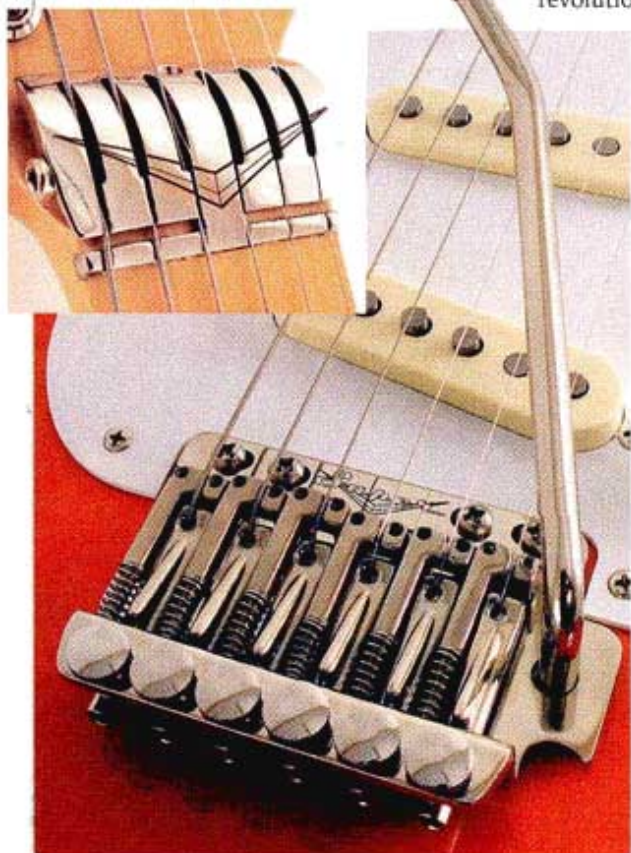


SuperVee Tremolo BY MATT BLACKETT

The SuperVee's cool nut/string clamp (top) evokes classic American auto grilles. The bridge allows for height and intonation adjustment.



THE GUITAR COMMUNITY'S "BUILD A BETTER mousetrap" award for the last 25 years would probably have to go to Floyd Rose, who got so fed up with his whammy system going out of tune that he took the tremolo law into his own hands. By clamping the strings at the two spots responsible for tuning problems—the nut and the bridge—Mr. Rose gave us all a system that would stay in tune through weeks of divebombs, motorcycle noises, and harmonic screeches. Joining the Floyd Rose revolution required a pretty invasive

mod to your favorite guitar, however, and that was enough to scare plenty of people away.

Enter the SuperVee Tremolo (\$249 retail/street price N/A)—a sleek, well-made whammy system for Stratocasters that one-ups Floyd with a bunch of user-friendly and musical features. First and foremost, the SuperVee requires *no* modification of your guitar. Although our test system came already installed on a Fender USA Strat, the excellent manual makes installation clear and easy. Take your old whammy off, put the SuperVee in its place, gently work the nut free, glue in the ingenious nut/string clamp, and that's pretty much it.

Cosmetically, the bridge isn't much bigger or clunkier than a stock Fender system. The most obvious visual difference is the nut/string clamp. Some players might be put off to see a big hunk of metal on the headstock, but it provides a very functional way of clamping strings, and the extra mass it adds to the headstock might just provide better sustain.

Operationally, string changes will take you about as long as with a Floyd. You feed the

string end (with the ball clipped off) into the hole on the top of the saddle, and tighten the Allen bolt. Then, put the other end into the tuning machine, and bring it up to pitch—which drags the string into the channel on the clamp. Tightening the Allen bolt on the bass side clamps the three lowest strings, and the treble-side bolt clamps the remaining three. Another bonus is that the SuperVee clamps the strings side to side, not from the top down, so the pitch doesn't budge during lockdown. The fine tuners are smooth, and they have plenty of range. Cooler still—and a big upgrade over a Floyd—is the fact that each saddle is adjustable for intonation and height. (Floyds only allow intonation adjustment, and accomplishing it is a slight hassle.)

The SuperVee exudes quality through and through. It feels smooth and solid, and it can be adjusted to fit any style. I tweaked the test instrument for a floating system with about a minor third of up-trem on the G string, which left enough downward range to slacken the strings just about all the way. There's an adjustment bushing to regulate the tension on the arm, which I set so the bar stays loosely tight in any position. This made it a breeze to instantly grab the bar for even just a couple of notes. In the words of whammy master Jeff Beck, this is great for "Bulgarian tremolos and bird noises, all in mid-flight."

A huge part of why the SuperVee feels so smooth is its awesome, frictionless blade technology for pivoting. Rather than the more common knife-edge system that most whammys use, the SuperVee goes up and down by bending a piece of spring steel in the bridge assembly. The idea is to eliminate any metal-to-metal rubbing and create a system that won't ever wear out. I don't have a crystal ball, but this guitar has returned to pitch every single time over days of serious abuse in the style of Van Halen, Vai, Gillis, and Beck. Try as I might, I could not get it to go out of tune.

The SuperVee folks have done a fine job with this product. Any whammy aficionado who doesn't mind a slightly different look to their Strat will probably find the SuperVee to be the most elegant and functional replacement system on the market. ■

SUPERVEE TREMOLO

KUDOS Easy installation. Smart features. Slick cosmetics. Great tuning stability.

CONCERNS Changes the look of a stock Strat.

CONTACT (877) TREMOLO; super-vee.com