

**Los Angeles-based Sound Designer, Composer and Scoring Mixer Michael Badal Fortifies His Studio with Solid State Logic ‘Hybrid’ Set-up**

*Known for his work on Hollywood films such as The Equalizer and with DJ Tiesto and Timbaland, Badal brings the sound of SSL into his studio with SSL hybrid production setup: Fusion and G-Comp processors, coupled with UF8, UF1, UC1 hardware, and SSL Plug-ins*

**Los Angeles, California, September 26, 2024 — Inspired while growing up in Los Angeles by an extended family that performed and appreciated music, Michael Badal dreamed of one day owning a Solid State Logic mixing console. A few decades later, now based in the Los Angeles area and working in both music and audio post-production, he has set up a personal studio. It features SSL's UF8, UF1, and UC1 hardware controllers, 360° software, as well as SSL outboard processing and summing hardware**

“From a very, very young age, I was always fascinated by recorded music, and photos of those gorgeous SL 4000 consoles,” Badal recalls. “Growing up in the digital age, I was always trying to make my music sound like the records that I grew up on, always trying to find that last 10% that I just couldn't seem to find.” He tried equipment from other brands, he says, “I wasn't getting the sound that I wanted, but after lots of listening and experimenting, I realised it’s the SSL sound I wanted - it’s always been the SSL sound.”

**Evolution of a brand affinity**

The first SSL piece he bought was a 500 Series G-Comp module. “The next thing was the Fusion, and I started adding that SSL ‘Vintage Drive’ saturation flavour to my mixes," he says. As soon as SSL released the UF8 eight-fader advanced DAW controller, UC1 plug-in controller and UF1 DAW control center, “I made the jump and started building my mixes from SSL plug-ins, using either the 9000 series-based Channel Strip 2 or the 4K B — those are my two go-to plug-ins because they have such a contrast sonically — then bringing in analogue processing on inserts.”

Badal got a very early start in the business. While still in his teens, his dance music tracks caught the ear of DJ Tiësto, and in next to no time Badal was releasing EDM tracks under his own name while also mixing and remixing tracks by the likes of deadmau5, Kaskade and Timbaland. After graduating from film school at Cal State Northridge, he simultaneously fell into the world of audio post production, working on projects with major brands at 740 Sound Design. He went on to co-found Digital Love, a music, sonic branding and audio post company, where he works as a composer, sound designer and scoring mixer for film, television and commercials.

**Trusting his ears first**

He may be a digital native, but Badal, still in his mid-30s, is old school when it comes to mixing, relying on his ears, not his eyes. “Frankly, my mixes have gotten better because of SSL 360°. I don't have any other software open. I don't have my plug-in’s open. I listen to the mix, looking at the SSL 360, UC1 and EQing as I go, just using my ears,” he reports, rather than be influenced by the look of an EQ curve on the screen. “It also makes it faster, just dialing the channel knobs and going from one channel to the next, doing everything with my hands, as opposed to with a trackball or a mouse.” He also takes advantage of the 360° Link facility to map third-party plug-ins to his SSL control platform, he says.

Mixing hands-on and using his ears goes back to when he started in the industry, he says. “I am a Millennial, but I grew up on faders and knobs when analogue was still the thing.” With the eight-fader UF8, he says, instead of thinking he should dial in the kick drum at -10 dB, for example, “It’s more about how it sounds. It’s the same with panning, using the encoders at the top of the UF8.”

The UF1 DAW control center also helps streamline and speed up Badal’s workflow, just like a console center section should. "What has been really helpful with the UF1 is the jog wheel, which I use for scrubbing or finding the point just before a transient where I need to cut, as opposed to zooming in and out with a trackball.”

**Building an SSL-centric workflow**

Badal has collaborated on various independent short film projects as a composer, but currently his focus is on working with four-time Emmy-nominated scoring composer Robert Duncan, whose credits include TV series Castle and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. “We just finished season four of The Equalizer and now we're knee-deep in The Night Agent,” Badal reveals.

Duncan has developed a workflow that significantly streamlines their collaboration and is built on SSL plug-ins, Badal explains. “He has Dropbox syncing but working straight out of his Logic template, as opposed to bouncing out stems, bringing it into Pro Tools, doing the mix then sending it back to him. I must give him credit, it's been fantastic.”

He elaborates, “He’ll print his composer stems within his Logic session and by then Dropbox has already synced it to me. I open the Logic session and, since we made an approved plug-in list with each other, we can open each other’s sessions, with SSL Channel Strip 2 on all the channels. We're not using any outboard gear on this project because of that, so we opted for the Fusion series and Bus Compressor 2 plug-in on the master,” enabling him to introduce all the character and colours of the outboard units to his mix even though he and Duncan are working only in the computer.

The in-the-box remote workflow is working well, he says. “It's fantastic, because now I can go on the road and work. I bought a second UC1, so I don’t have to deal with trackpad mixing. That goes in my backpack with a portable interface. I take my Focal speakers and a portable screen, and I can literally mix from anywhere.”

Currently, working with Duncan occupies about half his time, Badal shares. The other half is dedicated to L.A.-based dance music artist Miramar. “I'm producing and writing. We collaborate on 100% of his output, so I'm helping with the writing process, producing, mixing and mastering. I've been very blessed with the opportunities that have come over the last couple of decades. And I'm still in my mid-30s, so I feel like I still have more to do.” His SSL hybrid setup is working just fine, says Badal, but he has not forgotten his childhood ambition: “I still have that dream to get a 48-channel Duality someday.”

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