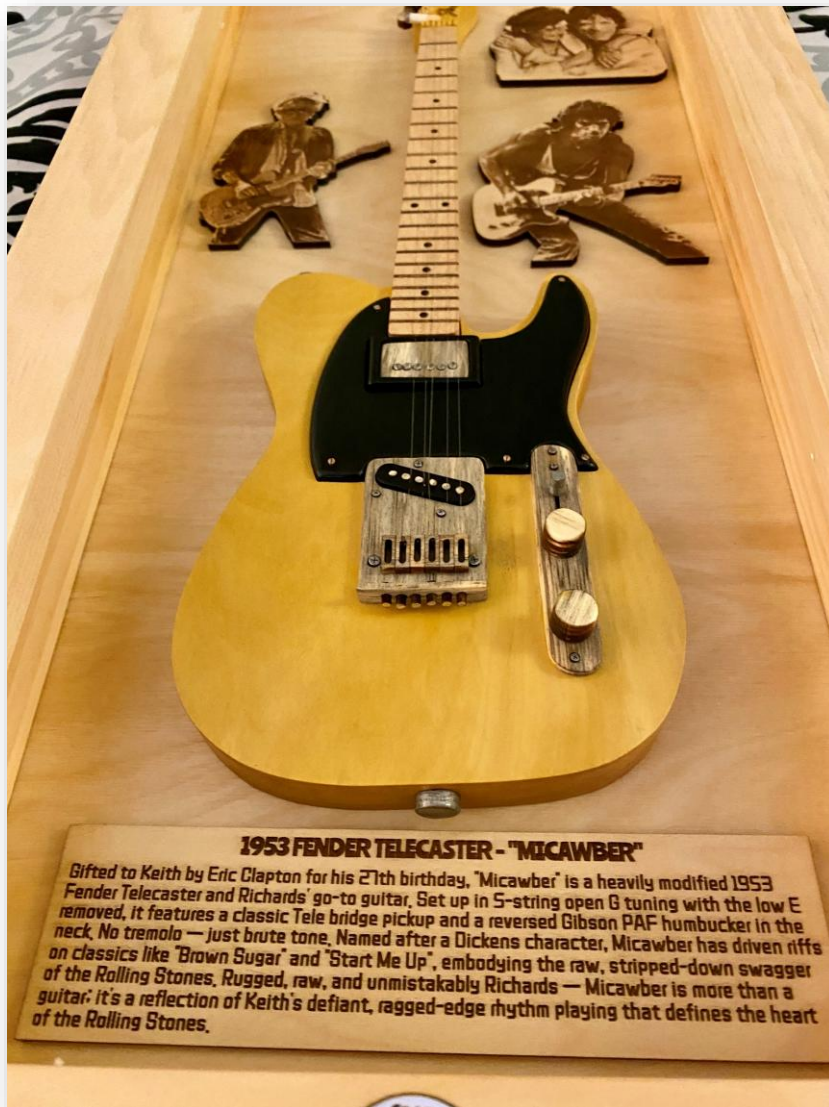


Micawber Intarsia Shadow Box

Step by Step

The “Twang Meets Sawdust” Edition
by Alain Dugas – a.k.a. The Luthier of Legends



This guide documents the build of my tribute to Keith Richards' 'Micawber'—a Telecaster as iconic as the man himself. If you've ever wanted to recreate a legendary axe in wood, this one's for you.

STEP 1: Do your homework

Before you cut a single sliver of wood, you need to dig into the history. When you're building a tribute to an icon like Keith Richards' Micawber, accuracy matters.

- Confirm the guitar is truly the player's favorite. Legends come with myths—sort those out first.
- Grab high-resolution photos of the body, pickups, bridge, knobs, the whole shebang.
- Scale the image to fit your shadow box.
- Print it. You're going to slice this thing up like a deli sandwich, so make it sharp and precise.

See below a sample picture of the full guitar



STEP 2: Wood Selection—Nature's Color Palette

Getting the right wood is half the battle. You're not just building a guitar—you're impersonating one.

- **Body & Headstock:** Yellowheart was the ringer for Micawber. Smooth grain, cuts like butter, and has that golden Telecaster vibe.
- **Neck/Arm:** Maple. Classic, reliable, and just enough grain to give it soul.

Pro tip: Let the grain—or lack of it—work for you. Don't fight the wood. Choose it like Keith chose riffs: instinctively.



