

# FLORIAN HORWATH

## „Tonight“ Helge Malchow, Publisher Kiepenheuer & Witsch

Just as this deceptive impression of innocence returns always when, after weeks of cold wet weather and nasty grey drizzle, the sun reappears and a gentle breeze caresses one's skin as if for the first time ever, so too must the perfect pop song sound. It was invented for that very purpose, as an eternal art form that has been handed since The Beatles (let's say: Norwegian Wood) from one musician to another, from generation to generation, like the baton in a relay race. That baton has passed through the hands of

Cat Stevens, The Kinks, Prefab Sprout, Jarvis Cocker and Ron Sexsmith. And it is now in the hands of Austrian singer-songwriter Florian Horwath, in the form of a song that is pure and perfect sound, that has no message beyond itself, that hovers in the air like an iridescent soap bubble for three brief but precious moments, and saves the world.



On Florian Horwath's 'Tonight' it is there, from the very first second - a sound both entirely old and entirely new, a vibrant guitar full of laid-back elegance, with the sweet lure of the eternal pop song: 'I don't know what to do with myself'. A luscious voice that is nothing more, nothing less than a further musical instrument, a melody that hits the bull's-eye, accompanied by street-busker drums that drive it along. It never reeks of plastic (nor of sweat).

Then the second track, 'I Just Want You To Hold On'. Slower this time, with a rattling rhythm, and the voice more nasal now, almost English school: an infusion of melancholia that skims the surface of sentimentality yet never steps over the line into kitsch. This balancing act relies on the precision of the mix, on sophisticated rivalry between the reserved solo guitar and the piano for example, and on yet another golden melody.

The album unfolds between these two poles - the faster, more upbeat tracks are more reminiscent than the slower ones of the earlier album 'Speak To Me Now', on which tracks with a pumping, driving rhythm were more predominant yet admittedly also derivative somehow of the roads paved by Velvet Underground, Talking Heads and David Bowie. In those cases, the singer-songwriter occupied the foreground - and so does the personality of this Austrian pop artist. The studied ennui sometimes displayed by great singer-songwriters - because their minimalist act relies simply on a voice, a guitar or a piano - is dispelled here by careful orchestration: the single voice is multiplied at moments to suggest a small choir; at others - on the fantastic closing piece, 'Tonight' for example - the piano is enhanced by a long-drawn out, baneful note from an organ, a sitar-like guitar and rousing horns. O, felix Austria!