SSL UC1 and 360 Link £569

SSL's UC1 is now capable of controlling all of your plugins thanks to the company's new (and free) SSL 360 Link plugin. **Andy Jones** asks if it's time for a reappraisal?

CONTACT **WHO:** SSL **WEB:** solidstatelogic.com **KEY FEATURES:** 30 rotaries offer dedicated control over SSL 4K B, Channel Strip 2 and Bus Compressor 2 plugins (included). Now controls any 3rd party plugin via free 360 Link **DIMENSIONS:** (W x H x D): 300 x 61 x 266 mm; **WEIGHT:** 2.1kg

SSL's UC1 controller was released around three years ago, and is a direct knob-per-function interface for controlling the SSL Channel Strip 2, 4K B and Bus Compressor 2 plugins.

The central part of the UC1 controls every dial on the SSL Bus Compressor plugin, while the left and right sides control the EQ plus compressor, limiter and gate parts of the Channel Strip plugins.

It's a neat device and does a cracking job of directly controlling those plugins in your DAW, even allowing you to switch channels to control multiple instances. There's also good feedback on what is being controlled (and how much) on the UC1 hardware itself.

Essentially using UC1 and its plugins gives you the tactility, sound and feel of a large format SSL console, but one plugged into your DAW. What's not to like?

Only one thing, really: that UC1 was initially dedicated to just those SSL plugins. However, the controller has now been opened up to work with all third-party plugins, thanks to SSL's new 360 Link software.

When setting this up, you first need to make sure you have a few plugins in place and updated. This is initially confusing, but installing the latest version of SSL's own software Download Manager is your first step. Then use that to install both SSL 360 and 360 Link (both of which are free). And if you have any other SSL plugins installed such as the original Channel Strip 2 and Bus Compressor 2, now is the time to update them as well. Finally you'll need to update the UC1 firmware via the SSL 360 software, and enjoy the unit's light show as it reboots.

SSL's 360 Link plugin is the focus of this review as it's this that acts as the shell between UC1 and third party plugins. When you first load 360 Link, it has to scan your plugin collection: it initially crashed, perhaps not surprisingly given the size of our plugin collection.

Link then highlights the plugins it has maps for. In our case, these were mostly SSL and Waves plugins, though it has factory mapping for UAD, Brainworx and Slate Digital.

Once you select your compatible plugin, it can then be opened up alongside 360 Link. Sure enough, the hardware UC1 controller does indeed control every parameter, with both the dials in 360 and the plugin moving according to the UC1 dials.

You also get six additional mapping options at the bottom of 360 Link which allow the UC1 to access different sets of parameters if, say, your chosen plugin has a lot more controls under its hood.

A configuration window can be opened so you can see which parameter is mapped to which control, and these can be altered in the User Mapping mode. Most importantly, it's here that you can create new mappings for plugins that aren't already set up.

You can add whatever plugins you like, although you'll be able to achieve a more natural console 'feel' by mapping UC1 to EQs, channel strips, compressors and other mix plugins. That being said, any VST3 effect can be mapped, and it's a very easy process.

360 Link really does bring a lot to the UC1 party and existing UC1 owners will love the new stuff.

As to whether you now need UC1 in your life? You do get three great SSL plugins that almost justify the UC1 price, and the extra control now widens the unit's remit. But if you're just looking for hardware control over your plugins, there are cheaper options out there. **FM**

The tactility of an SSL console, plugged into a DAW

FM VERDICT

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Fantasic for those who like the feel of console mixing and the SSL sound. And it now delivers a lot more control for the cash