

One-man band, Jesse "Lone Cat" Fuller (wrote the blues classic "San Francisco Bay Blues"), lived in Oakland., CA, was a friend and mentor of mine. I used to hang out with him at his house on/around 12th St., west of downtown Oakland. He played an instrument that he called the fofdella, which he created/made himself; a bass that you played with your feet. I helped him carry it into his gigs & set it up a few times at his gigs. Your friends 'invention' appears to be 'based' on Jesse Fuller's instrument. I remember one gig that Jesse did at UC Berkeley that was supposed to start at 7 PM, but he couldn't get his fofdella to work properly. The audience waited patiently for almost an hour watching Jesse, on stage, 'fiddle' with the fofdella with hammer, wire, and pliers. Arhoolie record label owner/producer Chris Strachwicz, who produced the show, went up and asked Jesse to please forget about using the fofdella and start the show, as the audience was waiting for him to perform. Jesse replied, "No, I ain't gonna play until I get my fofdella working." Strachwicz smiled, nodded, and sat down and waited with the rest of us for Jesse to get the job done. After a few more minutes, Jesse got the instrument working, and he started his show, at about 8:20 PM, well over an hour+ late. Of course, the audience forgot about how long they'd been waiting the minute Jesse started to play. It was a great gig/night of music by a roots musician, much of whose music predated the blues, he remembered, performed, and told stories about music that was played before blues; sooky jumps, reels, etc. "San Francisco Bay Blues" remains one of my favorite tunes.



JESSE FULLER

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Fotdella

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fotdella>

"Fotdella" is a term coined by Jesse Fuller to identify a foot-operated string bass musical instrument. Invented and constructed by Jesse "The Lone Cat" Fuller, an American one-man band musician, who needed an accompaniment instrument beyond the usual high-hat (foot-operated cymbal) or bass drum favored by street musicians, Fuller dreamt it up in the early 1950s, while lying in bed. It ended up as a large upright box with a rounded top, vaguely shaped like the top of a double bass, with a short neck on top. Six bass strings were attached to the neck and stretched over the body. He later made five more models of various designs.

To play the instrument, there was a homemade set of foot pedals, each one bringing a padded hammer to strike a string when depressed, like the action of a piano. With these six bass notes, Fuller could accompany himself on the 12-string guitar in several keys.

Fuller's wife took to calling it a "foot-diller" (as in the then-current expression, "killer-diller", meaning exceedingly good); and later, it became shortened to just fotdella.

One of Fuller's later fotdella iterations is available for viewing at a museum in Seattle, Washington.

Dave Harris, an active one-man-band and author of 'Head, Hands, and Feet,' a comprehensive encyclopedia of one-man-bands, has designed and had built for him several fotdellas and currently performs with them in Victoria, British Columbia.

After having seen one of Harris' performances in 2001, members of the band Frog & Henry later built one of their own in 2010 in Ontario, Canada, from a double-bass, piano hammers, drum stands, and found materials.