

# Bizarre Stuff

*You Can Make in Your Kitchen*

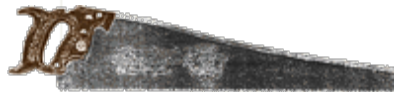
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## Musical saws

*This article was written and contributed by Stewart C. Russell of Glasgow, Scotland.*



Get a normal wood saw, the longer and more flexible the better. Sit down on a fairly straight-backed chair, and clamp the saw handle between your knees.

Grip the tip of the saw with your thumb over the top, fingers underneath. Bend the saw down with your thumb, and while doing this, bend the blade into a slight S-bend with your fingers.

Now tap the saw at the centre of the bend. You should get a ringing sound. Bend the saw a little further down, and the note gets higher. It takes practice to get repeatable tones, so stick with it.

What you've just done is recreate the sound of the musical saw, an instrument popular before the advent of amplification. With dedication, the saw can sound like an eerie soprano voice. Professional saw players (they do exist; listen to the opening tune of the movie "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest", or the They Might Be Giants track "James K. Polk") use a cello bow and controlled knee movements to modulate the blade's whine.

If you want to learn more about the musical saw, visit the musical saw homepage at <http://www.lmaster.u-bordeaux.fr/scie/intro.html>

If you need to learn even more, there's a book co-written by saw virtuoso Jim "Supersaw" Leonard. It's called "Scratch My Back", published by Kaleidoscope Press, Santa Ana, CA, USA; ISBN 0-9620882-0-X. I got my copy from Amazon.com. (currently out of print - ed.)

A few companies make specialist musical saws, which are more flexible and less sharp than wood saws. One of these is Mussehl and Westphal, who have been making musical saws since the early 1920s. You'll find them at the New Classics site, <http://classics.nu>

*Stewart's pages can be reached through <http://scruss.com/>.*

## For further research...

### Saws

Sandvik makes perhaps one of the best [musical saws](#) available.

### Web sites

The [International Musical Saw Association](#) (formerly California Saw Player's Association) has lots of resources and links.

The [Musical Saw and Theremin page](#) is maintained by Texas musician Robert Froehner and features, among other things, musical saw sound files.

[Musical Saw . com](#) has lessons and saw related items for sale.

[Lark in the Morning](#) sells saws, instructional videos, and other instruments.

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<http://bizarrelabs.com>

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Last updated Dec 30, 2008

