

In memoriam of Ikutaro Kakehashi (1930-2017)

Notice of death of one the most impressive personalities in synthesizer history. Ikutaro Kakehashi, who died on the 1st of April 2017 at the age of 87, had an amazing life.

After completing an apprenticeship as a watch-maker, Ikutaro, who was fascinated by the American sound of the 50s, started to build home organs. Following his first company Ace Electronic, he founded ROLAND in 1972. That's THE Roland - one of the most famous synthesizer names today.

Ikutaro Kakehashi

- Ace Electronic Industries (1960-1972)
- Roland Corporation (1972-2013)



Among the legendary Roland products are System-700, SH-101, Jupiter-8, D-50, JD-800, V-Synth, TB-303, TR-808 and TR-909 and many others. Roland made electronic music history - think of the modular systems, synthesizers, drum-computers and performance tools - and the ROLAND SOUND has shaped the last 40 years as no other company has been able to.

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Kakehashi left Roland in 2013. Looking at the Roland products of the present day, his leaving the company marks a clear turning point. We can't imagine Kakehashi would have been really happy with those dainty synths à la Boutique Series or those plastic turntables with a 909 logo.

All the more reason to commemorate him now for his life's work, and to thank him for his tireless efforts in creating highest quality instruments.

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Synthesizer pioneer Ikutaro Kakehashi, founder of Roland, dies at 87

BY DAISUKE KIKUCHI

STAFF WRITER

Ikutaro Kakehashi, an influential figure in the 1980s pop music scene and founder of electronic instrument makers Roland Corp. and ATV Corp., has died at the age of 87, an ATV spokeswoman told The Japan Times on Monday.

Kakehashi founded Roland in Osaka in 1972 and headed the company as an engineer and businessman, where he oversaw the invention of synthesizers and many other revolutionary instruments that changed the direction of music.

The TR-808 and TR-909 drum machines, as well as the TB-303 bass synthesizer, are a few examples of instruments invented by Roland under Kakehashi's leadership. These became popular pieces of equipment among producers of Detroit techno, Chicago house, new wave and other pop genres of the 1980s. They remain classics and are still used by many musicians today.

In 2013, Kakehashi won a Technical Grammy Award for his contribution to the development of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) technology. MIDI is a technical standard for electronic instruments that allows synthesizers made by different manufacturers to synchronize.

In 2000, he left a set of handprints on Hollywood's Rockwalk hall of fame.

Tommy Snyder, a drummer for Japanese rock band Godiego, was one of the first to report Kakehashi's death, sharing a message via Facebook on Saturday.

"Ikutaro Kakehashi, founder of Roland, father of the TR-909, TR-808, Godfather of MIDI, and someone who I have collaborated with for 38 years, and also considered him as my second father, passed away at the age of 87," Snyder wrote.

Many musicians also paid tribute to Kakehashi on Twitter.

Marc Almond, a member of English new wave duo Soft Cell, wrote: "A man who changed music Ikutaro Kakehashi the man behind the Roland synth, 808 and more has sadly passed. Thanks for the electro sounds."

Chris Carter of English industrial music pioneer Throbbing Gristle, wrote that his rock band "could have sounded quite different without Roland."

Kakehashi left Roland and founded ATV in 2013 after a clash with Roland's management.

A private funeral for Kakehashi will be attended only by close family members, the ATV spokeswoman said.

APR 3, 2017

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Links:

- Book recommendation: [I believe in Music – Ikutaro Kakehashi](#)
- Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Believe-Music-Ikutaro-Kakehashi>
- Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ikutaro_Kakehashi