackBerry Hub for Android can support more than a dozen different applications that include the most popular social networks and instant messengers. Here are some of the accounts that you can add to your BlackBerry Hub: Twitter, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, BBM, Instagram, Pinterest, Slack, Skype, Viber, WeChat, Line, Kik, Telegram, Google Hangouts.



In the BlackBerry Hub on Aurora, also support for two SIM cards is added, while for each call log in the BlackBerry Hub a separate menu is displayed, and all SMS messages are in one section, with a note to which of the numbers they are received.



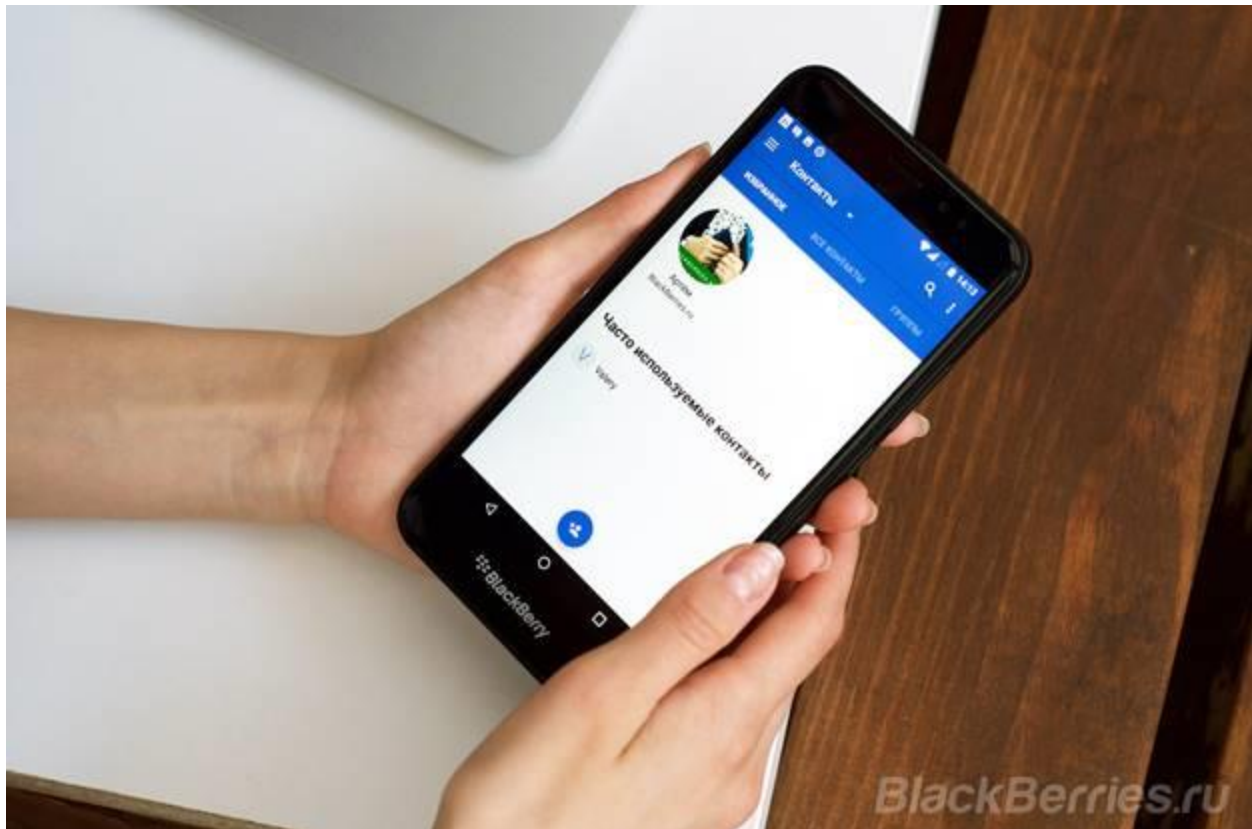
Curiously, the BlackBerry Hub automatically creates a new section for each SIM card installed on the phone. It's not entirely clear that this is a bug or feature.

