Georg Bolin
Posted by trondis23 - 2010/09/02 21:07

Great site! I just discovered it today.

I have two guitars by Georg Bolin. My first was a standard 6-string which I bought in 1975. Back then Bolin got an order from Andrés Segovia, and he made several guitars for Segovia to pick from. Mine is one of the guitars he built on that occasion.

I bought my alto guitar in 1981. Then I visited Bolin in his studio in Stockholm. That was a very interesting meeting. He showed me several of his guitars and inventions, and explained his philosophy of guitar building.

One of Bolin's inspirations was the famous Swedish tenor Jussi Bjørling. He told me that he had observed Bjørling in a concert hall, first from very close, and he was surprised that Bjørlings voice sounded so weak, that is without much volume. But then he listened to Bjørling from the back of the concert hall, and he could still hear Bjørlings voice very clearly. So the voice carried very well without having much volume. This inspired Bolin to try out a new kind of guitar that was much smaller than standard C20 classical guitars - it looked more like a Sor guitar. Like Bjørlings voice this would carry the sound very well without having much volume. He also had a guitar that he called a ters guitar. I think it was a 6 string tuned up a third.

I think that many of Bolin's guitars doesn't sound as loud as most Spanish guitars, but they have a very long sustain. That makes them very suitable to polyphonic music, like baroque or renaissance music.

Bolin had also invented his "tonbord" - or "sound board". This was a kind of amplification system for classical guitars that reproduced the guitar sound by a wooden cabinet. I have heard this on a few occasions on concerts for guitar and orchestra. But he had also expanded this idea to a "tone wall", which was a much bigger system. The idea here was to amplify a small orchestra, like a theatre orchestra. The "sound wall" would make them sound like a much bigger orchestra.

I have uploaded a picture of Bolin on the gallery from when I picked up my alto guitar. The "sound wall" can be seen behind us.

http://altoguitar.com/images/fbfiles/images/Bolin2.jpg

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Re:Georg Bolin
Posted by Sten - 2010/09/03 10:22

Hi trondis23,

Welcome to this website! Here you can find a lot of information and also music scores.

The picture of you and Georg Bolin is very nice.

I have also two instruments by Georg Bolin, one 6 string guitar which he built for me in 1978, and one 11 string alto guitar. I agree that the Bolin sound is special. I use the 6 string Bolin with string #6 tuned in D, and my Ramirez 1A has the normal tuning in E. My Bolin alto has string #3 tuned in g, and my other alto guitar by Hedman has renaissance lute tuning in f#.

Sten

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Re:Georg Bolin
Posted by ninjasan - 2010/09/03 19:50

Welcome Trondis,

Great picture!
How did work the sound wall?

best regards

christophe

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Re:Georg Bolin
Posted by trondis23 - 2010/09/04 07:17

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ninjasan wrote:

How did work the sound wall?

I don't know much about the internals of these devices. In principle it is a loudspeaker with a wooden membrane. Bolin said that no instruments were made out of cardboard. A wooden membrane would sound more natural. And it does.

Below there is another picture, with a "tonbord" to the left. It looks like a guitar body with the ribs on the outside. So it is a kind of music instrument, built on the same principles. He used a contact microphone on the guitar. This was also made out of wood, so he probably made it himself. The "tonbord" had different shapes. The other that I have seen - I think it belonged to the music conservatory where I live - had a square shape. The guitarist could sit on it.

Didn't someone write a book about Bolin? If not, someone should. He was a very interesting man.
http://altoguitar.com/images/fbfiles/images/Altgitar2.jpg

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Re:Georg Bolin
Posted by ninjasan - 2010/09/04 07:39

Hello Trondis,

thank you it is very interesting,
and I like your black and white pictures,
very beautiful light,
small size does not do justice to them,

christophe

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Re:Georg Bolin
Posted by Sten - 2010/09/04 17:21

Hello Trondis,

You asked about a book about Georg Bolin. I have one. It is in Swedish and it is called "Georg Bolins gitarrbok". The author is Oscar Hedlund, the publishing company is Reuter & Reuter Förlags AB. The ISBN number of the book is 91-85870-80-3.

Sten

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Re:Georg Bolin
Posted by trondis23 - 2010/09/05 09:50

Thank you, I will see if I find that book. Fortunately I understand Swedish. I think that I also saw a TV program about Georg Bolin once.

Regarding the images, I tried to upload them with a higher resolution, but it failed. What are the exact limits on the forum and gallery? I will ask my friend who took them if he has more. I actually saw them for the first time this summer myself.

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