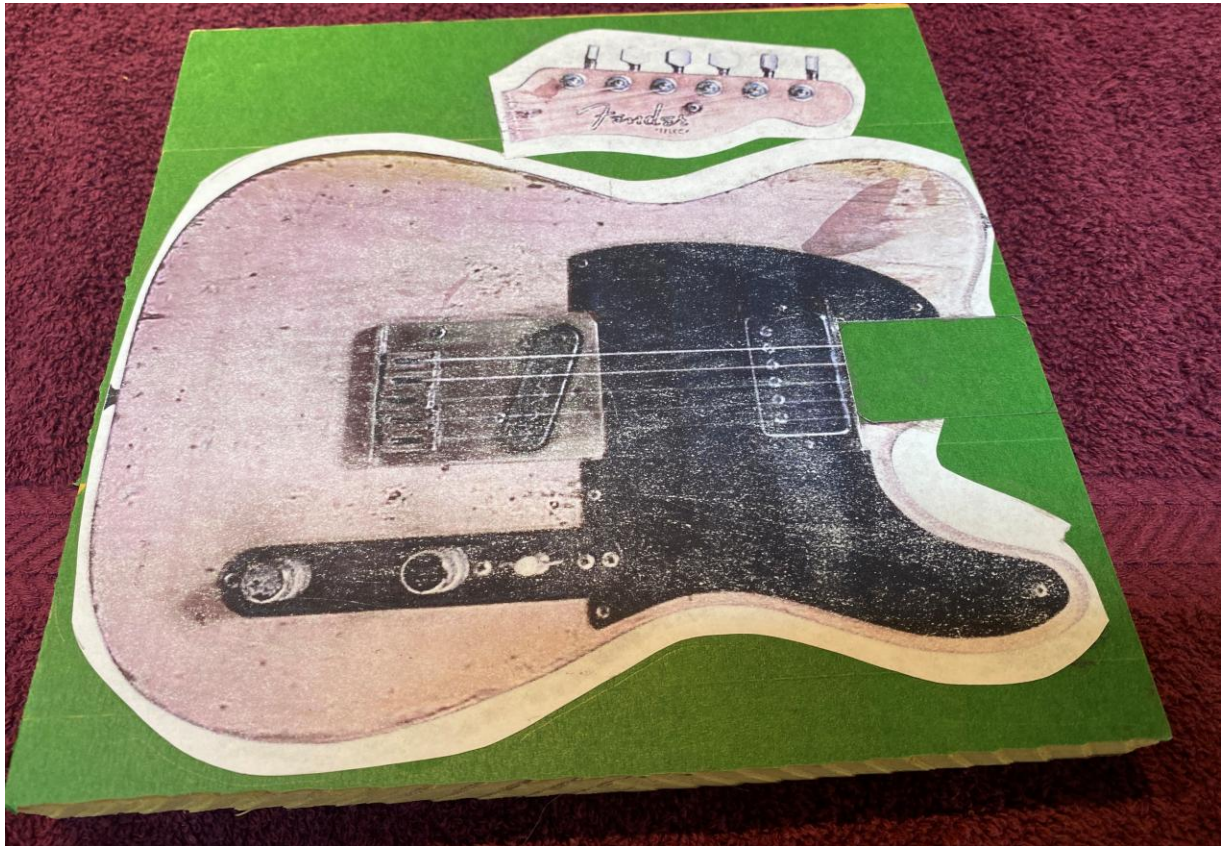
STEP 3: Tape, Print, Stick, Cut

Painter's tape goes down first—green tape is your friend here. Then glue the printed pattern right over it. Why?

Because it peels off clean and protects the wood. This lets you cut with total confidence, hugging every curve like a rock ballad's bridge section.

Once the shapes are out, just peel the tape off to reveal raw, perfect pieces ready for the spotlight.

Make sure your printout matches your final shadow box size. If you get the scale wrong here, the whole thing ends up looking like a ukulele tribute.



STEP 4: Cut It Out (No, Literally)

Time to fire up the scroll saw. You'll cut along the glued-on pattern lines—easy to follow thanks to the tape trick.

For the pickguard, cut it right out of the same body piece. No fancy exotic black wood here. You'll fake it later with ink (see Step 7), and trust me, no one will know. Unless they're a lumber psychic.

Start with the outer contour before diving into tight internal cuts. A sharp #5 reverse-tooth blade keeps it clean and reduces tear-out.



STEP 5: Laser it like you mean it

Break out the big guns: the laser engraver. This baby does the fine stuff—frets, fret markers, logos, screw holes, even grooves for dowels

- Frets? Laser grooves first, then slot them in.
- Tuning posts? Swap in contrasting wood, cut on the laser.
- Capstans, pegs, tuning keys? Dowels do the trick.
- Tiny holes? For strings? Already thought of that.

A 20-watt diode laser gives you precision down to the whisper of a hair. If the scroll saw is the band, the laser is the lead guitarist.



STEP 6: Dry Fit—No Surprises

No glue yet—just mock up the parts. Like a band soundcheck, this step ensures everything fits and grooves.

- Shims under the pickguard and pickups give the piece depth.
- The 3D effect? That's Intarsia magic—achieved by layering and angling just right.

Step back. Tilt your head. Adjust anything that looks off. This is where the whole piece begins to look like a guitar, not just a pile of puzzle parts.



Use thin wood shims to create dimension. That 3D pop is what makes intarsia feel alive—not flat and lifeless like your uncle's karaoke.

STEP 7: Fake the Ebony, Save the Wallet

Black wood? Gorgeous. Also rare, expensive, and murder on blades. Instead, stain the sections with black India ink. If your sanding is glass-smooth, it'll fool just about anyone.

