



■ A high-quality piece of hardware, the Stetsbar Vibrato looks great here



STETSBAR VIBRATO

GBINFO

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PRICE: £259

BUILT IN: USA

TYPE: Retrofit vibrato system for LP-style guitars

FEATURES: Fully adjustable bridge, vibrato system, mounting kit. Tools and instructions included

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A NEW VIBRATO SYSTEM THAT FITS A LES PAUL WITH NO FEAR OF WRECKING YOUR BELOVED AXE. **TIM SLATER** HIDES THE DRILL

■ You might think that the very idea of fitting a vibrato to a Les Paul is nothing short of sacrilegious. American company Stetsbar, however, isn't afraid to challenge the accepted order.

This new vibrato has the funky retro feel of a Bigsby unit, but it fits straight on your treasured Gibbo without having to drill any extra holes or disfigure the guitar in any way. A Les Paul with a wang-bar may seem a bit

steel and fiddy-arsed nuts and bolts are kept to a minimum.

The elegant design looks disarmingly at home fitted to the Les Paul; relatively sleek and compact, yet still somewhat 'hefty retro' which suits this type of guitar well. The bridge and vibrato assembly sits on a nickel-plated steel baseplate that mounts directly to the guitar's top. Despite the rounded profile of the Les Paul's maple cap, the mounting plate fits snugly, and Stetsbar also offers an adhesive rubber strip that provides a protective barrier between the bottom of the baseplate and the guitar's top, just in case. The bridge assembly includes a traditional tune-o-matic-style bridge and a custom tailpiece that floats smoothly on a steel plate anchored to the base by two short springs.

The Stetsbar's twin mounting studs fit directly into the holes drilled for the original stop tailpiece, meaning that virtually anybody experienced in everyday guitar maintenance can install this unit easily. The hardest part is removing the threaded posts – particularly on this guitar. When we contacted Eric Stets for advice his response was swift and helpful. He suggested threading two tiny nuts onto each post, locking them tightly together and then using a small spanner to

loosen the posts by turning the nuts anti-clockwise, which works a treat.

STETS BOOGIE

Under the hand the Stetsbar feels great with a sensitive action recalling a mixture of a bouncy standard Fender Stratocaster trem and a vintage Bigsby style unit. The travel isn't as limited as a Bigsby, however, pulling back almost a full tone and dive bombing impressively – the slightly weird sensation that comes with using a vibrato-equipped Les Paul doesn't last long. The distinctive semi-circular bar is shaped deliberately for cupping in your fingers, but if I was to order a Stetsbar I would go for the optional straighter bar. The more traditional-looking straight whammy bar feels longer by virtue of having one less bend; this one feels too short to me.

Tuning stability is excellent, despite the guitar only having a minimal set and with a bit more fettling and a dab of graphite pencil in the nut slots, it's very cool and efficient vibrato. Just as important, it has very little effect on the tone of the guitar. If you decide to rest it and restore your Gibbo back to original spec, it only takes a few turns of a screwdriver to get the job done. No drilling, no mess, no hassle. An impressive, high-quality retrofit. **GB**

"NO DRILLING, NO MESS, NO HASSLE. AN IMPRESSIVE, HIGH-QUALITY RETROFIT"

odd, but the Stetsbar is nevertheless a high-quality piece of hardware – we seized an unsuspecting Gibson Les Paul Classic found in a quiet corner of the GB office for its test-bed.

STETS GET STARTED

This vibrato unit is a simple design but the attention to detail and excellent build-quality reveals designer Eric Stets' engineering background; everything is expertly machined from high-quality

GBOPINION

GOLD STARS

★ Looks amazingly cool and natural; Telecaster styles available too; Easy to fit

BLACK MARKS

● Two-bead vibrato arm looks too small

GBRATING

