

The Museum of Amazing Musical Minstruments - The Cuica

Close your eyes and travel with me to the Amazon Rainforest. Tall tropical trees surround you and the insects buzz in your ears. But what's that you hear high in the canopy.... A bear?..... A bat?A monkey?..... No it's a *cuica*!!!

The cuica comes from Brazil and it gets its name because of the sound it makes – cui-ca.... cui-ca! Some people think the *cuica* laughs.... others hear it cry. What do you think?

The cuica is a friction drum, played by rubbing a stick inside the drum with a wet cloth. The cloth has to be wet - it doesn't work with dry cloth! The stick is attached through the drum skin at the top. When you push your thumb onto the drum, you tighten the skin and make a higher sound.

Cuicas are played in samba bands and party bands in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Often, it's the older musicians that you see playing the cuica. Once they get too old to carry a big heavy drum on the parade, they take up the cuica because it's much lighter to carry and they can still have fun with it!

I have two cuicas – one comes from a factory in Sao Paulo and is made of steel and cowskin. The other is made from a coconut and snakeskin and was probably made for a tourist market. Although the coconut cuica is very fragile, the sound is delicate and pure, much better than you'd expect from a souvenir shop. It just goes to show that wherever you are in the world, take a look round the local market for unusual musical instruments – you never know what you might find!

Links

A cuica maestro!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9xlRJblfmk>

Cuica samba

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmlK94QvwiA>

THE CUICA QUIZ

1. Which country does the cuica come from? BRAZIL
2. How does the cuica get it's name? BECAUSE OF THE SOUND IT MAKES
3. Who plays the cuica – old or young musicians? OLD
4. Is the cloth you use wet or dry? WET
5. One of Mat the Hat's cuicas is metal the other is? COCONUT
6. If a cuica was a wild animal, what animal would it be?

