

## "TREMLOLO" TRIO

### Three new approaches to replacement vibrato systems

Three new aftermarket vibrato systems for common double- and single-cutaway solidbody guitars offer the convenience of "drop in" installation. Each system boasts unique features and improved performance.

#### SuperVee Tremolo System

Brainchild of designers Jeff Athrop and Marc Caldwell, the SuperVee is a direct-replacement (a.k.a. "drop in") unit requiring no modifications, no drilling, and no routing. We tested a prototype unit installed by SuperVee on a Fender Strat.

The system consists of a locking nut unit and a replacement bridge, and the first couple of things we noticed were 1) the high-quality, well-machined look and feel of its parts, and 2) the visually unusual locking nut assembly. Unlike most locking nuts, this one requires no modification or routing. Simply pop out the stock nut and install the new nut/clamp assembly, using a drop of glue to hold it in place. The nut/clamp assembly uses a stainless steel pre-slotted 9.5" (or 7.25")-radius nut with an attached clamping unit that pinches each string in a zigzag-shaped channel via two Allen-head screws (one for the E, A, and D strings, one for G, B, and E).

The SuperVee's bridge isn't significantly larger, bulkier, or taller than a stock Strat bridge, and sports a couple of innovative features like its six-piece bridge-end string clamp/fine tuner assemblies and six separate saddles instead of the standard all-in-one piece. This allows the saddles to be individually adjusted for height and intonation, like standard Strat saddles, with no saddle shims or time-consuming intonation/setup.

The other innovative feature is the bridge pivot point, or in the case of the SuperVee, the lack of one. Instead of a bridge that pivots on two screws or a "knife-edge," the SuperVee uses a piece of industrial spring steel that bends to connect the bridge plate and mounting plate. This essentially eliminates any metal-on-metal wear and tear, and ensures the tailpiece returns to the same position after each use.

The SuperVee uses the guitar's stock springs and spring claw to compensate

for string tension, and can be set up for floating operation with limited pull-up capability, or with the bridge flat against the guitar's body.

The SuperVee performs very well, staying in tune even with repeated heavy use, including dive-bombing. Its feel is slightly stiffer than a standard vibrato, but very smooth, and the fine-tuners at the bridge offer enough travel to allow for drop-D tuning without having to loosen the locking nut.

As with most locking vibratos, changing a broken string (especially if you're in a hurry) can be a bit of an ordeal. It requires two Allen wrenches (one for the nut and one for the string clamp) and also requires cutting the ball off of the string. Being able to simply lay the string into the open zigzag channels in the locking nut (instead of feeding it under a locked-down clamp) does speed things up a bit.

Overall, the SuperVee vibrato is a well-crafted, well-conceived unit that offers solid performance without having to modify your guitar (save for perhaps shimming the neck).

