

Ole Kehlet 1952-2023 English

Danish guitar builder Ole Kehlet – 1952-2023

Memorial words by Finn Olafsson

It is with sadness that I have to announce, on behalf of the guitar builder and guitar repairer Ole Kehlet's family, that Ole is no longer with us. On Monday morning, January 23, 2023 at Zealand University Hospital, Roskilde, Ole passed away peacefully, aged 70, after a few months of illness.

In 1978, Ole Kehlet started as an independent guitar repairer – a job which ignited a dream in him to realize his own guitar sound, his own design, and his lofty visions of making Kehlet guitars optimally playable. As you know, it takes determination and a lot of hard-earned experience to follow your dreams, but when you succeed, it can produce fantastic results – and so it did for Ole Kehlet. He was an incredibly skilled and uncompromising craftsman, and his guitars are today highly recognized among acoustic guitarists.

In the early years of his career Ole built a few classical/Spanish guitars but soon he chose to focus on acoustic steel string guitars, often with very beautiful inlays, which in many cases were pre-ordered.

Ole Kehlet worked daily in his workshop in Toelloese, a small village on Zealand, but from there also participated in the daily operation of his music store "Wood Sound" in Blaagaardsgade in Copenhagen, which he visited weekly to pick up and bring guitars for repair and to meet his customers.

Ole was a warm and loving family man, and he also saw the younger employees in the Wood Sound store as his family. Among them are Emil Meinild, who, since 2000, has been associated with Wood Sound/Kehlet Guitars and Malik Heding, who already started working at Wood Sound at the age of 15 and then apprenticed for seven years with Ole Kehlet - at the guitar workshop and in the store.

In 2002, my collaboration with Ole Kehlet started, when I first got my hands on a steel-string Kehlet guitar. This led to a 20-year long dialogue with Ole about different ways to develop the Kehlet guitar - for example the choice of woods and new inlay designs. It also led to the two completely new guitar models, the Kehlet Grand Folk "Finn Olafsson Signature", which has since been my favorite concert guitar, and the Kehlet "Vienna" - a small bodied short scale parlor guitar.

Together with Emil Meinild, we participated over the years at i.e. Frankfurt Musikmesse, where we presented the fine Kehlet guitars. Ole and Emil had the technical knowledge of the construction principles, while I had the honour of playing the Kehlet guitars and telling about my experience with the instrument. This culminated in an agreement to manufacture under license two Kehlet models with Spanish guitar manufacturer, Alhambra Guitars - built exactly to the instructions of Master Luthier Ole Kehlet. These guitars are still in production.

But what started as a professional collaboration quickly developed into a close friendship between us, and Ole's boundless support for me personally, and for my guitar music, was of great importance.

Ole Kehlet is survived by his wife, Helle and their two sons Martin and Thomas, and five grandchildren.

The funeral was held in silence for family and closest friends.

Honoured be the memory of Ole Kehlet.