Search Feature



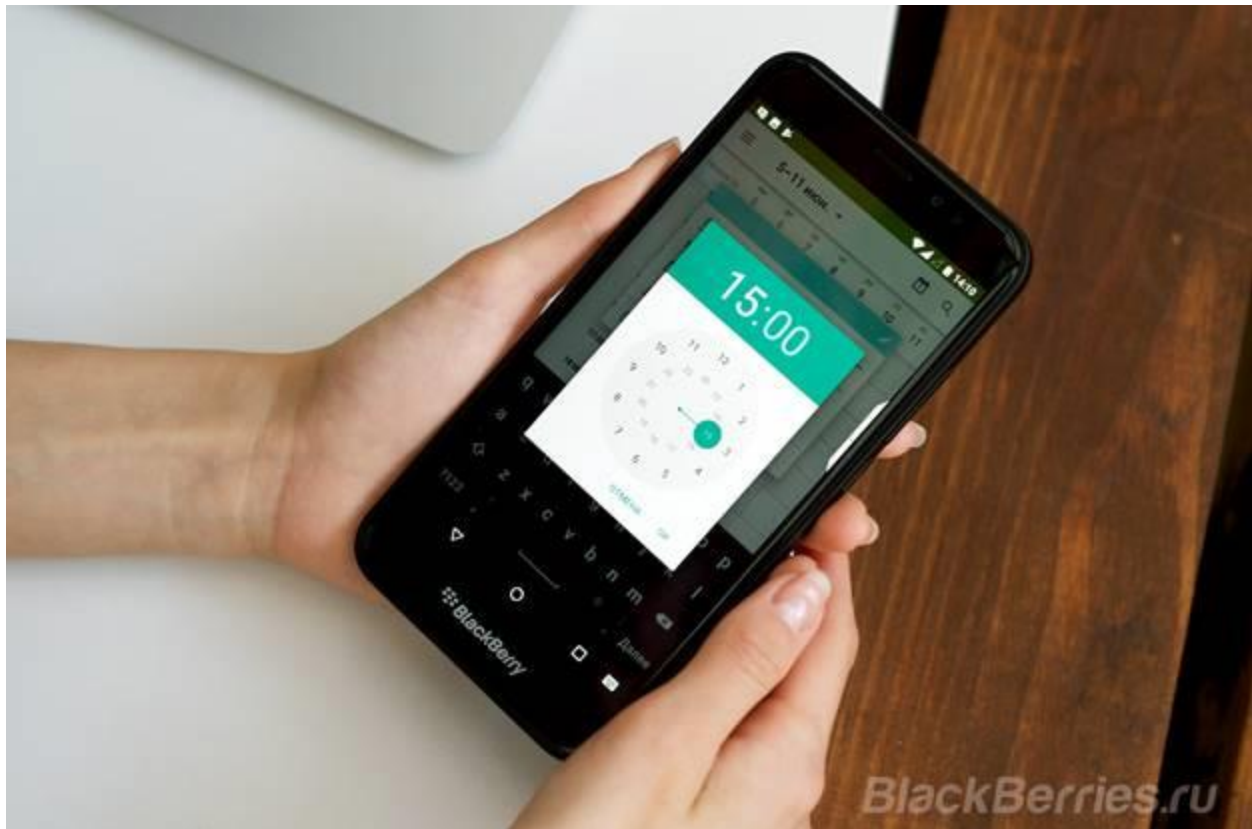
The search feature on BlackBerry Aurora is a powerful application that can help you find contacts, calendar entries, e-mail messages in BlackBerry Hub, documents, multimedia files, applications and much more. It also offers the option of remote searching if the information you are looking for is not found on the device.

