

MAKING A STICK UKE.

Brian Lemin March 2012

This is a copy of an email I sent to a guy enquiring how to make it.

1. I found the idea from a UTube video. A young lad and his Dad put together a fretless version using a "lump" (!) of wood from their shed. I played it through, stopped it a critical moments and took a screen shot so as I could see what they did. From that I got an understanding of the what I thought was the defining technique they used to create this "stick". That was the "turn around and tuning keys placement". Once I had got that I did the following.

2. Decided on the type of Uke I was going to build. I chose a tenor and ascertained the string length required for the uke. The I drew it up in only plan form on a piece of card. (Not sophisticated instrument plan just the outline; position of the nut and bridge; where I would cut the holes required and the position of the tuning pegs.)

3. I selected a nice piece of wood of the required size (plus a bit) Drew the outline on it a cut/sanded it to plan view shape. For the side view I measured up my commercial tenor uke for things like neck thickness etc. I did a similar rough shaping for those features.

4. I do not have a router, so I drilled holes cut and chiseled out the holes where the tuning pegs would go, making sure that I left appropriate thickness for the pegs to protrude etc..

5. I went to a web site called eKips punched in the string length and all the questionnaires they provide, mostly referring to my commercial tenor uke. I then printed out the fret board and stuck it on my rough blank (use easy peel off glue). I then drilled the small anchor holes for the 4 strings at the nut end.

6. I made the nut and bridge. I am one of those crazy people that has a box of dried and bleached bones in my shed!(Long story, but no, I have never killed anyone!!!!) But you can use any hard wood for those components.

7. I decide to use a small piece of aluminium (English spelling!!) tube for the turn around, and since then I have used bone, but aluminium is best. Shape the end for the length (just what looked right) and to set the tube in a bit to anchor it as it were. I did judicious shaping to inset the strings underneath so they would run smoothly etc..

8. The I fretting the neck. I got all my stuff from Stewart McDonalds via the net. They will sell you a million bucks worth of equipment for fretting. You do not need it, but if you are serious about making instruments then a fretting saw with depth gauge is you first buy. I used a junior hack saw, rigged up a depth gauge on it. I actually left the eKips print out on the neck and used that as a guide... the purists will massacre me for that! I found that if I took care it worked. I am not going into fretting it is a job that I dislike the most, find the most difficult, but in the end it always works out for me. There are a lot of Utube videos telling you how to do it.

9 I bought a simple under bridge piezo from eBay, with a 1/4 inch jack as part of it and fitted it under the bridge. The important thing with this is that the A> The under surface of the bridge must be flat and B> the wood that it lays on must also be flat too, so that the bridge contacts' equally across its full surface contact of bridge/piezo. If this is not so you will get an equal amplification of the strings. I fitted the jack. I had to make a special space for it as I forgot about it as I was making the sick hole!

10.. I fitted the machine heads and strung it up, tuned it plugged it in and it worked!

Now what I will do is to take a picture of my uke and do a few annotations for you. also I will tell you to look on the net for pictures of electric guitar "stick" types, there is also a stick commercial uke too you should get a picture of (I cant remember its name)

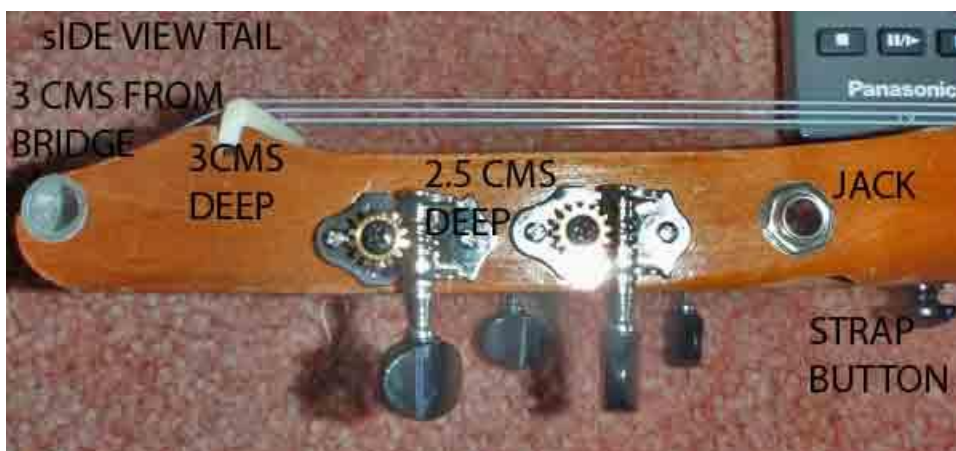
I need to tell you a few other things that I have learned. It is hard to hold and play unless you use a neck strap. For a next effort I would use tuning pegs that end with the knobs facing out from the side not downwards. I would create a removable gizmo to allow it to sit on my knee. All these ideas can be found with searches on Google images for this type of guitar. Just adapt them for your uke.

