

# Neve Classic Console Bundle for UAD-1 | \$599

Universal Audio have turned their attention to some top-notch Neve outboard. **Bruce Aisher** wonders whether he can find sonic nirvana

## WHAT IS IT?

A suite of plug-ins for UAD-1 modelled on classic designs from AMS-Neve

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Individual, realistic and addictive sound.
- 2 Modelling real hardware.
- 3 'SE' versions use less CPU, but maintain a firm sonic character.

**U**niversal Audio have a long and illustrious history. Besides their many other achievements, Bill Putnam

Sr, the company's founder, designed a studio classic in the shape of the 1176LN compressor and it's still in production 40 years later. The 1176 was one of the first units modelled for the UAD-1 DSP card.

The Neve Classic Console Bundle is the latest instalment and has been made with AMS-Neve's full co-operation. The bundle comprises three vintage Neve emulations the first being the Neve 1073 Equalizer, which

has adopted legendary status within the pro-audio community since it first saw the light of day back in 1970. It adds a positive sheen to anything that passes through it – the general consensus being that it's very hard to make it sound bad.

## The holy trinity

The 1073 itself was designed as an input module for the Neve consoles of that era, and was first used in the 8014 desk. Since then it's been common practice to place the modules in pairs and put them in a 1u rack case – an easy way to get that

Neve sound without having to buy a whole desk.

The UAD 1073 EQ plug-in looks almost the same as its hardware equivalent, with four rotary EQ controls, an input gain control and two switches for EQ bypass and phase reversal. The input gain can be swept from -20dB to +10dB and, when switched to 'Off', acts as the plug-in bypass. Next there's a high shelf EQ with +/- 18dB of gain fixed at 12kHz. This is where the famous Neve sheen can be dialled-in.

The semi-parametric mid-range EQ has dual-concentric knobs for gain (+/- 18dB) and frequency selection (six fixed bands between 360Hz and 7.2kHz plus the Off position). The low-band shelving EQ has a similar control system, but with four frequencies from 35Hz to 220Hz, once again with +/- 18dB on hand.

This is all rounded off with an 18dB/octave low-cut filter with four selectable frequencies from 50Hz up to 160Hz. It's worth noting that, just like the real thing, if any of the four EQ knobs are set to 'Off' (or the EQL switch is engaged) the plug-in will colour the sound slightly.

## This one goes up to 81

The 1081 channel module is the younger sibling of the 1073, providing the mic/line and EQ sections in later Series 80 consoles. The most immediate visual difference between





The 1081 (above) and 1081SE (below) are useful for the more precise sonic surgery on your recordings

**SPECS**

**Mac:** OS X Version 10.4 and VST or AU compatible host

**PC:** Windows 2000, XP or Vista and VST-compatible host.

Requires 256 MB RAM and 100MB free hard disk space.

the 1073 and 1081 is the expanded feature set. There's an additional semi-parametric band, and there are now ten frequencies to choose from in both middle bands. They've also been joined by a Q selector (high and low) for extra flexibility.

Both the low- and high-shelving bands have five selectable frequencies alongside a switch to change the 'shelf' into a 'bell' curve. There's also now a high-cut filter as well as the low-cut. These remain at 18dB/octave, but now have five frequency settings each. Besides the functional additions, there's actually quite a bit that's different between the 1073 and

1081. After all, one person's '12kHz sheen' is another's 'treble harshness'. There is, however, a marked family resemblance as you'd expect.

**Dynamic daddy**

The final instalment comes in the shape of the 33609 Buss Compressor. This started life as the 2252 Mono Buss Compressor module in 1968.

Like its partner EQ modules, the original 33609 compressor is valued for its non-linearities. To you and me this means sonic 'warmth' and 'character', but can a plug-in conjure up the same magic?

The Neve 33609 is a dual-channel

unit with stereo and dual-mono modes. The front panel has the same 'back-to-front' logic as the 1073/81, placing a limiter on the left, the compressor in the middle and output and metering on the right. In terms of signal flow, the input passes into the compressor followed by the limiter and on to the output. All controls are stepped as on the original.

The compressor has a conventional threshold control and the ratio knob allows selection of five values between 1.5:1 and 6:1. Between these sits the 'recovery' selector (release). There are four fixed values and two program-dependent options. Finally, the gain control brings the compressed signal back up to a healthy level.

The limiter has similar threshold and recovery controls to the compressor, but with a different palette of release times. There's a switch to choose between fast and slow attack times.

Next to the output gain control and gain reduction meters are switches for stereo linking of the controls, and switching between mono and stereo modes. In stereo mode, each channel will compress by the same amount to stop spurious image shifts.

You can have quite a bit of fun in 'stereo unlinked' mode by selecting different ratios and thresholds for each channel and creating 'double-knee' compression. For some this may be a step too far in the 'nerd' direction, though.

