

Michael Mayer  
12.11.71 (Black Forest, Germany)

Michael Mayer was born close to the Black Forest, and grew up amongst nature and clean air. His was a normal childhood. At school he hated maths, loved music, and was neither studious nor lazy. His parents encouraged him to play piano, but even then, DJing was his thing. From the age of fourteen he threw parties for his classmates, playing the Pet Shop Boys, Italian disco, funk tracks, and chart hits.

At eighteen he got a job in a commercial club, but the customers didn't like his tastes, so he quit. Spinning dance music at raves was more fun anyway, so he did that instead. The scene pulled him by the ears to Cologne – the city he's settled in since 1992 – and he started a record label, shop and distribution called Kompakt, with his friends. Together they have worked to change techno, and for the first time since it started in 1993, he feels OK about not being there full-time. He's still based in its office, but is more passionate than ever about being a DJ, and travelling.

On Thursday night at the latest, he starts to compile his record box for Friday and Saturday. He never plays the same set twice, and is always improvising, so has to trust his selections completely. It's cliché-German he reckons, this mechanical, monotonous procedure of checking a hundred new releases a week, though he peppers his domestic life with creative, Mediterranean cookery – 'strictly veggie and minimal, but full of passion and lust.' He doesn't usually sleep on planes, but can reach a state of trance by reading, and arrive in good condition.

Three years ago, Michael said he was working on an LP, but it never arrived. He was unable to fully concentrate; three times he started, and three times he stopped. In the end, he made the entire thing in just three weeks, locked in isolation from the angry summer weather. Its rainfall samples were captured during those nights, as it constantly pounded down on his back yard. His stunning, sensual mix CDs – 'Kompakt Köln Präsentiert Michael Mayer', 'Immer', and 'fabric 13' – and string of powerful 12"s – '17 & 4', 'Pensum', 'Privat' and 'Speaker' – are its foundations.

He likens its making to throwing up; at first there is pressure, and then there is relief. It sounds honest, true, whole, and complete. On it, you hear the music of his past, and the spirit of his present. Alan Parsons, The Steve Miller Band, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, acid, New York deep house, movie scores, and thirteen years of techno are there. It's the soundtrack of a Scorpio: sinister, sweet, tender, and sleek. For its title, he wanted to reflect his reality, his constant meeting of people, the forging of partnerships, and reliance on contact. He needed something simple, to capture these hazy, crazy DJ days forever. 'Touch' is Michael Mayer's debut album.

(Nick Doherty, September 2004)

