

Auto Trim Tuner

Planet Waves



BY ADAM MOORE

As I'm sure many players will attest, your tuners are perhaps one of the most neglected and overlooked pieces on your guitar. We spend all our time picking out the perfect set of pickups and a cool trem system, and forget all about the six pegs holding our strings in tune up top. This month, we were able to get our hands on a set of Planet Waves Auto-Trim Locking Tuners. They were installed in a rebuilt Stratocaster with String Saver graphite bridge saddles, a standard Strat trem setup and a neck from Stewart-McDonald.

Installation

Our replacement neck from Stew-Mac already had peghead holes drilled to the correct size (10mm, or 13/32"), so all we had to do was drop them in, tighten a few nuts and drill a few screws into the headstock. All in all, it was a very smooth process and a clean-looking installation. We were ready to string up literally within a matter of minutes. Suffice to say, depending on the guitar, using these tuners may require some modification of peghead holes; working on a headstock is always a delicate process, so if you're not sure of what you're doing, take it to an expert.

Stringing Up

The operation of these tuners is remarkably hassle-free. Feeding the string through the tuning posts, you simply lock the string

in place with a thumbwheel located on the base of the sealed tuning machines. The wheel clamps down easily, without too much effort, and with a gear ratio of 18:1, the tuners are exceptional smooth. Not only do you not have to work too hard to turn the tuning key, but you also have less chance of accidentally overshooting your target pitch, meaning you're more likely to stay in tune.

Of course, the reason many people will get their hands on these particular tuners is the auto-trim function. Designed by Ned Steinberger (the mind behind those "headless" guitars and basses), these tuners feature an ingenious operation that will make you say, "Why didn't they think of that before?" Each tuner peg has a built-in steel wire cutter hidden inside; as you wind the string up to pitch with a few turns of the key, the string cutter cleanly snaps off the excess. It takes a bit to get used to – there's a resistance point right when the string cutter kicks in, and when you first use these tuners, it feels like you're about to break the string – but it certainly works well, leaving your headstock looking much cleaner, and allowing you to pack a few less tools for gigs.

Back to Jamming

After stringing up the guitar, which, again, only took a matter of minutes, we were

back to jamming. The locking mechanisms do exactly what they should, and with less string wound around the tuner pegs, we rarely experienced any string slippage or tuning problems. Our tuning held up under some intense playing, and we were not able to significantly throw the auto-trim tuners for a loop.

All in all, Planet Waves, a company always coming up with innovative accessories, has given guitarists a tool to significantly ease their life. The only downside worth mentioning is that while the tuner machine and keys were chrome (also available in black or gold), the pegs were black. This is certainly more of an aesthetic concern, but it would have been nice to be able to get all-chrome tuners, for those trying to maintain a certain look on their axe. But, I'll admit, that's hair splitting.

Rating

The Golden M



Planet Waves
MSRP \$89.99 (chrome set)
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