



SSL XLogic Alpha Channel | £999

SSL extends its XLogic range with something more affordable. *Jon Musgrave* powers up...



WHAT IS IT?

Mic pre/EQ with digital output

CONTACT

Who: Sound Technology
Tel: +44 (0)1462 480000
Web: solid-state-logic.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Relatively good value
- 2 SSL sound
- 3 Stylish and sturdy

Once upon a time, getting top console-grade channels in outboard form (and hence mobile and

compact) often involved literally racking up one-time console modules with dedicated power supplies. But in recent times most top companies have wised up to the advantages of selling purpose-built rack units.

A while ago I was lucky enough to size up both the E-Signature and Super Analogue Channels from SSL. With those units retailing for well over a couple of grand each, it's no surprise that plenty of people would have been put off.

At just under a grand their latest box, the Alpha Channel, is a considerably different proposition. It's still a lot of money, but unquestionably makes the SSL sound available to a much wider audience.

Self contained

It's astonishing to think that in these days of digital recording, many mic-pres don't come fitted with an A/D converter card as standard.

This is certainly the case for the aforementioned (and more expensive) XLogic channels (and plenty of other manufacturers as well).

Whatever the arguments are for each approach, it's great to see that with the Alpha Channel they've opted for the all-inclusive one. Not only that,

but they've also made use of both sides of the converter at the output stage (see the box below for details). So what else is new here?

First off, the mic stage incorporates the VHD (variable harmonic distortion)

idea we saw on the E-Signature Channel. This offers a drive control that shifts from second harmonic distortion to third. Used in combination with the mic gain (more gain drives the VHD circuit harder), it gives you tone shaping right at the input stage.

Next up we've got an EQ design effectively lifted from the stereo channel on a G Series desk. Slightly simpler than the four-band standard G EQ, this Alpha Channel version has low and high shelving with a fully parametric mid band.

Frequency ranges are typically broad (up to 22kHz on the high shelf), and in keeping with the 'black knob' LF EQ there's also a bell shape option. The high-pass filter is a simple design, but with three frequency settings (40, 80 and 120Hz) it's pretty flexible. SSL EQ is renowned for being pretty

S/PDIF routing

The Alpha Channel has an extra variable in the form of two converter channels (left and right) at the output.

In use, this results in four signal patterns controlled by the 'post EQ' button. With the

insert and post EQ both switched out, the left channel gets all the processing (filter and EQ). The right channel gets filter only.

Switch in the 'post EQ' button and both left and right get the same full

processing. Now switch the insert in and you get two further options by plugging into the insert return. With 'post EQ' switched out the insert return feeds the EQ then the left channel, with the main input going via the filter to the right channel.

Switch to post EQ and the insert return feeds straight to the left channel with the main input getting all processing (and feeding the right channel). Got that?!



