

# UAD-1 plug-ins

FutureMusic  
PLATINUM  
AWARD

Jonathan Wilson loads up the first fruits of Universal Audio's alliance with Roland, part of a Classic Series FX bundle...

## DETAILS

### UAD-1 PLUG-INS

**Roland RE-201 Space Echo**

**PRICE:** \$249 (Audio Unit, VST, DX, MAS, RTAS)

**Roland Dimension D**

**PRICE:** \$149 (Audio Unit, VST, DX, MAS, RTAS)

**Boss CE-1**

**PRICE:** \$99 (Audio Unit, VST, DX, MAS, RTAS)

All three are currently available collectively as the Roland Classic Series FX bundle, \$399

#### CONTACT

Universal Audio  
Web: [www.uaudio.com](http://www.uaudio.com)

#### TECH SPEC

System Requirements  
**PC:** Windows 2K/XP, 512MB RAM, VST-compatible host  
**Mac:** OS X 10.2, 512MB RAM, Audio Units or VST-compatible host

**IT'S TRUE: GOOD THINGS** come to those who wait. Nearly 14 months after Universal Audio and Roland announced their software tie-up at the NAMM show in January 2005, the trio of plug-ins promised then has finally been completed. And with the recent release of the much-anticipated Roland RE-201 Space Echo for Universal Audio's UAD-1 PCI card plug-in system, this revered hardware classic joins its fellow Roland legends – the Boss CE-1 chorus and vibrato stompbox, and the Roland Dimension D stereo chorus and spatial effects box. With all three plug-ins available as the Roland Classic Series FX bundle for a very nice price, now is clearly the time to lend an ear.

### Who's the Boss?

It seems odd to describe hardware as 'vintage' when it was introduced in a year I remember from childhood, but 1976 is now a long time ago – 30 years, in fact. Roland's Boss subsidiary chose that famous long, hot summer to introduce the chorus-effect pedal to the music world.

Heard on thousands of recordings since, there's been nothing to touch the warm, analogue sound of the CE-1... until now. Having scoured eBay for some original hardware units, the Universal Audio boffins set to work emulating every aspect of the CE-1's bucket brigade delay (BBD) line. The assignment was to capture

in plug-in form the warm subtleties of the original's analogue signal path, its comparatively short 1.5 to 4 milliseconds of delay and the slight EQ added to the wet signal, all of which help create the CE-1's magic.

### First impressions

One thing they definitely got right is the look. If you check out an original CE-1, this UAD-1 plug-in is a perfect virtual facsimile – the 'metal' bodywork has even been suitably aged. Now that's attention to detail! Same knobs, same dials, same design. If you've ever used a hardware CE-1, you'll be right at home. Saying that, the CE-1 is almost idiot-proof in its simplicity, anyway. It has two modes, Chorus or Vibrato, with one knob for the former and two for the latter. Got all that?

### Up close...

To get it going, you click on the left-hand button to turn on the effect and the right-hand button to select either Chorus or Vibrato. If it's Chorus you're after, you'll want the Chorus Intensity control to adjust the rate and depth of the chorus sound. If you're in the mood for Vibrato, you've got Depth and Rate controls to work with. On the left-hand side is an output-level control, so you can turn your signal up or down. The lights on either side indicate clipping (left) and the rate of chorus intensity or vibrato rate (right).

One new feature in the plug-in version is the Dual and Classic switch

## What next for the UAD-1?

**THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN** Universal Audio and Roland was made public at NAMM in January 2005, with all three products on review here being announced at that time. However, with the Space Echo taking over a year to perfect, it wasn't even released before Universal Audio announced another strategic alliance at NAMM in January 2006. This time, the company had hooked up with AMS Neve Limited and had reached an agreement to develop software emulations of legendary Neve signal processors. The first of these will be the AMS Neve 1073 Equalizer ("the most widely used EQ in popular music," froths the UA website) and for the curious amongst us, a tantalizing screenshot of the GUI is already available. All very mouthwatering, but in the meantime there's been nothing further announced vis-à-vis the Roland alliance. Given Roland's long and varied product history, it would be disappointing if no more plug-ins were planned.

on the far left-hand side. This refers to the plug-in's behaviour when fed a stereo signal – selecting Dual initiates two mono CE-1s, one for the left channel and one for the right, while Classic outputs the dry signal to the left and the wet to the right. It's a subtle difference, but it is different.

