



# Softube Console 1

The hardware controller now has a sister with faders and a few hidden tricks. **GEORGE SHILLING** is 'Darth Fader'

Console 1 came out in 2014 as a hardware controller for an accompanying SSL4000 channel strip plug-in, with a clear onscreen display popping up when you adjusted anything. With the associated plug-in plonked on every DAW channel, this introduced a new and efficient way of mixing in the box using a hardware controller. As well as modelling the EQ, dynamics and filters of the SSL, analogue 'drive' was adjustable, along with a flexible Shape section with transient modifying. Softube soon added an alternative SSL9000 strip, and later came Neve, Summit and API channel emulations. A MkII version with minor cosmetic differences was released and with manufacture now shifted to China came a major price reduction. And Softube hooked up with Universal Audio to integrate UAD plug-ins and add a mode for controlling the Apollo Console monitoring software.

Console 1 Fader (C1F) is of similar colour, size and shape to Console 1, being just a few millimetres taller, and unlike Console 1 requiring a PSU for the motorised faders. Both connect via USB so it would have been helpful to be able to daisy-chain them; unfortunately you cannot. But it is similarly solidly built, with a sturdy metal case and a reassuring weight to it. When I reviewed Console 1 in *Resolution* V15.6 I criticised the provision of a rotary rather than linear fader. But instead of updating the unit to include one, we have this new controller with 10 faders.



/ Display showing SSL channel strips

C1F will of course happily integrate with the original unit, and the onscreen overlay now features new views to include the faders, channels strips, or the original channel display. These all display the 20 channels of Console 1 and an — almost invisible — colour strip along the bottom shows which 10-fader page is active.

## Drive — Discrete or Tube

Like the single Volume knob on Console 1, C1F provides level control on the output of the Console 1 plug-in which is intended to be inserted on every channel in your DAW. Default fader mode is of course Volume. However, an extra carrot is the provision of the Drive section, so this is the second fader mode, and variable Character is a third fader mode, which varies between brighter or darker crunch. Two new Drive characters are included: Discrete for a harsher flavour and Tube which is a bit more goeey, and owners of Console 1 also have access to their accompanying console Drive models as options.

Also included here are High and Low-pass filters, cleverly controlled using the faders. Holding the Low Cut button you can move the corresponding channel fader up from the bottom to raise the frequency, or with High Cut pull it downwards from the top — neat. Filters correspond to the Drive type or Strip selected with a gentler slope for the Tube and a steeper roll-off for the Discrete channel setting. I still find it disappointing that you cannot utilise the

filter sections of UAD EQs, e.g. when swapping in the Harrison 32C.

## Feel the Width

The 100mm touch-sensitive Alps faders are smooth, with fast motors. At the bottom of each is a Select button with variable brightness LED, a level meter, and near the top, Mute and Solo buttons; Mute can be fiddly to access as it falls between faders. As with Console 1, a Shift button (bottom right corner) accesses secondary functions, so Mute usefully doubles as Bypass, and Solo becomes Phase toggle. Panning is controlled with a single knob near the bottom right, which also controls Width in Shift mode, with a clever variable frequency bass mono-ing function when narrowing rather than widening.

There are no physical displays or numbers to tell you which fader is which; perhaps a printed-on 1-10 might have been helpful. But the Page scroll buttons have LEDs to indicate other pages of faders available each side. Three assignable buttons default to transport controls, although in practice your computer keyboard spacebar is usually easier to find than a tiny Play button. There are also three Send modes for faders, and if you are lucky enough to use a DAW that supports these then things are even more seamless; the enhanced integration with Studio One, Cubase, Cakewalk and Reaper means you can directly control DAW faders, Pans, Mutes (rather than those in the plug-in) — and now DAW Sends.

However, in Pro Tools, Ableton and Logic you can still usefully enjoy using both Console 1 and Console 1 Fader, which together improves the in-the-box mixing process with a more hands-on approach. I love the mode where touching a C1F fader brings up the relevant Console 1 channel for instant access to EQ etc., and Layer Mode usefully provides VCA-style masters with control of fader groups — not just for level, mute and solo, but also drive and filters. Familiarisation is easy, and you will likely find your mixes coming together more efficiently with this nifty unit. **1**

## resolution/VERDICT

**PROS** Seamlessly expands the hands-on Console 1 experience, bonus Specialization, Drive and Filter capabilities.

**CONS** No mixer support in Ableton, Pro Tools or Logic, poorly placed Mute button

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