

## Peter Wiegand // Riverboat

It is all in a state of flux, not only for Peter Wiegand. The singer with a voice that is – regardless of all comparison with Tom Waits or Jacques Brel – above all unique, the actor with the edgy face contrived a houseboat, a **Riverboat**. And he took plenty of friends highly capable in music on board, to create a new kind of music - music thicker than water, music that sails around the shoals, and fools about the waterways of life and style, always preferring the waterways off mainstream. Nick McCarthy, guitarist and songwriter of Franz Ferdinand, is on board. Batman-author Alan Grant from South of Scotland. Georg Kager, Hannes Hajdukiewicz, C.L. Mayer, Jonathan Heine, Harald Lange, Klaus Kammerloher, Davide de Bernardi, Andreas Kohlmann, Lou Noah, Karen Weber, Claudia Gubisch, Alexander Gasteiger, Ingo Steer. All words and lyrics of the unexceptional original songs are by Wiegand himself, this time. The houseboat-crew, mainly consisting of close, long-time musical companions, set the ideas to music. Therefore, almost every track has its own composer. The music is tailor-made for Wiegand, all congenially done and so complex in style, following the cruise of the lyrics strongly autobiographically marked.

New Orleans, Manhattan, Vienna and Berlin can be shadowy guessed in the night, clear rapids, marbled brackish water and swamps, the reflection of the own self and the surrounding society, shipwreck and uprising, joyride and escape, blues and Viennese song, Stomp and Circumstance, Waits and Brecht/Weill, tango in a gin mill and cha cha cha, George Benson, Helmut Qualtinger and Jim Morrison, marching bands, funky twentyfirst-century-swing under weeping willows. Never at all has Peter Wiegand been swinging so laid-back before, with all the depth you can find here. The water beneath his keel is sparkling.

Curtains up, the accordion plays the overture “**Ich wollte immer schon**” (**Ever since, I wanted**): “Ever since, I wanted to make something big out of my life/ but I never knew what” . It is the terrific, opulent show of shipwreck, great theatre. For a start, the combo performs as the juicily striking-up New-Orleans-band and then comes up with an ingenious surprise.

**Eigentlich (Actually):** Actually, it is all not that bad, because – Peter Wiegand sings - “I am easy to talk to”. “Actually/ no one knows you” is indeed a depressing awareness. Floating on an easily grooving George-Benson-like jazz guitar, it loses its bleak comprehension and self-concept. It is all not that bad, even it comes up your throat.

Some comparisons are weak – but in **East Side** Wiegand appears so laid back, so relaxed, in a manner we usually merely know from a J. J. Cale. The countryesque music is penned by Nick McCarthy. Sometimes all you need is a bed to sleep in and the receipt of a transatlantic call.

“He’s got the pendulum/ she’s got the cord/ he’s got the dream / she’s got the clock”. What at first sounds like Waits, quickly turns into pure Wiegand. The metaphors hit home, and are of archaic forcefulness. **Like It Is**.

“Appointments, appointments, appointments” and **No Day Off (Nie Frei)**. Maybe that’s what The Doors would sound like, if Jim Morrison was still alive today and would dedicate himself to lyrics on everyday phenomena like the stress of our time. Just like Wiegand does, in this song with powerful scooting syllables. The organ glows, the base scales up, the “turns bring the tension”.

Wiegand sings in three **languages**: German, English and Viennese. In each one of them he finds fitting allegories, glowing metaphors, startling twists. All of his lyrics could just as well stand for themselves. That measures the league of authorship Wiegand plays in, meanwhile. He also stands out, as everything is real, experienced, nothing is fake. What he’s been through supplied him with a lot of stories to tell. And he is skilled with this special **voice** that is sometimes melancholically gentle, then again rough and lustily rebelling, with his bass-baritone for which the label “expressive” is mere understatement.

Keyboard-, stringed- and percussion-instruments, electrifying guitars, slide-guitar, piano, organ, accordion, base, drums, trumpets or strings here and there coin the instrumentation of Wiegand’s songs, arranged by Jonathan Heine. The recordings of the “Riverboat”-CD took place in Phil Freeborn’s Studios in Berlin, who – by the way – happens to really live on houseboat on the river Spree.