### In use

If you want both Chorus and Vibrato on one track, you'll need to open two separate instances and experiment with placing them in series and testing out settings. Helpfully, there's a decent set of presets supplied, most of which feature descriptions such as 'beautiful', 'soft', 'mellow' and 'lush'.

Which is exactly how this plug-in sounds. The Chorus is a lovely effect, sounding superb on acoustic sources such as guitars, electric piano, vocals, even bass. From a subtle hint to a creamy swirl, there was an impressive melding between the original signal and the effect, the two blending perfectly.

The Vibrato meanwhile is not quite tremolo and not quite chorus, but something unique. It doesn't suit every application and is not as universally useful as the Chorus, but it sounds great. You may only use it sparingly, but when you do you'll be tickled that you have it to hand.



(Above) Two CE1s, loaded in series on one track. One is set up for Chorus, one is set up for Vibrato. The results were, um, interesting.

(Right) Two Space Echoes, two CE1s and a Dimension D (plus several LA-2As on several tracks): UAD1 meter at 92 per cent. Uh-oh!



## Overall

When Universal Audio sets its mind to something, the results are invariably stellar. In tackling the CE-1, UA has done Roland's heritage proud – this software version looks and sounds just like the real thing. If you've ever been disappointed by horrible, metallic-sounding chorus plug-ins or digital hardware incarnations, the analogue warmth of the CE-1 will captivate you.

It is also DSP-efficient enough that you can play through it live, meaning you can happily noodle away for hours, revelling in its addictive creamy tones. The fact that as soon as I turned it off I wanted to turn it straight back on again speaks volumes – even at very subtle settings, it adds the kind of magic to your sound that you recognize as being instinctively 'right'.

## Dimension D

Three years after the CE-1 came the SDD-320 – the Roland Dimension D. A stereo chorus rack unit, its real charm lay in the spatial effect it had on any signal run through it, subtly enhancing it and giving it another, er, dimension. Yep, hence the name.

Another bucket-brigade delay line chorus, the Dimension D really is a one-trick pony. There are four variations on a theme (stereo chorus) and that's it. If you're the kind of engineer that likes to indulge in endless tweaking, the Dimension D's control panel probably seems disappointingly spartan. However, if you want subtle spatial enhancement of your recordings without a side order of in-your-face chorus effect, this is the perfect plug-in for the job.

## First impressions

If using the CE-1 was straightforward, the Dimension D takes simplicity to a Fisher Price level. There are five fat coloured buttons that make it work – four Dimension Modes, increasing in intensity from buttons 1 to 4, and an Off button. Guess what that does?

Universal Audio sensibly moved the Stereo/Mono switch from the



(Left) Heavy vibrato and a moderate amount of stereo chorus on an acoustic piano track, using one CE1 and one Dimension D in series.

(Below) Multiple Roland and other UAD-1 plug-ins loaded in Logic and still not quite halfway on the CPU meter. Adding another Space Echo would change that!



back of the unit to the front, there's a Power switch on the far right and an Output level meter before that, but otherwise, there's nothing more than a whole lot of empty space on the Dimension D's front panel.

## Inner space

By default, the plug-in loads with the Stereo Mode on, so you'll need to check this according to your source. In Mono mode, the Dimension D is defiantly monophonic, so even stereo inputs are summed to mono. It's a useful option to have for sonic variation, though, such as when using the plug-in on an auxiliary bus. In fact, this was my preferred use for it, as you can then dial in varying degrees of dimension.

It may only have four buttons, but the Dimension D can also be operated in multi-button mode for subtle combinations of the sounds – hold Shift as you click each one. The supplied presets automatically offer all the possible combinations, so it's worth checking them out.

## In use

After switching the buttons around for a while, you quickly get used to the natural sound of the effect. This also means you notice immediately when it's switched off, as the sound seems to shrink back into itself.

There's a hint of reverb and EQ about the Dimension D's sound and it really suits acoustic sources, like guitars, pianos, woodwind and vocals.