Contact App



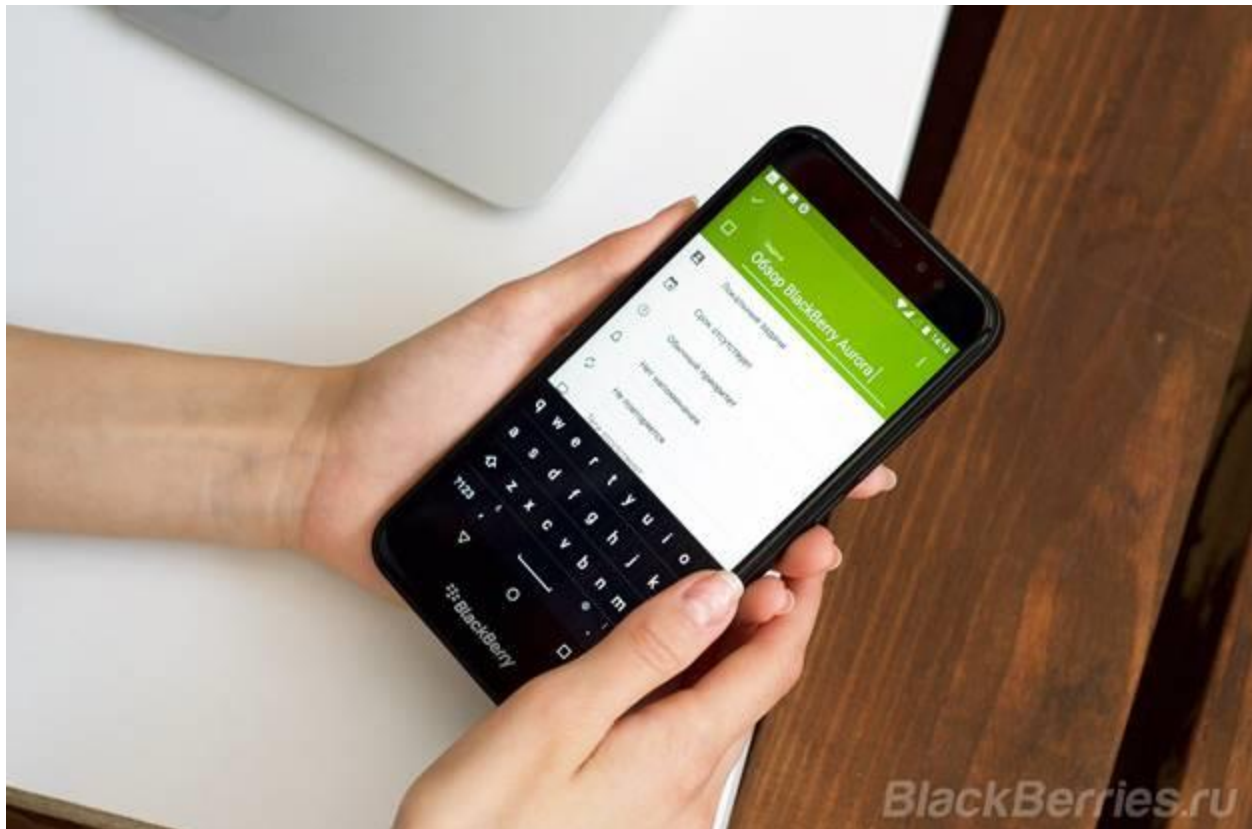
Offering a full package of tools, BlackBerry added its own contact application for smartphones based on Android. Of course, there is no need to use the BlackBerry offer, but with features such as remote search, managing recent contacts, which allows you to block recent contacts, as well as smart filters, contact groups and the ability to merge contacts from different applications, the application from BlackBerry is an excellent choice.

BlackBerry Calendar



BlackBerry also includes its Calendar application, which has received many improvements since its initial release on PRIV. With the BlackBerry calendar, you can view and respond to meeting invitations directly from the BlackBerry Hub and make phone calls directly from the event reminder. In addition, you can use Google Now voice commands to create appointments.

Tasks and Notes for BlackBerry



Applications Tasks and Notes allows you to increase efficiency at work by creating task lists, notes and reminders, or by assigning work schedules. One of the features that worth noting is the ability to use tags, formatting and synchronization with Microsoft Exchange.

BlackBerry Password Manager

All BlackBerry smartphones based on Android have a preinstalled application called BlackBerry Password Manager, which allows you to store all your passwords, registration data and important security records encrypted with AES-256 standard and protected master password. In addition, you can use the BlackBerry Password Manager to create strong passwords and lists that to be stored in encrypted form.