Just before his moving in on his imaginary Riverboat, Peter Wiegand starred in Sinica Galics 17-minute-long short film “Schranken des Lebens (Barriers of life)”, which cleaned up at a film-award-ceremony in Landshut, Germany, and was shown on Emir Kusturica’s Filmfestival, on invitation of the host himself. Right at the moment, he is involved in a film-documentary on the “paradise express” between Belgrad, Serbia and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Bavarian Television dedicated a detailed portrait to him, screening within the series “Lebenslinien (Life-Lines)”. “I didn’t become a songwriter over night”, Peter Wiegand says about himself and adds on: “Dreams, hopes, dissappointments, luck are the drive of my being.” Wiegand is a singer, songwriter, a latecomer – and therefore an antibody to pop-industry.

With about 30 years he started to feel an itching. His experiences so far needed a valve, asked for a transformation into arts. In 1953 he was born in Freiburg, Germany, as the son of German-Austrian parents and was raised, at first, in Salzburg, Austria. As a ten-year-old he ended up in a young offenders institution and later on in a home for maladjusted youth due to “vagabondage” and “ambiguous affiliation”. As a young adult he hung out in numerous countries and even more casual jobs, he dealt in hardware, worked as a registrar in an insurance body, as an orderly, conductor of a couchette coach, house painter in Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Greece, Israel, India. He lived in a kibbutz and in tear-down houses – a life like a novel by Jack Kerouac or T. C. Boyle. With his wife-to-be he was part of an autarkic commune in Bavaria. Children came. The family roamed the US in a camping van. Back in Europe Wiegand built up the first German tofu production – a financial disaster, followed by a family-catastrophy. He found himself on the streets, alone. He went back to the US. He oriented towards theatre. His acting coach encouraged him to work with his voice. Musical projects open doors for Peter Wiegand: the band “Mahagony”, the encounter with the Mongolian singer Nan Chi Lac, the work with Nick McCarthy, who should become a real rockstar with his band Franz Ferdinand. Wiegand discovered Tom Waits’ music, in which he found himself and his story. He became a convincing interpreter of his brother in mind’s music. He knows what he is singing. 2004 he decided to leave his Waits-image behind, to follow his own path. He celebrated success with his dramulet “Wien ist nicht Chicago (Vienna is not Chicago)”. His own music was to become as rich in contrast and as complex as life. In the following years he was musically involved in working with the very successful Gerd Baumann and with the musical network and collective The Conference round Leo Gmelch, Wolfgang Roth, Georg Karger, Dim Schlichter, Tobias Weber, who were all familiar with crossing stylistic lines. The CD and programme “Catch me if you dream” was made.

Now, in 2011, he arrived on his Riverboat, his houseboat. He found a perfect metaphor for the combination of home and the river, the flow, the stream, the movement. As much as he considers the houseboat-crew to be a family, his music is still a matter of the heart: his music “is always more Peter Wiegand”, that is authentic, himself. Off all role models. It’s all in a state of flux.

(Text: Thomas Kraus; Translation: Sabine Appeltauer)

## **RIVERBOAT – the songs with description of the author (lyrics/music) & short associations by Peter Wiegand**

### **DEMO-CD:**

#### **01 Ich wollte schon immer (Peter Wiegand/ C. L. Mayer)**

Again and again, all these fantastic people, who do fantastic things, and me unable to keep up with them.

#### **02 Eigentlich (Peter Wiegand/ Harry Lange)**

Easy and laid- back, you can sail a lot of storms.

#### **03 East Side (Peter Wiegand/ Nick McCarthy)**

Be a hero for once, off into the wilderness of Manhattan, just like that, to show that you can, without safety net.

#### **04 Like It Is (Peter Wiegand/ Hannes Hajdukiewicz )**

The rueful fail to stop the unstoppable. All that remains is clear-up operations at home.

#### **05 Nie Frei (Peter Wiegand/ Georg Karger)**

Caught in the middle between compulsory lust for life and safety. Both can be autistic.

**CD (no tracklist!)**

**Spark Of Pleasure (Peter Wiegand/ Harry Lange)**

After some sheer unsurmountable ascent, you look down into the valley, satisfied and proud.

**Riverboat (Peter Wiegand/ Hannes Hajdukiewicz, Jonathan Heine)**

Many allurements, seductions. Help from friends – never give up – don't forget where you are coming from. Don't lose your aim.

**Feines Haus (Peter Wiegand/ C. L. Mayer)**

A beautiful, dreamlike landscape straight out of a picture book, all around me, just like it really is.

**Same Old Saloon (Peter Wiegand/ C. L. Mayer)**

War and peace, love and death, being connected from the beginning till eternity.

Just as it ever was and always will be.

Running (Peter Wiegand/ Harry Lange/ Klaus Kammerloher/ Peter Wiegand)

Dreams, hopes, disappointments, luck are the drive of my being – come and go.



Photography: Bernhard Müller, Fokus-Design.com

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