The soundstage becomes a little wider, a little airier at the edges, this effect being more noticeable with mono tracks in Mono mode. One of the nice things about the Dimension D is that it never seems to lard on too much chorus – again, using it as a send effect helps control this.

## Conclusion

The Dimension D doesn't really do all that much and it's hard to get people excited about a plug-in whose main strength is its subtlety. True, sonic mangling is not the Dimension D's forte, but it is a cool tool to have in your arsenal to give lacklustre tracks a subtle lift or give acoustic and vocal recordings extra air and space.

## Roland RE-201 Space Echo

Arguably, no UAD-1 plug-in has been as hotly anticipated as Universal Audio's software implementation of the venerable Roland RE-201 Space Echo. It's an analogue echo device employing multiple tape heads and a spring reverb tank to achieve its fat, warm sound, so it's no surprise that it took over a year for UA to perfect its idiosyncratic and sometimes chaotic nature.

## On screen

As soon as you see the UAD-1 Space Echo, you immediately want to start using it – it looks drop-dead fabulous, the spitting image of its 1973 hardware forefather. Fans of the original range from contemporaries like David Bowie and Pink Floyd, right up to Radiohead and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, via countless dub reggae albums. All will doubtless be relieved to hear that the famous tape

## PCI, PCI-X and PCI-E

**WHILE IT'S UNDISPUTED** that Universal Audio produce some of the finest plug-ins available to man, to even demo them – let alone purchase and use them – you need to have one of the company's UAD-1 PCI cards installed in your computer. Trouble is, the days of PCI cards are numbered – at least for old-style PCI cards. Last year, many manufacturers replaced PCI with PCI-X, providing greater graphic throughput, but at least these cards had the same form factor as standard PCI cards, so older cards (such as the UAD-1) could be swapped out into new machines. Now, many computer companies are switching to PCI-Express, a card physically half the size of PCI or PCI-X and so totally incompatible with older PCI cards. TC Electronic, Universal Audio's main rival in the powered plug-in market, recently announced its first PCI-E card for PowerCore (the company also already has a FireWire version), so UAD-1 owners are understandably watching and waiting with keen interest for Universal Audio to make a similar announcement.

## ALTERNATIVES



### PSP 608 Multi Delay \$149

Those Polish PSP dudes make some great plug-ins and the 608 is another classic. Each tap has selectable feedback, stereo image and position, delay time, multimode filter, modulation, tape saturation and reverb. That's a whole lotta tap action going on. [www.pspaudioware.com](http://www.pspaudioware.com)



### TC PowerCore Chorus Delay £750

Part of the bundled plug-ins that ship with any PowerCore product, this baby is partial to a little spatial expansion alongside its modulation features, such as chorus, flanging and slap delay. Routing and filtering flexibility, too, plus BPM tweaking of mod speed. Nice. [www.tcelectronic.com](http://www.tcelectronic.com)



### Analogflux Suite \$80

A comprehensive suite consisting of TapeBus, Delay, Impulse, Insert and Chorus plug-ins, with a convolution processor thrown in for good measure. Also features A/B comparisons, mono and stereo processing, 64-bit internal precision and a cheerfully low, low price. [www.voxengo.com](http://www.voxengo.com)

(Right) The Roland RE-201 Space Echo in all its glory. Check out the battered corners – even the vintage leatherette is authentic. (Below) Following a Space Echo with a Dimension D can help open up the sound further – here, an electric guitar is getting the full Roland treatment. (Bottom) Things are getting Dark and Hairy with a Space Echo. The other 30 presets are no more sensibly named. Roger, Houston!



distortion, wow and flutter, pitch shifting, warmth and self-oscillation has been perfectly captured – it's all there if you want it.

### Space man

At first glance it looks complicated – all that knob-laden Ying to the Dimension D's minimalist Yang – but the Space Echo's interface is sensibly laid out. On the left side is the Peak Level indicator and VU meter, plus the Reverb Pan, Echo Pan and Input Volume controls. The latter determines the level of distortion introduced – this is nice tape saturation, of course, not horrible digital clipping. Below the Volume is the Echo/Normal trigger switch.

