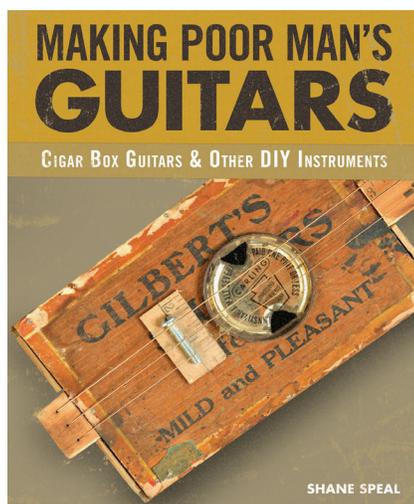


Meet the Man Who Re-invented the Cigar Box Guitar and Sparked a New DIY Instrument Movement



East Petersburg, PA—Nothing says ‘Americana’ more than a cigar box guitar. This primitive instrument, cobbled together from discarded wood, guitar strings, and an empty cigar box—was the poor man’s guitar of the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For decades, it was a forgotten instrument though; that is, until Shane Speal brought this DIY guitar back to life and created a cult following.

In addition to creating an online community for cigar box guitar enthusiasts, which went viral in 2004 and has not

lost steam since, he re-creates cigar box guitars and plays them in a DIY-instrument band called Shane Speal and the Snakes. He’s also released six full-length cigar box guitar albums under the same name, has a cigar box guitar museum in New Alexandria, PA, and has made 2,000 cigar box guitars to date. Suffice it to say, his nickname—King of Cigar Box Guitars—is well deserved.

In a new book *Making Poor Man's Guitar: Cigar Box Guitars & Other DIY Instruments* (Fox Chapel Publishing, August 2018), Speal brings the making of music and musical instruments back to its roots. The book presents authentic stories that’ll give readers chills and insight into the untold story of America’s poverty-stricken DIY music communities—some stories date back to the beginning days New Orleans’ jazz. Learn about Blind Willie Johnson’s one-string cigar box guitar that he played with a pocket knife, or The Razy Dazy Spasm Band—a group of street urchin paperboys in the late 1800s who haunted the Storyville district of New Orleans—and unwind with a riveting interview with legendary Blues guitarist Scrapper Blackwell whose larger-than-life music career began with a homemade cigar box guitar.

With each story, you will discover the magic of the DIY music movement. A book like this comes at a time when many people are experiencing technology fatigue, want to unplug, and make something meaningful with their hands. Speal describes the experience best. “Anyone can buy a guitar at a chain store. Mass produced instruments litter the landscapes,” he says. “However, there’s a certain magic that happens when you struggle to build your own instrument. You put your own creativity, your soul, and even your own beautiful mistakes into it. Each one is uniquely your own.”

“

Shane Speal is universally recognized as the prime mover of the Cigar Box Guitar cult, a man who has made it his life’s crusade to spread the word and promote the popularity of Cigar Box Guitars.”

—PREMIER
GUITAR
MAGAZINE



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The beauty of *Making Poor Man's Guitar* is that it's not your usual, tedious history book. It's relevant, energetic, and insightful. It draws on American culture and a deep love of primal music making. The icing on the cake is that it doubles as a how-to book, allowing musicians to take this gem of history and reinvent it for themselves.

Engaging, talented, and knowledgeable, Shane Speal can discuss the following in an interview:

- How he revitalized this once forgotten instrument of American blues and roots music
- The joy of playing an instrument you built with your own hands
- How cigar box guitar-making is more than just woodworking—it's about the primal creation of music
- Fascinating stories and humbling beginnings of cigar box guitar players like Blind Willie Johnson who played a one-string cigar box with a pocket knife
- The untold story of America's poverty-stricken DIY music communities—some stories date back to the beginning days New Orleans' jazz
- Pockets of history that come from studying cigar box instruments, some involving Vaudeville, lumberjack camps, and more. He even has recordings!
- A deeper meaning to life, which can be found from learning from poor folks of America's past
- Why modern technology isn't always equal better when it comes to music
- The massive community of guitar builders and players who are just waiting for you to join them on this creative journey

"The stories in this book will make each DIY guitar project come alive," says Speal. "Discovering cigar box guitar music holds the same excitement you felt when you bought your first Led Zeppelin record back in the '70s. I want others to fall in love with music all over again."

About Shane Speal

York, PA musician, Shane Speal is responsible for the modern resurgence of the cigar box guitar, a once forgotten instrument of American blues and roots music.

Few artists are as committed to expanding the boundaries of such a primitive instrument as Speal does. "A Cigar Box Guitar is quirky and appears 'broken' from the start," says Speal. "They just don't look like they should play any music. I love to see jaws hit the floor when I shove a socket on my finger and wail away."

In addition to performing and composing on cigar box guitar, Speal has also opened the first permanent Cigar Box Guitar Museum within the walls of Speal's Tavern in New Alexandria, PA. He also has an ever-expanding lesson series on how to play cigar box guitar, found on Youtube, CigarBoxNation.com, CigarBoxGuitar.com and ShaneSpeal.com. His column, The DIY Musician has been read by thousands at GuitarWorld.com and showcases homemade instruments, players and techniques.

Shane Speal & the Snakes latest album, Stay Primal features cigar box guitars, washtub bass, washboard, tin can microphones, and many other DIY instruments.