**Into the red**

The last, and somewhat unassuming, control is the headroom switch. The three settings allow the user to push the plug-in emulation 'into the red' internally. This won't alter the output level itself, but merely changes the internal operating level so that gain

**Universal Audio and the UAD-1 DSP card**

First introduced in 2001, the UAD-1 card has lasted extremely well. Since releasing the PCI version, UA has introduced both PCI Express and

ExpressCard versions. All three are based around the same DSP chip (which were originally designed for graphics applications), and each is available in

three different 'PAKs'. The difference, besides price, is in the number of plug-ins included as standard. Some options also include a pre-paid voucher for use in the online shop.

UA, unlike the rival TC Powercore platform, have mainly focused on modelling real 'vintage' equipment. Many of these plug-ins are released under license from the original manufacturer.

The range includes models from Boss, Neve, Fairchild, Pultec, EMT, Helios, Teletronix and Universal Audio itself amongst others.

Each new plug-in comes with a 14-day full demo version. So, once lured in, purchase is just a matter of paying at the UA online store and downloading a short registry file. In fact, it's a bit too easy...!



reduction doesn't happen quite as easily. At higher settings, though, you'll find you get that kind of tasty non-linear colouration which gives the unit its warmth.

**Neve nirvana?**

I've had the good fortune to use the hardware version of all three units and have managed to set up a head-to-head comparison with the UA plug-ins. I was incredibly impressed, although I don't think anyone with regular access to the real thing would think about dumping them for the DSP versions.

But in blind tests, with a number of listeners, the general view seemed to be that the hardware and software sounded 'different' rather than any

**“They won't solve your extreme audio problems, but they'll certainly add sophistication to any mix”**


one being clearly 'better' – quite an accolade. Tests like this can be problematic though, due to differences in the A/D and D/A stages on modern digital gear. It should also be noted that the original hardware units also include top-notch mic preamps or line matching transformers as well.

In the more realistic confines of a computer-only mix I found the plug-ins extremely characterful and enjoyable to use. Some EQs just make sense. The 1071 is great for general sonic shaping and the 1081 can really dig into those problem areas.

For vocals I found that a 1081 and 1176 compressor on a group buss was all I needed to get a great tone.

**Rupert Neve – studio electronics guru**

Rupert Neve is a legend amongst studio pros the world over. Some of the best albums have been recorded on Neve-designed consoles, and his outboard modules (like those modelled by UA) have attained mythical status. After serving in the Royal Signals during WWII, Rupert began building PA systems and radios. In the 1950s he turned his attention to amplifiers through his new company CQ Audio. In the early '60s Neve was commissioned to build his first mixing desk for Desmond Lesley, a composer of experimental Musique Concrète. Later, using much newer transistor technology, he built a console for Philips Records and the Neve Company was born. Over the next ten years Neve produced a long line of beautiful-sounding consoles including the 80 Series. He went on to found Focusrite and has consulted for Amek and Taylor Guitars besides many others. Today, Neve is in his 80s and is still designing great-sounding kit.



Just add some plate reverb or tape delay for that vintage sound.

The 33609 can be enjoyably quirky at times, but in the right context sounds fantastic. As a full mix compressor it did something wonderful to my tracks and can 'pump' in the nicest of ways.

I'd quite happily use these plug-ins for most of my EQ and master compression needs if they weren't so resource hungry (the 33609 uses 70 per cent of one UAD-1 card's resources at 44.1 kHz!).

Luckily Universal Audio provide SE versions of these plug-ins, and they come very close to the 'full power' version in terms of sonics. If you need some 'character' stamped on your

sound then you should definitely give these plug-ins a try.

Okay, so they aren't at all clinical and they won't solve your

more extreme audio problems, but they'll most certainly add a bit of sophistication to any mix. And I'm not giving them back! **FM**

**FutureMusic VERDICT**

**BUILD** [Progress bar: 10/10]

**VALUE** [Progress bar: 8/10]

**EASE OF USE** [Progress bar: 7/10]

**VERSATILITY** [Progress bar: 9/10]

**RESULTS** [Progress bar: 10/10]

**UA have taken revered hardware and modelled it to perfection to produce a killer bundle.**



These software versions of the classic 1073 (above) and 1073SE (below) series give you classic hardware sound on your desktop

**ALTERNATIVES**



**Focusrite Liquid Mix £500**

Very highly regarded FireWire-based system from Focusrite. As the package includes a well-designed controller, tweaking is very much a hands-on affair. It currently specialises in EQ and compression only, but it comes with a comprehensive and ever-expanding library of emulations.

[focusrite.com](http://focusrite.com)



**URS Native Bundles From \$449**

URS produce a range of plug-ins in TDM and native formats. They aim to emulate the sound of classic API, Neve, SSL and Pultec kit. With the native versions, they have gained a reputation for good-sounding software with relatively low CPU requirements.

[ursplugins.com](http://ursplugins.com)



**AMS Neve Over £10,000**

The real thing. Two 1081 and two 1073 EQ modules plus a 33609 – which will be enough for two simultaneous channels of that Neve sound. There's nothing quite like the real deal, but you'll need a top-notch audio interface and decent monitoring to do them justice. But, like great works of art, they might just prove to be a good investment.

[ams-neve.com](http://ams-neve.com)