

PEAVEY POWERSLIDE £275  
ELECTRICS

PHOTOGRAPHY: JESSE WILD



## Peavey PowerSlide £275

Niche goes mainstream as Peavey launches its PowerSlide electric slide guitar *by Dave Burrluck*

**T**he PowerSlide is an unusual beast. Let's face it, the electric lap steel guitar – which actually predated the 'Spanish' electric guitar – is hardly commonplace in terms of availability or the mainstream players that use 'em – Davids Gilmour and Lindley being notable exceptions. Typically played on your lap – or on a stand – you don't fret anything, you just use a slide.

Classified as a 'square neck, raised action' instrument, Peavey's PowerSlide takes the basic solid body/neck (quoted as a neck-through construction) and adds an upper horn on the bass-side. The treble side is curved too, and to be honest it looks like some heavy metal monstrosity from the eighties. That said it's very tidily made: the 40mm basswood body/neck achieves a good light weight, the finish is very smart and the graphic-printed 'fingerboard' has clear 'frets' and position markers.

But by design, the PowerSlide is intended not just to be played on your lap. Like the Melobar from yesteryear, the idea is that you can play it horizontally, on your lap or standing, or vertically (like a standard guitar). This is done via its four strap buttons (one at each tip of its base, one on the upper horn and one at the tip of the slotted headstock) and supplied three point 'Y' strap. There's a chamfer on the treble side of the otherwise rectangular section neck that aids vertical playing although even seasoned slide players may find this a little, ahem, unusual to get to grips with. Trying to wrap your left hand around this square neck not to mention the huge string height is extremely odd.

The top-mount bridge and raised nut are simple chromed metal parts, the inverted three-on-a-strip tuners perfectly functional. We only get a single pickup, but it's a partially covered dual-coil ceramic-loaded design with a quoted DC

resistance of 14k ohm. It's controlled by a single volume and single tone/variable coil cut control. This latter feature works in reverse, so fully off (anti-clockwise) it voices the brightest tone: the humbucker's bridge-facing single-coil. As you wind the control up, the other coil is introduced so in the



The PowerSlide's styling is certainly going to polarise opinion

### The Rivals

**Eastwood's Airline Lap Steel** (£279, eastwoodguitars.co.uk) is a tribute to the laps of old and is well-spec'd with a single hotrail humbucker.

**Duesenberg's Lap Steel** (approx £1,000) features the easy-shift capo and dual-lever multi-bender to simulate pedal steel effects – quite a different lap with a very pro price. Another pro-option are **Crosbie Lap Steels** from Nashville (from approx £900, www.wunjoguitars.com).



slightly stiff-feeling mid position you get the darker sounding full humbucker. As you turn the control fully up it takes out the high-end like a more conventional tone control.

### Sounds

We have no major complaints here. It's not perfect, but the combination of heavy strings, high action and a decent hollow Stevens-style bar gives you a big clean sound that's very satisfactory. Country styles are easily coaxed with the tone control voicing the single-coil and heaps of clean reverb'd amp tone. Conversely, dial-in a dirty amp tone and it's roots rock heaven, especially with that tone control voicing the full humbucker. If you give it some

higher gain the treble roll-off really pushes out a nasty, nasally fat honking tone. It's got excellent sustain, while it also has just a little compression to the voice – not as much as this writer's standard Bennett lap steel, which is simply a thicker, denser chunk of wood – but it's impressive nonetheless.

As to the different strap/playing positions... well, good luck! The strap initially seems a little short to play effectively horizontally and standing, but once sorted it does work. And while that cutout on the bass-side comfortably surrounds your hopefully not too large stomach, it feels quite cramped, making higher position work much harder than simply playing it flat on your lap, a

stand or a desktop. In a conventional 'Spanish' playing position, using a regular bottleneck or slide, you lose the control you have in standard lap position and things such as behind-the-bar bends are impossible. But you may disagree – the beauty of the slide guitar is that there are no rules in terms of style, tuning or sound – and taking the lap steel off your lap will certainly get you noticed.

### Verdict

As a standard electric lap steel, this is nicely made and, via the pickup and simple tone/variable coil-split control, unleashes more than enough sounds to cover all the bases that you'll need – from country and swing through to blues and modern rock.

Whether you'll feel as comfortable strapping it on in either vertical or horizontal positions, as per its design, well... we didn't. Via the strap and array of buttons it's perfectly possible, although your style – at least until you adjust, if you can – will be somewhat limited.

But, if the PowerSlide does nothing more than broaden the original electric guitar's appeal, it still gets our vote!

### Peavey PowerSlide

**PRICE:** £275 (inc gigbag, strap and slide)

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Solidbody electric slide guitar

**BODY:** Basswood

**NECK:** Basswood, neck through

**SCALE LENGTH:** 635mm (25-inch)

**NUT/STRING SPACING:** Raised metal/51mm

**FINGERBOARD:** Graphic layout, part of finish

**FRETS:** 27, graphic

**HARDWARE:** Vintage-style three-on-a-strip (inverted); raised metal bridge with top-mount string loading – all chrome-plated

**STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:** 51mm

**ELECTRICS:** Single 'Hi Output

Tappable' dual-coil humbucker

(with ceramic five-bar magnet)

volume and patented tone/

variable coil cut control

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.95/6.5

**OPTIONS:** None

**RANGE OPTIONS:** None

**LEFT-HANDERS:** No

**FINISHES:** Black (as reviewed),

red, ivory

**Peavey Electronics Ltd**

**01536 461234**

**www.peavey.com**

### An Introduction To Lap Steel Guitar With Michael Messer £20 [www.euroblues.co.uk](http://www.euroblues.co.uk)



**This timely** DVD features Michael Messer, one of the UK's finest slide guitar players, offering a very thorough primer to get you going in the world of the lap steel guitar. He's a good teacher and the frills are at a minimum – it's mainly Messer talking and playing us through the basics using a Resophonic acoustic Tricone. But you don't need one of those to get going: the PowerSlide would be perfect or, as Messer explains, simply raising the action on any acoustic, or electric, will work.

The lessons – which comprise nearly two hours of tuition time – centre on 'low bass' G tuning, or open G (D G D G B D) as it's more commonly known. Messer discusses the different styles of bar to use, how to hold 'em, and the all-important vibrato and string damping before getting going. He's also very picky, if you'll pardon the pun, about right-hand technique and the use of thumb and finger picks; early on you'll be introduced to right-hand pick and strum techniques that are the foundation of this style. Speaking of style, Messer covers generic single-note and harmony before moving on to more specific blues licks and turnarounds, country, Hawaiian licks, angled chords, palm harmonics and finally introduces 'high bass' G tuning (G B D G B D) – the most widely used option for acoustic lap steel playing.

All in all, this is an essential primer and more for anyone wanting to enter or simply brush up on the techniques, styles and tones of the lap steel. Highly recommended.

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Concept; competent build, sounds and affordability

**We dislike:** Not everyone will find the strapped-on concept appealing

**Guitarist says:** A well-made, affordable electric steel guitar with the option of playing it strapped on... if you can manage it!

### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★