



## Univox Uni-Vibe VS. Fulltone Deja Vibe 2, Love Pedal Vibe, Moollon ReVibe, and T-Rex Viper

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

ONE OF THE MOST ENCHANTING GUITAR EFFECTS of the late '60s was the Univox Uni-Vibe. Designed by a Japanese engineer named Fumio Mieda for the Shin-Ei company (one of Univox's overseas subcontractors), and introduced in 1968, the Uni-Vibe used a pulsating light bulb and four photo-resistors to modulate its four-stage phase shifting circuit up to 720 degrees. Housed in a large sheet-metal enclosure, the Uni-Vibe featured Volume and Intensity controls, a Chorus/Vibrato switch, and a DIN-style jack for connecting to the speed/bypass pedal. The Uni-Vibe's signature pulsating swirl touched an aural nerve in Jimi Hendrix, as well

as a young Englishman named Robin Trower, who slathered the effect on practically everything he played. If you're unfamiliar with the Uni's sound, just grab a copy of Trower's *Bridge of Sighs* album, and you will be treated to some of the coolest 'Vibe textures ever recorded. Mixed with wah-wah—as on songs like "Too Rolling Stoned" and "Lady Love"—the result was so stoney and psychedelic that it's a wonder the DEA didn't have Trower on a watch list.

As cool as a vintage Uni-Vibe is, however, it's a pretty large and impractical piece of hardware to put on a pedalboard. It's also non-true



bypass, prone to breakdowns, and so costly nowadays you'd want to hire a security guard to keep an eye on it. Fortunately, excellent clones of the Uni-Vibe have been around for years, and we've previously reviewed the Fulltone Deja Vibe, the Prescription Electronics Vibe Unit, and the Voodoo Lab Micro Vibe.

Nevertheless, new models keep on comin'. For this Fight Club, we selected four Uni-Vibe soundalike pedals we have not previously reviewed—the Fulltone Deja Vibe 2, the Love Pedal Vibe, the Moollon ReVibe, and the T-Rex Viper—and subjected them to a face-to-face test against a vintage Uni-Vibe. We also did some ear calibrating with a similar era (perhaps even earlier) JAX Vibra Chorus—which is like a Uni-Vibe, but with slider controls and the addition of tremolo. Our test guitars included a Fender Stratocaster, a Gibson Les Paul, and a new Hamer Talladega. For amplification, we used a Cornford Carrera, a Line 6 Spider Valve 212, a Savage Rohr 15, and a Mesa/Boogie Blue Angel.

#### FULLTONE DV-2 DEJA VIBE 2

Featuring a built-in pedal speed control, and packing a replicated Uni-Vibe circuit that uses

four photocells and a pulsating light source, the DV-2 (\$325 retail/\$292 street; stereo version \$395 retail) is unique among Uni-Vibe clones in that it has an internal power transformer. No wall-wart needed—just plug it in using the custom flat-wire detachable AC cord, and you're good to go. Built for the long haul, the DV-2 features an industrial strength, 16-gauge welded-steel housing and rugged PC board construction with careful lead routing and all of the jacks, pots, and switches chassis-mounted for solidarity. The bypass footswitch—*true* bypass, that is—is located by your heel, so that you can leave the rocker at your favorite setting, and toggle the effect off and on with your toe.

Other functions include Vibrato/Chorus and Modern/Vintage switches, an Intensity knob, a side-mounted control for adjusting the output level, and a status LED that also



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pulses in time with the speed setting.

With the Modern/Vintage switch in its latter position, the DV-2 copped the warm phasoidal swirl and heartbeat-like pulse of our original Uni-Vibe. The DV-2's voice is a bit more refined, but the chewy 'Vibe sound is definitely there—as is the vibrato effect, which nails the wavy pitch-shifted modulation of our reference Uni-Vibe. Being able to control the speed via pedal brings the DV-2 even closer to the original, and having the rocker right on the housing is probably something Univox would have eventually done if the Uni-Vibe had remained in production.

In Modern mode, the DV-2 sounded a little brighter and punchier—something humbucker players might prefer—and the only other element that takes it out of the “dead nuts” realm is the DV-2's faster top speed. There is also a pretty abrupt jump between medium and fast as you push the DV-2's rocker toward its full forward setting. Our Uni-Vibe's pedal varied the speed more predictably in the same range.

As a side note, Michael Fuller points out that a big part of what makes old Uni-Vibes sound the way they do is the aging of their 19 electrolytic caps, which can nearly double in capacitance as time takes a toll on the internal gel (ten to 15 years is the typical lifespan, and vintage UniVibes can be thrice older than that!). So the question/dilemma that any Uni-Vibe re-maker faces is how far to go in trying to re-create the sound of an original unit, whose caps have aged to the point that their specs—and hence, the sound they create—differ from when the pedal was new.

Fulltone seems to have addressed this issue via the Modern/Vintage switch, which allows the user to dupe the sonic textures of a vintage unit, or nudge the sound in a direction that may indeed be something closer to what the original delivered when Nixon lived in the White House. As a firm believer in the right to choose, I think the DV-2 rules on this merit alone. Fulltone's Deja series Vibes have also been the choice of Robin Trower since 1996, and you can hear him playing a Deja Vibe 2 live by visiting [fulltone.com](http://fulltone.com).

#### FULLTONE DV-2 DEJA VIBE 2

**KUDOS** Righteously pulsing modulation. Built-in rocker-style Speed control. Independent bypass switch is much cooler than the rocker-incorporated bypass of a vintage 'Vibe. Rugged as a tank.  
**CONCERNS** Consumes a sizeable chunk of pedalboard real estate.

**CONTACT** Fulltone, (310) 204-0155; [fulltone.com](http://fulltone.com)