

# MAHALO MLG1 LAP STEEL

£195

If your playing is on the slide, try this son of a beach on for size

**THE** sound of a wailing lap-steel guitar is as synonymous with Hawaiian culture as loud shirts, Dog the Bounty Hunter's mullet... and pineapple chunks on pizza. The new Mahalo MLG1 Lap Steel nails that association with the Polynesian island, thanks to a beautifully rendered surfboard-shaped basswood body. The guitar is topped and tailed with a raised chrome bridge and top nut connected by heavy gauge strings (high to low: 0.013, 0.017, 0.024, 0.032, 0.042 and 0.056). An inch or so below the strings lies a sheet of printed markers to guide

tuning used by the likes of Robert Johnson, The Rolling Stones, and Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry when he's pulling blues licks from his old lap steel. Aficionados of classic 40s and 50s country lap and console steel tend to use a C6 tuning, of which there are quite a few variations. Listen to Don Helms' playing on Hank Williams hits such as *Your Cheatin' Heart*.

You need to use open tunings on a steel so you can play chords by laying the tone bar across a few strings at a time. For instance, in E tuning, when you hit the strings open you get an E chord. Slide the tone bar up to the 5th fret marker

## You can rest it on your lap, or on its three telescopic legs

your fingers, and a single P-90-style single-coil pickup wired to a volume and tone control.

There are plenty of great quality, affordable lap steels available. The P-90-equipped Recording King RG-31 and RG-32 models (£140 a pop); the fugly but ergonomically sound Peavey PowerSlide (£229), which can be hung from a strap; and the Art Deco Gretsch Electromatic 'steels (£334) to name a few. What sets the Mahalo apart is that, while you can rest it on your lap, it also comes with three telescopic legs to take the strain. It also comes with a padded gigbag that accommodates the steel and the legs. You don't, however, get a tone bar (basically a solid slide) – you can use a guitar slide or bottleneck, but a tone bar sounds better. The likes of Jim Dunlop sell them for around £25.

Our Mahalo steel came tuned to open E (high to low: E, B, G#, E, B and E), a popular blues slide-guitar

for an A chord; continue to the 7th for a B chord. That's a classic three-chord trick that you couldn't pull off on a steel in regular tuning.

Despite its novelty appearance, the Mahalo MGL1 is a serious instrument, with its lone pickup pumping out a ballsy tone. Steel players like to use a volume pedal to fade notes in, but you can use any effects you want. Delay and overdrive – as used by David Gilmour and Huey Morgan on their steels – are especially effective. Like pineapple on pizza, lap steel can be something of an acquired taste, but the Mahalo is the perfect place to start.

Ed Mitchell

SUMMARY	FEATURES			
	SOUND QUALITY			
	VALUE FOR MONEY			
	BUILD QUALITY			
	PLAYABILITY			
OVERALL RATING		★★★★★		

### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Basswood  
**NECK:** N/A  
**FINGERBOARD:** Aluminium  
**FRETS:** Printed markers (36 frets)  
**SCALE:** 577mm (22.75")  
**PICKUPS:** 1x P-90-style single coil  
**CONTROLS:** 1x volume, 1x tone  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**FINISH:** Gloss Cream with surfboard graphics  
**CONTACT:** Stentor Music  
[info@stentor-music.com](mailto:info@stentor-music.com)  
[www.mahalo-ukulele.com](http://www.mahalo-ukulele.com)

### TUNING

**LAP** steels are designed primarily to be used with open tunings. There are countless variations for different styles of music, or you can come up with your own!

### BODY

**DUDE...** this might just be the coolest lap steel ever thanks to its surfboard-shaped body. Underneath the gloss finish is a slab of basswood for wicked sustain.

### PICKUP

**THE** Mahalo is packing some heat in its engine room thanks to a fat-sounding soapbar pickup, so called because, well, it's shaped like a bar of soap.