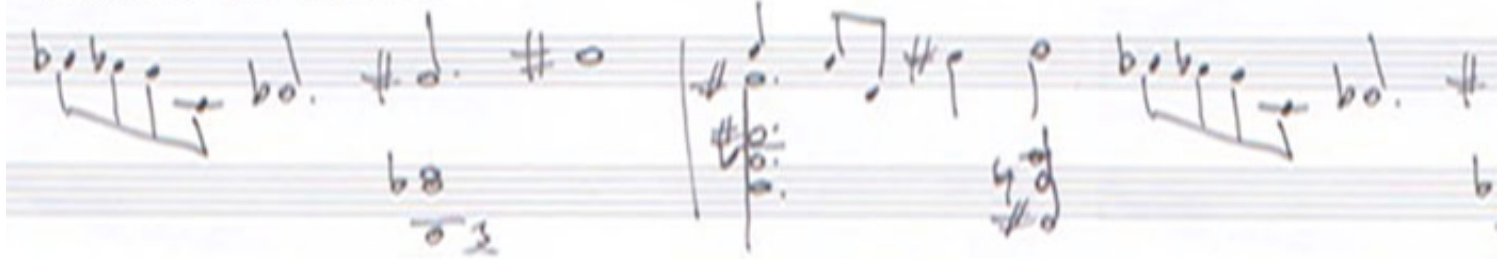


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### Michael Schiefel - gay

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#### Info (English)

His solo debut "Invisible Loop" amazed and fascinated; his second album, a vocal suite consisting almost exclusively of original compositions called "I don't belong", took an introverted turn - a reflective stock-taking in that electric arena of space and movement, identity and escape. On Michael Schiefel's newest album, everything revolves around love. Desire, jealousy, loneliness, new beginnings - they can all be found in Schiefel's project "Gay". In trio with Andreas Schmidt (piano) and Christian Kögel (guitar), Schiefel recants love stories from Ella Fitzgerald to Portishead. "If a song is right emotionally, it really doesn't matter if you interpret somebody else's or one of your own. It really depends on what you need at the time." A surprising statement for a musician who has enthused his audience with unusual compositions and arrangements in recent years. Michael Schiefel has a conclusive explanation for this. "For me it was especially important to play together with musicians and not just relate to myself exclusively. The songs are rooted in situations that others have experienced; the whole record, even the layout, revolves around communication - the core message is a communal one: where is everybody else, where am I, how are we together or how are we not." In a very personal way, the singer interprets songs seldom heard but all the more beautiful. "The idea was that the songs should fit in with the theme of love, and of course with me." In this context, what the title of the album is about can quickly be explained. "It plays with the double meaning of the word 'gay'", grins Michael Schiefel, "because the term is not only a synonym for homosexuality, but also means joyful. And I wanted to break this cliché a little, of the eternally happy gay, which is completely senseless anyway." Schiefel took over a year to find the ten songs that best described his feelings and the ones he felt best with. Instead of quoting the usual suspects, he dug up nearly forgotten songs in books and old records. He sets the best known and by far most recent hit, Portishead's "Glory Box", in the middle of the album. This somewhat gloomy piece isn't the only dramatic moment, other works plumb into the dark depths of being in love as well. "Love is no light-footed game. Sometimes you feel really great

because it's fairly easy right then, but usually it's pretty complicated." Even if Michael Schiefel hasn't forgotten any of his individual art, this album appears to be less extravagant than its forerunner. "I had the idea that it wouldn't be necessary to get very fancy this time." "Gay" reveals even more, along with wonderful musicianship and intense feelings, the enormous expressiveness of this unusual voice. It changes effortlessly between shaded melancholy and euphoria, breathes voluptuously, languishes and rages, flirts and provokes to the degree of femininity. At times Schiefel sings, winking at himself, pulling out all the stops in free improvisation with bizarre, at times electronically estranging scats. Indeed, the singer comes closer to us in these songs than ever before, as the reduction of technical effects and vocal acrobatics let Schiefel's presence and personality radiate even stronger. Schiefel's style-solid accompanists Andreas Schmidt and Christian Kögel create Spartan sound realms full of nuances for a new directness. Filigree piano impressions, atmospheric electric sounds, little dissonant jests and blues phrases all mesh a fine net, with stretches of floating chords, splintering scales and howling screams from the electric guitar. Or, like in the ironical "Get Happy", with scurrile banjo accompaniment. Sovereign expertise is evident in the interaction, frequently improvised, of these two Berliner pros. Schmidt has already played with Aki Takase, Lee Konitz and Gary Peacock, Kögel won several German jazz contests with his trio "Without the Cat".

Michael Schiefel's career as a professional jazz singer began in the early nineties. Born in Münster in 1970, he had moved to Berlin and was still studying composition at the "Hochschule der Kunst" (High School of Art). Between projects with David Friedman, the "Thärichens Tentett" and "Jazz Indeed", Schiefel found time to record his solo-albums Invisible Loop (1997) and I Don't Belong (2000). Whereby the word "solo" in this case is to be taken literally. Schiefel "sang" all the instruments himself and abstracted his virtuoso vocal escapades so consequently on the computer that they sounded like instruments. The daring, almost breakneck variations, layers and collages brought him much fame and honor, and several tours in Europe, Africa, and Asia, among others by invitation from the Goethe Institute. "Apart from him, only few master their voices so well that they can create an entire orchestra in the listeners' ears.", pointed out ZDF (a major German broadcasting company), "Al Jarreau and (...) Bobby McFerrin are names that come to mind. But Michael Schiefel is really doing something new." In "Klassik heute" (Classic Today - a music magazine) Ralf Dombrowski praised "An artist is growing here, one who doesn't rely on others' certainties." Michael Schiefel is much too of an emotional person to calculate with the supposed certainties of others. "I perceive my records as diaries", the singer smiles, "Of course, music has a therapeutic effect for me." That's why I don't belong was a single solo effort that dealt with being alone and accordingly sounded significantly more introspective. "Gay goes through all the moods, even the harmonious and smooth ones that you probably wouldn't play in a neutral phase of life," says Schiefel happily, "but that's just the way it is, when you fall in love."

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