

United States of America

**LEARN**

Many early blues musicians played homemade instruments, including diddley bows, cigar-box guitars, jugs, and washboards. The blues style first emerged among African Americans in the rural South in the early twentieth century. These musicians voiced life experiences through expressive lyrics, emotive vocal sounds, and flattened or bent notes. As African Americans moved from rural areas to cities, the blues sound became more urban, incorporating electric and amplified instruments. Still a treasured part of American musical heritage, blues has inspired genres as diverse as gospel, jazz, rock, soul, and rap.

MAKE**Materials**

- Cigar box
- 2 Rubber bands
- Paint stick
- Duct tape
- Cardboard 2x3.5
- 2 Nails
- Hammer

Instructions

1. Use tape to decorate the cigar box before starting.
2. Fold cardboard to create a teepee leaving a ½ inch flat surface on each side.
3. Cut 4 evenly spaced small slits in the teepee to create the bridge.
4. Place paint stick in the center of the cigar box with the bridge resting on top.
5. Carefully nail the bridge to the paint stick and cigar box at each flat surface of the bridge.
6. Loop one rubber band from the nail on the bottom side of the bridge to the top of the paint stick – securing the band by squeezing it in 2 of the slits in the bridge.
7. Repeat with second rubber band.
8. Use tape at the top of the paint stick to hold rubber bands in place.
9. Play your new cigar-box guitar!

SEE



Visit MIM's USA/Canada Gallery and see the cigar box guitar in the Blues display.

LISTEN

Check out James "[Super Chikan](#)" Johnson playing a son-string "broomstick" cigar box guitar.

Listen to Justin Johnson's original song "[Rooster Blues](#)" for three-string cigar box guitar.

PLAY ALONG

Create your own sound on the cigar-box guitar while singing along to this [song](#)!

I've Been Working on the Railroad

Traditional

I've been workin' on the railroad all the live long day

I've been workin' on the railroad, just to pass the time away

Can't you hear the whistle blowin'? Rise up so early in the morn

Can't you hear the captain shoutin'? "Dinah blow your horn!"

LEARN MORE

Watch DB Guitars [construct](#) a professional cigar box guitar from beginning to end.

Discover the world of cigar-box guitars with [cigarboxguitars.com](#).

Explore more Americana music through [American Roots Music produced by PBS](#).