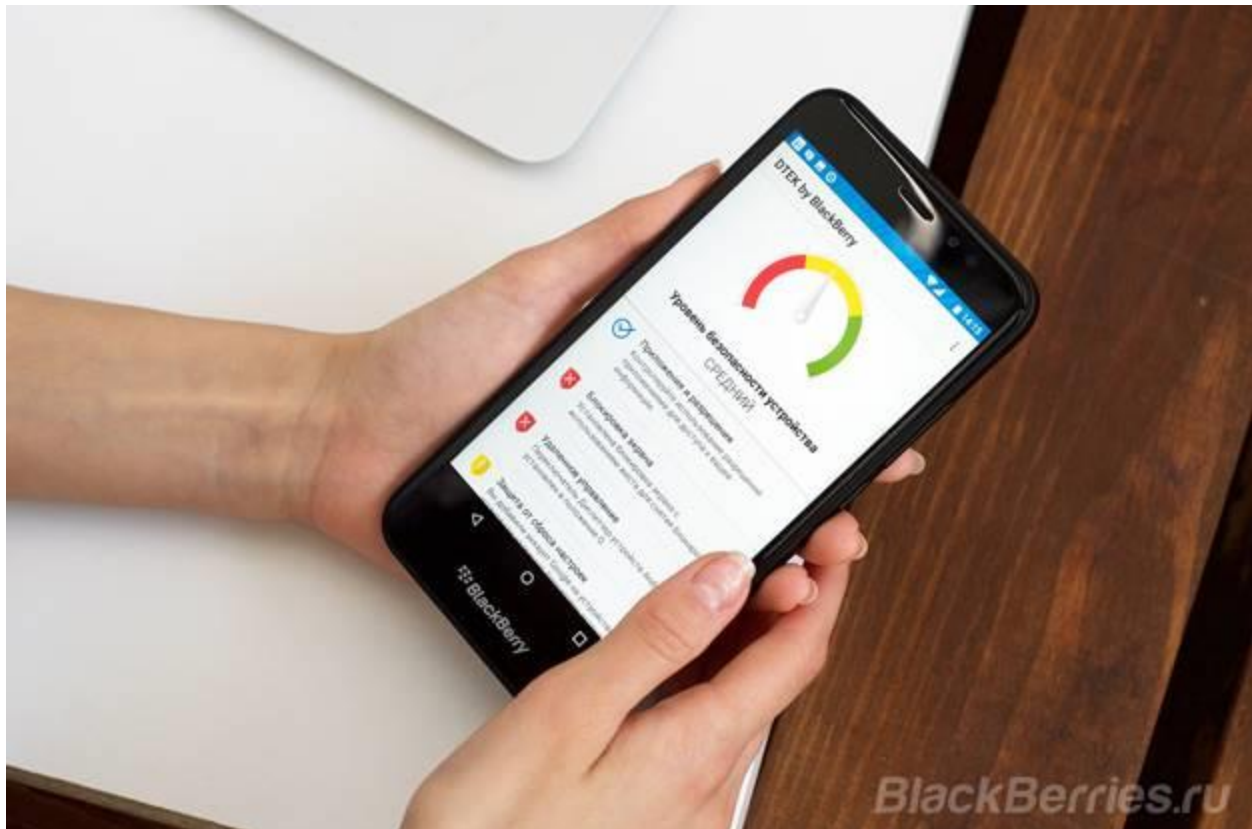
Smart BlackBerry Keyboard



As part of the BlackBerry application suite, Aurora received the pre-installed BlackBerry Keyboard. For those who have used BlackBerry 10 OS, everything should be familiar here, but if this is your first BlackBerry, here's what you need to know about the keyboard: she's absolutely incredible! The BlackBerry keypad remembers how you type, and tells you the words as you type, and you only have to flick your fingers upwards to select one of the suggested words. The keyboard also supports swipe gesture from right to left to delete the last typed word, or to swipe from left to right on the Space key to switch the language.

So far, this is the only bad thing that I find in ALL BlackBerry Android: the inability to use two languages simultaneously, just like when you use the Virtual Keyboard on a Blackberry 10 device. On BB Android, one must switch between languages every single time.

BlackBerry Android Security Features



Like all other BlackBerry smartphones based on Android, Aurora received a complete package that ensures the safety of the smartphone:

Reinforced Linux kernel: BlackBerry reduces the possibility of an Android attack, thanks to numerous patches and configuration changes to improve security.

Randomization of the address space: This function encrypts the system memory used by applications, which makes it difficult to hack the device.

Hardware root of trust: During production, the BlackBerry uses a hardware trust root that adds security keys to the processor on each smartphone. These keys help you monitor and verify the status of each device - this means that the authenticity and integrity of your device is guaranteed, as is the security of the data it contains.