As you can see, I made this from the seat of my pants, stage by stage as it came up. Why not make a fretless one from any old timber to get the idea, then get better wood and make a fretted one. I say this as I have made a lot of musical instruments over the years so "seat of the pants" construction for me was pretty simple.

Good luck. Oh yes, my next effort in this direction will be incorporating ideas from a Bass guitar. Do a search on "travel Bass" and you might get to their web site a then look for detailed pictures. It is harder to construct, but has some great improvements on it that can be carried over to a uke.

Thanks for your interest.

Here are the pics I took.



Underneath tail end.

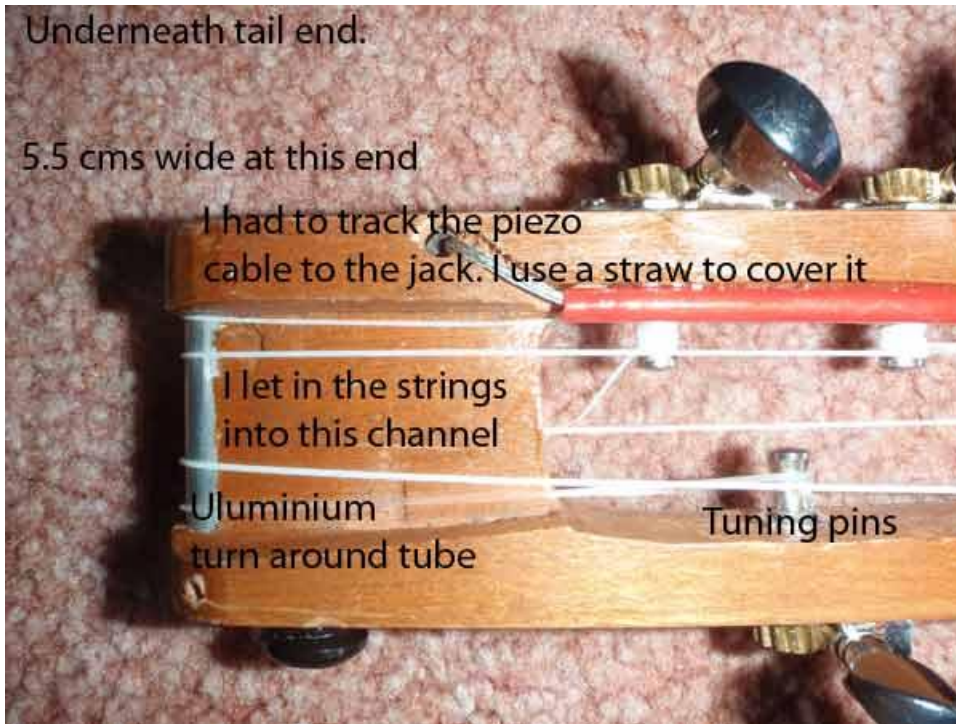
5.5 cms wide at this end

I had to track the piezo cable to the jack. I use a straw to cover it

I let in the strings into this channel

Aluminium turn around tube

Tuning pins



TAIL VIEW PLAN

5.5 CM WIDE APPROX





THE NUT PLAN VIEW



ABOUT 4CM
AT TOP.
YOU
CHOOSE



12MM DIA

tURN AROUND TUBE