Ink goes on clean, dries fast, and doesn't hide grain like paint does. You get depth and contrast. Best of both worlds.



STEP 8: Obsess Over the Details

This is where the piece gets its swagger and either sings or flops.

- Control knobs, pickups, bridges—go all-in on accuracy.
- Laser etch every little screw.
- Use shims again to raise the bridge pickup.
- Pre-drill tiny holes for the strings so you don't curse later.

This step is all finesse. These small moves separate the pros from the dabblers. The closer someone looks, the more impressed they'll be. If Step 4 was rhythm guitar, this one's a blues solo in drop D.



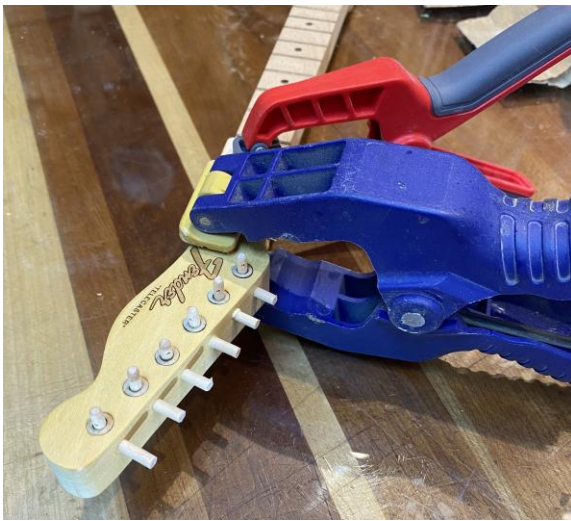
STEP 9: The Glue-up

Carpenter's glue, clamps, and patience. This isn't IKEA—we're doing this right.

- Everything gets glued one piece at a time.
- Let each layer dry fully before handling.
- Tuning keys are glued to posts. Grooves are cut into the nut to hold the strings.

And then—bam—the cigarette.

Tucked between the strings like Keith left it there mid-solo. It's a rebellious, spontaneous detail that adds soul. This is where your piece crosses from replica to tribute.



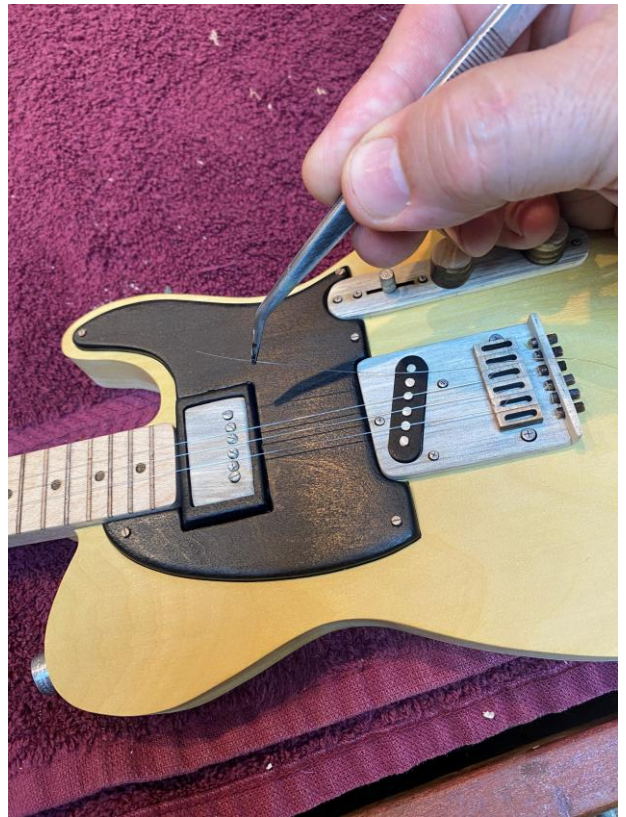
STEP 10: String Theory

No strings = no soul. No guitar looks finished without strings. You'll use fishing line in various thicknesses to mimic real guitar strings.

Feed each one through its tiny hole, loop it around, and stretch it tight. It's fiddly work. But when it's done? Magic.

Once strung, the illusion is complete. Viewers will instinctively want to strum it.

A dab of clear CA glue keeps fishing lines taut and invisible—just don't superglue your fingers together like I did once.



STEP 11: Construction of the shadow box

Nothing fancy here—basic square construction with butt joints and screws.
Focus on:

- Precision
- Strength
- Clean lines

Use your laser to etch a plaque with the guitar's story, name, and maybe a few in-progress shots. It gives context—and credibility.



STEP 12: Oil, Mount, Done

Mount the guitar inside with screws. Don't over-tighten—this ain't drywall.

Then, apply a couple of coats of Tung oil to the whole thing. It seals, protects, and adds just enough sheen without looking like a bowling trophy.

Tung oil takes a day or two to cure fully. Want more sheen? Hit it with a second coat and buff it lightly for that vintage amp glow.

Step back.

Admire.

Say something smug but humble, like, "Yeah... I built that."