Secure Downloader: Thanks to the secure boot process, you can be sure that only an undamaged operating system with a BlackBerry signature can be downloaded. Each stage of the secure download chain confirms that the next component is not completely damaged before continuing the download.

FIPS 140-2 memory encryption: Government class encryption, approved by the US government, protects your personal information, such as photos or banking information, even if your phone is lost or stolen.

Release of timely patches for security: Many popular smartphones place confidential user information at risk of compromise due to slow security updates - weeks, months or even years after the patch is released. Release of BlackBerry patches is the fastest, which minimizes your vulnerability.

BlackBerry Integrity Detection (BID): A service that constantly monitors events or device configuration changes that indicate a compromise for device security and operates in real time if a threat is detected.

Security Research Team: World-renowned experts are testing the security of BlackBerry smartphones on Android.

However, with the security update on Aurora, we had some ambiguities in the fact that the smartphone that we received for the tests contains a system security update from February 1. This is, actually coincides to the release date of the device. Updating the BlackBerry operating system for Aurora is deployed through the FOTA service, and it is possible that to get the update the smartphone must be connected to the network in Indonesia. We contacted BlackBerry support with the appropriate request and we will inform you as soon as we receive a response.

One of the main security tools of Aurora is the pre-installed DTEK application from BlackBerry, with which you can not only get a visual idea of what information and functions your applications use, but you can take measures to limit them by adjusting permissions.

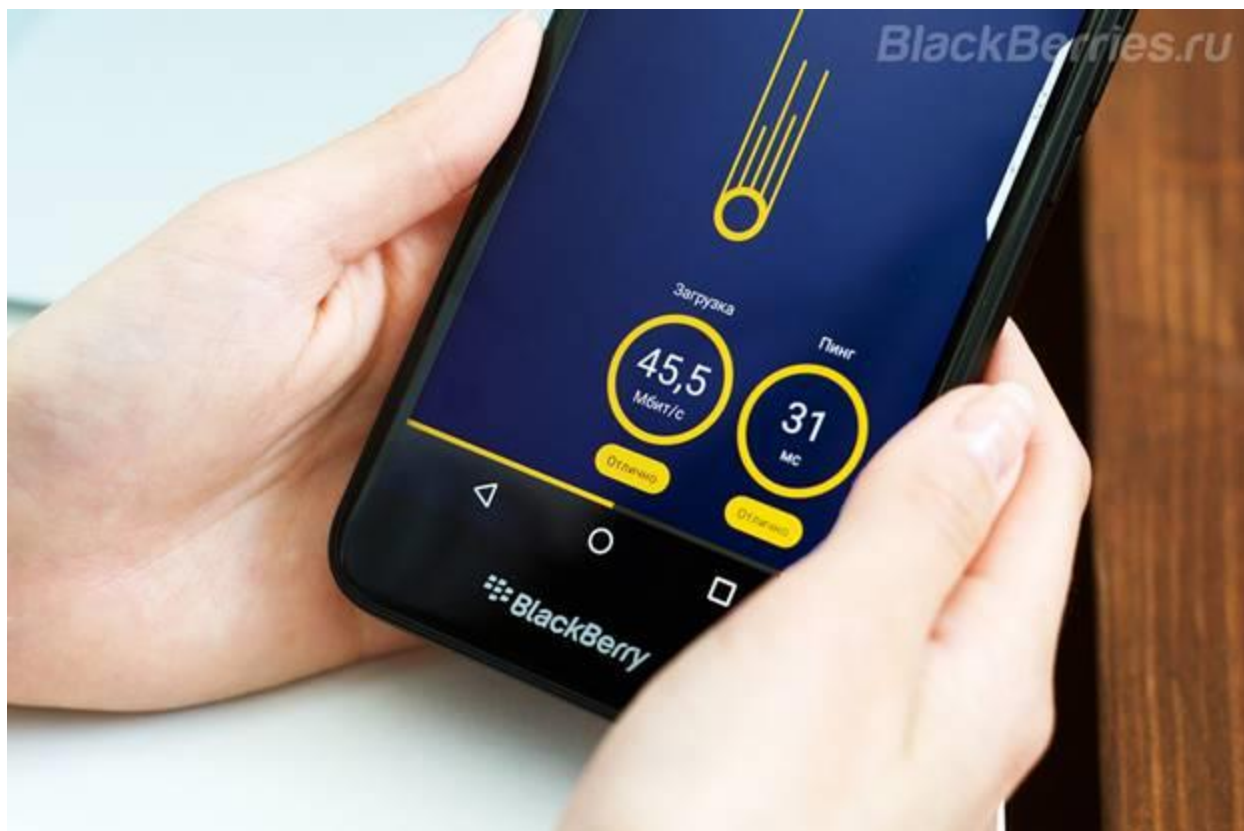
In general, DTEK is great for monitoring, tracking and getting information about the security rating of your device, but it is far from perfect. For example, DTEK is great for finding applications that check your contacts, gain access to a microphone, track your location and much more, but you have to consider that some of these applications do require access to these functions for their work and if you cancel some rights, those applications are simply useless.