In the centre is the Mode Selector dial with 12 settings divided amongst Repeat (four options), Reverb Echo (seven) and Reverb Only (one) functions: the different modes utilise different tape playback heads. Below this is the Temp Sync switch to lock the echoes to your track and to the right of this switch are the Head 1, 2 and 3 settings, which display either as milliseconds or BPM depending on the Sync setting.

On the right of the interface are the Bass and Treble controls for the

low and high-frequency response in the tape echo portion of the signal, with Reverb Volume and Output Volume alongside. Below are the insanity-inducing Repeat Rate (to manipulate the speed of the tape capstan motor), Intensity and Echo Volume dials. Below these are the Tape Age slider, Splice switch and Wet Solo switch. Oh yes, there's a lot you can do with a Space Echo.

### Lift off!

After playing with this plug-in, testing the presets and running all kinds of material through it, it's easy to see why there's still so much love for a 30-year-old product – the Space Echo is superb. You can treat it like an instrument in the mix, rolling the Repeat Rate and Intensity dials up and down, flicking the Splice switch, panning the Echo and cranking up the authentic spring reverb to create some dazzling, out-there sounds.

You can also use it as a more subtle echo or reverb effect to add a flash of brilliance to a recording... but most of us will make like King Tubby and head straight for the madness. The self-oscillation is wonderful (it can even self-oscillate from silence) and the overall sound is warm and

true. Emulating analogue tape is the ultimate test, but UA's algorithms sound spot-on to me.

### Coming in to land...

If Logic's Tape Delay (or equivalent) is a favourite of yours, the Space Echo will blow your mind. It will also blow your UAD-1's CPU meter if you drop more than three on to a track, so sit a couple on auxiliary busses and dial in as much Space Echo as you need from each track's Send knob.

Individually, it is more expensive than the other Roland plug-ins, but as part of the Classic Series FX bundle the price is more reasonable. It's an incredibly versatile plug-in that responds differently according to the source material used, whether single or multiple tape heads are in use, the 'age' of the tape running through it and the settings of the various controls. It'll be a long time before I run out of uses for my Space Echo.

### So then...

The star of the Roland Classic Series FX bundle is the Space Echo. It's a fantastic product, both as a static bus effect and as a creative instrument during mixdown. Its inclusion in the FX bundle with the favourable pricing should also help UA shift a few more CE-1s and Dimension Ds as a result.

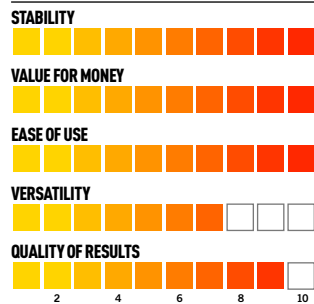
However, both chorus plug-ins are also excellent products in their own right. They are more specific in their operation – multi-tasking is not really their strong point – but if it's chorus and spatial enhancement you're after, you won't find many better alternatives. As ever, Universal Audio has delivered on its promises – even if it did take over a year! **FM**

### ON THE DVD



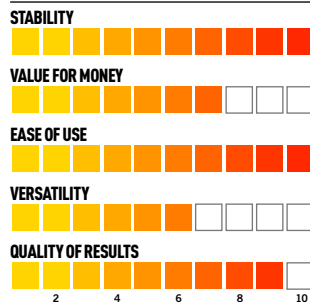
Various solo'ed instruments – including acoustic guitar, bass guitar, electric piano, acoustic piano, electric guitar and percussion – with the CE-1, Dimension D and Space Echo applied to each of them in turn.

### VERDICT BOSS CE-1



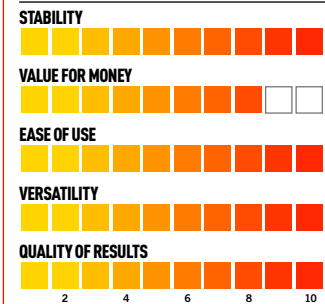
Yes, it's only a chorus pedal, but it's probably the greatest chorus pedal in the world.

### VERDICT DIMENSION D



In a mix, little things make a big difference – the Dimension D offers something special.

### VERDICT SPACE ECHO



Possibly the most fun plug-in ever. Hats off to the white-coated geni in the UA labs!