

**UK-based Producer /Engineer Ben Hillier Integrates Solid State Logic's UF8 Controller into his DAW-based Hybrid Workflow**

 *Hillier, a longtime producer of Depeche Mode, Elbow, Blur and others,
appreciates getting his hands on SSL faders again*

**Sussex, England, July 18, 2024 — Like many engineers and producers who came up in the record business using large format mixing consoles, Ben Hillier prefers to have his hands on hardware faders when he works. Hillier has favoured a hybrid music production workflow for years, combining analogue processing with recording software to track and mix, but it was only recently, when he adopted the Solid State Logic UF8, that he finally found a DAW controller that suits his work style.**

Hillier, whose extensive credit list, dating back 30 years, includes projects with Depeche Mode, Blur, Elbow, Doves, Nadine Shah and many, many others, had tried various controllers in the past, but always found them lacking. “It’s a fundamental thing — it's quite nice to turn one channel up while you’re turning another one down,” he says. “And riding a balance on a few things is very handy, I find.”

**A shared past with SSL**

He spent the late 1990s and early 2000s in studios with SSL 4000 E/G Series desks, he says. “If you've come from large format mixing, as I have, you don't realize how much you miss them. They were great; they were so fast and intuitive.” The eight-fader UF8 is proving to be a good substitute for those vintage mixing desks. “The more I use it, the more I learn about it and the less I have to think about it,” he says. “It's become part of the studio furniture, and that's what you want - you switch it on, and it just works.”

Hillier used to be based at The Pool, a studio that he opened in southeast London in 2006 that became so successful commercially that he had to move out and find another mix room for himself. More recently he moved to the Brighton area, on England’s south coast, where he established Agricultural Audio Studio. “It’s on a working farm, literally in the middle of a field, two miles from the nearest cappuccino. It started off as my mix room, then a friend -producer Ben Hanson - and I built two control rooms out of straw bales, which is the best material to build studios out of. I've never worked in a room that's got such a true sound. When another unit became available, we also built a live room.”

**Tactile functionality - in full view**

“It's also good for fundamental, simple things," he adds. "You can program the buttons across the top to be control keys — play, stop and so on. That sounds like a really basic thing, but if you've got a plug-in window open and you want to just stop, start and go back to where you were, then you can do that without having to shut the plug-in window. You think that’s not going to make that much difference, but it really does.”

Hillier, who is a songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and an artist in his own right, was a very early adopter of Pro Tools but has been mixing with Reaper for about 15 years. “It’s a fantastic piece of software. I started using it because I was getting more and more fed up with latency issues on Pro Tools,” he says. “I use Ableton quite a bit as well. If I'm writing I tend to use Ableton, because it's fast and it's more fun. It almost feels like it's got some sort of input, like working with someone. The UF8 works fine with that as well. We sometimes use Reaper and Ableton together and the control surface will follow between the two different DAWs. It’s especially handy if you're working on one DAW and you want to have the faders controlling the other DAW.”

Agricultural Audio is also the name of Hillier’s independent record label, which launched in early 2023 in partnership with music distributor The Orchard. “I've got my own project on the label, which is called Storm Franklin, with Juanita Stein. I bought the UF8 to help me mix that. We've just released the new Nadine Shah album, Filthy Underneath, and I used it on all of that as well. I've also been mixing a guy called Sam Akpro, a new artist who is doing quite well in Britain. I thought people wouldn't want to trek down to the middle of nowhere and work in the middle of a field, but they absolutely love it. Loads of bands come down and work with us, so it's a busy studio.”

**More real estate with UF8**

Now that he has been using the UF8 for a while, he says, “It would be great to have the space to have a bunch of them, but the way that many studios are now, you don't tend to have that much room. But I think I may get another one, because I’m going to need to set up my home studio again. I think it would work even better with my laptop. It basically gives you more real estate and can see more and access more. It slots into the middle of the digital/analogue setup nicely and works really well.”

Hillier is enjoying having his hands on SSL faders again, he says: “I've had contact with SSL throughout my whole career, so I'm quite happy to be using it again. It's always nice to have a bit of SSL gear around.”

*Solid State Logic is the world’s leading manufacturer of analogue and digital audio consoles and provider of creative tools for music, broadcast, live and post production professionals. For more information about our award-winning products, please visit:* [www.solidstatelogic.com](http://www.solidstatelogic.com)*.*

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