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## Super-Vee Double-Locking Strat Vibrato System Review

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May 20, 2009

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Leo Fender did a lot of things right, and the Strat vibrato is one of them. However, when he designed that vibrato back in the early '50s, he couldn't have anticipated some of the ways that players would abuse it. Over time, many have tried to update the design to create one that would allow aggressive creative use without throwing the guitar out of tune. In that spirit the Super-Vee has tackled the age-old problem of creating an elegant and functional device that stays in tune and doesn't require modifications.

### What It Is

The Super-Vee consists of two main parts: locking nut and bridge assembly. The nut is designed to drop in place with a single drop of glue into the nut slot of the guitar. While this does involve removing the original nut from the guitar, that's the only modification you'll need to do. It is made of nickel-plated stainless steel and is reminiscent of the design of classic '50s cars with the stylishly engraved "V." While most locking nuts clamp down from the top, the Super-Vee clamps strings from the sides and doesn't push them sharp when locked. To me this is worth the price alone, as it's always a pain having to go back to the fine tuners to compensate for the raised pitch when locking up the nut. The nut is also designed to work on either a 7.25" or 9.5" neck radius (12" and custom radii can also be ordered), so there is no worry of having funky string heights when switching over from the stock nut.

### Download Example 1

Gentle use of vibrato for subtle effect

### Download Example 2

Beating up the Super-Vee to try to take it out of tune. No dice!

### Download Example 3

Various whammy FX and dive bombs on chords

All clips recorded with a Fender MIM Strat, Allverb on Allaire room reverb, Digidesign Eleven and T-Racks 3 Mastering Suite.

Amps: Ex. 1 - Blackface Clean w/2x12, Ex. 2 - Marshall JCM 800 w/4x12, Ex. 3 - Dual Rectifier w/4x12



The bridge is a thing of beauty as well. Using patented Blade technology, the bridge is frictionlessly bonded to the anchor plate. Because of this, the manufacturer claims that it will never wear out (something that happens with knife-edge systems). Another bonus is that the fine tuners have extra range, which allows for drop-D tuning without unlocking the nut. When it arrived, it was set up for drop D, and I was amazed how it went up to E with just a quick turn of the fine tuner, and had travel to spare. Nice! Each saddle can be adjusted for height and intonation, and the clamping area has a steel slug that clamps the string over a large area, which totally eliminates slipping of the string as well as breakage. Once again, I can't tell you how many times I've clamped the high E string on the guitar and it slipped right out of the bridge. This is maddening and inconvenient, so I'm glad somebody finally addressed this long-standing issue. The sustain block is anodized aluminum, which came as a result of testing many materials for the best tone and weight. Finally, the bar is made to screw in and can be set by an adjustment screw in the back of the unit to stay in place or swing freely.

### So Are Vee Going to Play, or Vat?

The Super-Vee came pre-installed on a Fender MIM Strat and was already in tune when I pulled it out of the gig bag. Right away the vibrato felt familiar but smoother and more controlled than a normal Strat vibrato. I noticed that it sounded very close acoustically to my '08 American Standard and didn't lack sustain or articulation. Because it was set up with three springs, it was solid but still easy enough to maneuver while maintaining a controlled feel. There was no friction; the unit was totally silent yet unyielding to any tuning issues. I spent a great deal of time abusing it to see how much it could take. Whether it was divebombs that dropped the bar all the way down to touch the body, or pulling it up as far as it could go (about a 1/2 step, due to the floating setup), I never could get it to go out of tune. You can get very aggressive with the Super-Vee and feel confident that it will stay in tune.

That said, it isn't all about over-the-top wanking. In fact, the Super-Vee is quite capable of subtle nuances that range from Surf-style dipping to coaxing out elegant hand-style vibrato. When I first screwed the bar in, I noticed that it was set up around the place where my picking hand likes to be. While that was great for quick access, I wanted to have it hanging loose so it was out of the way. Going to the back of the unit and loosening the nylon screw let the bar fall into a loose, swinging position which was great, but you could feel it wiggle inside the vibrato. It wasn't bad, but it would've been nice if it were tighter. Although the slotted nylon screw ensures there isn't any direct metal-on-metal friction, I found that it was made of pretty soft material that might strip over time. It's a small price to pay for the convenience, though, and I applaud the innovation.

### The Final Mojo

The folks at Super-Vee are obviously very dedicated to their product. The website is beautifully laid out with helpful videos, great photos, and an FAQ to answer the most common questions. And they do offer factory installation with a 3-day turnaround. With the fine craftsmanship, great looks and solid performance, anyone looking to take their Strat to a new level will seriously enjoy the Super-Vee.