BlackBerry Aurora Communication



As written at the beginning, BlackBerry Aurora is the first BlackBerry phone with support for two SIM cards. The Android operating system allows you to configure which of the two SIM cards will be used for data transfer, as well as which for calls and messages. You can set this SIM card selection upon request.

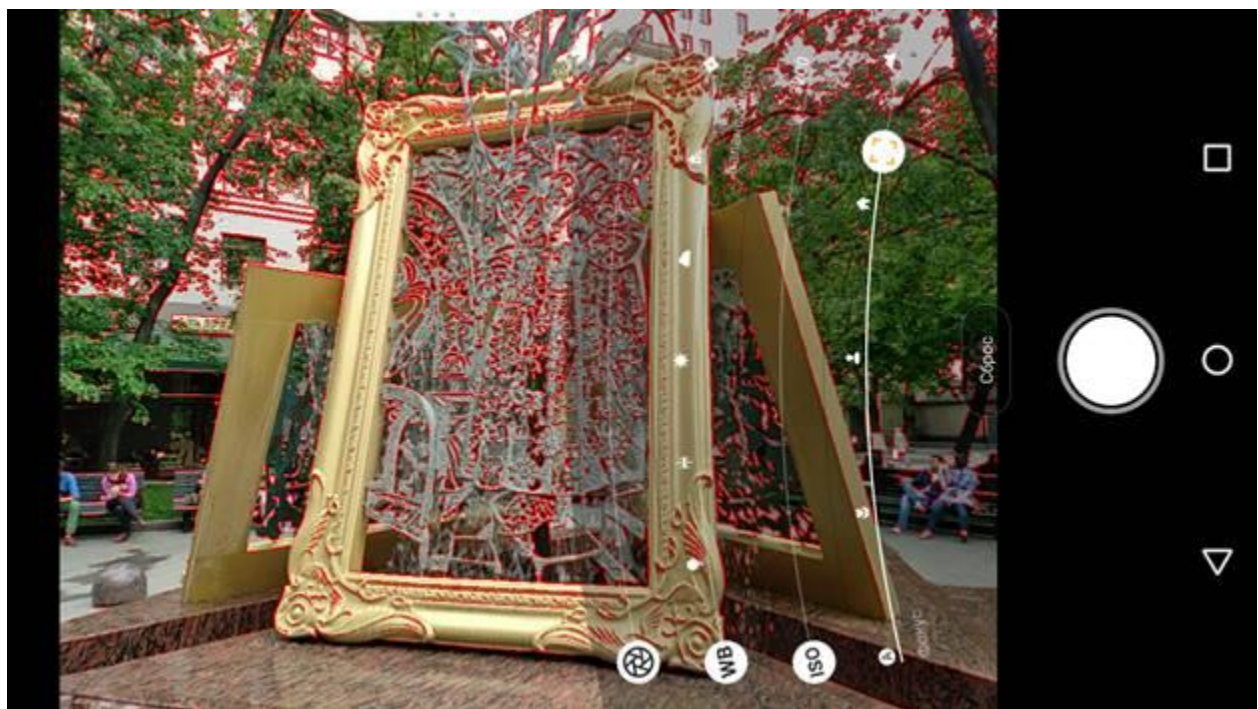
An interesting point is that for the correct operation of two SIM cards, you need to consider the availability of support for 2G networks. For example, for tests we used SIM cards Megaphone and Tele2, and if you installed a SIM card Megaphone as a card for data transfer, then the SIM card Tele2, chosen for calls and messages - lost the network, if on the contrary, both cards worked correctly. Keep this in mind.

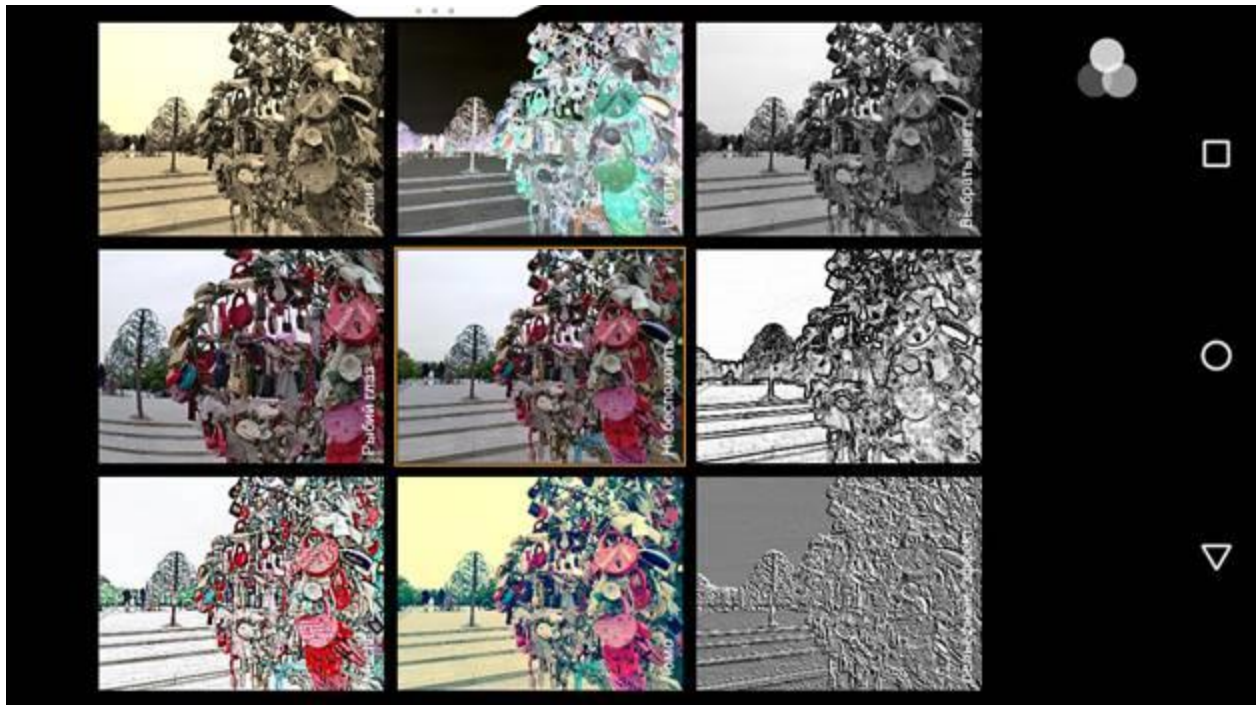


Regarding the quality of communication and data transfer speed in the LTE network, we tested Aurora in comparison with PRIV and KEYone, and found no significant differences in either download speed or signal reception level.

BlackBerry Aurora Camera

Unlike other applications, the camera interface on Aurora is significantly different from other BlackBerry smartphones based on Android. In particular, the manual control mode and, in particular, autofocus, which in the process of focusing highlights the contours of objects on which the camera is focused, is quite interesting.





Other features of the Aurora camera include live filters, time-lapse mode and panorama.





BlackBerry Aurora battery

In test mode, the phone was quite capable of working 24 hours a day. This is a pretty good result and quite consistent with the manufacturer's information.

Summing up

In our opinion, Aurora may be of interest to cater a certain category of buyers outside of Indonesia, primarily as a working device. We agree that high-quality communication, fast LTE, support for two SIM cards, with simultaneous support of a memory card - is already a pretty good reason. Yes, there are many Chinese smartphones based on Android with similar specifications, which are much cheaper, however, few of them can boast a 4GB RAM. The main difference between Aurora and budget Chinese phones is the secure operating system and regular security updates deployed by BlackBerry at the same time as the publication of the list of vulnerabilities from Google, and the fact that Aurora is much faster than the flagship smartphones of many other companies. However, at the time of this article we still do not yet receive information from the manufacturer about the availability of updates.