

## SPEZIALMATERIAL

### HISTORY OF THE LABEL (written by an outsider)

In 1291, a small group of forest community leaders from central Switzerland formed an alliance asserting their independence and unity as brothers, to free themselves and their people from the domination of the Habsburgs. This was the beginning of Switzerland as we know now it, the Confoederatio Helvetica (CH), named after the Celtic tribe who lived in the area before the birth of Christ.

In 1994, a small group of friends from Lucerne in central Switzerland formed an alliance asserting their independence and unity as brothers, to free themselves and their people from the domination of piss-poor commercial indie / rock music. Sound familiar? This was the beginning of Spezialmaterial as we now know it, the Ephidrena Tribe (ET), named after

either:

- a) the stimulant which a team of Japanese scientists were the first to synthesize and derive from the Chinese mao herb in 1892, or
- b) the FSOL-offshoot Amorphous Androgynous, 1993 LP „Tales of Ephidrina%.

**\*DISCLAIMER\*** - Spezialmaterial does not advocate the abuse of amphetamine-like substances, despite the fact that Mormons used ephedrine as a substitute for coffee as late as the 19th century.

Ephidrena began promoting and arranging gigs for some of the highest quality acts to emerge from the worldwide electronic music scene. They consistently risked their own hard-earned cash to bring talented producers to their country, exposing curious audiences to a kaleidoscope of new and original sounds in the face of more popular, safe & conventional musical forms. From the first gigs held in mountain caves, Ephidrena events graduated to include former women,s prisons, former malt processing warehouses, former riding school barns and former yoghurt factories (among others). [anyone who was at Warp & Skam,s „Test 1% @ Kelham Island Industrial Museum in Sheffield on 25/4/98 will understand the importance of location to the music being performed there!]

The flyers for their events were often lovingly-created, recycled handmade objects of intense desire (and therefore highly collectible) - examples of such would be actual cassette tapes printed with the event info and having music recorded onto each and every one, or the infamous Skam event flyer which used slices of bicycle tyre inner-tube embossed with braille into which was inserted a folded, transparent information sheet. In this, and other ways, Ephidrena endeared themselves to their foreign guests and local audiences as promoters with a flare for novelty, attention to design and love of small details.

Their passion for the music and perseverance in putting on such events gave them regular exposure to - and close and lasting contact with - many of those involved at the forefront of the genre, as well as crucial insight into the strategies required to operate as successful promoters. It was important for Ephidrena to create a friendly, informal atmosphere for the acts they invited to play, and consequently artists were able to stay longer, get to know them better, work collaboratively on musical projects, and enjoy both the natural splendour of the surroundings and elements of Swiss culture too.

As a parallel process to their increasing success as promoters, original Ephidrena founders Fabian Stübi & Thomas Federspiel (Intricate) and other friends (early incarnations of what would later become Person, Solotempo, Staubsauger and Softland, among others) continued their musical experiments, gaining experience playing live alongside their international guests, partly influenced by some of their favourite acts, but equally searching for new means of expression and constantly letting their ideas mutate into different forms.

From ambitious but uncertain beginnings, Ephidrena left Lucerne to base themselves in Zurich, and evolved into Spezialmaterial - a larger collective of artists and associates bringing various strengths to the label, who are finally gaining the recognition they deserve in Europe and further afield.

After many years of refining their sounds, each of the acts on Spezialmaterial now can claim to have had a long history of sonic exploration and development, leading them to the point today where they not only encourage each other and set an example for their local contemporaries, but are also starting to reach out to avid listeners and future collaborators all over the world. Although SM originally provided a platform for homegrown talent, it has begun to branch out and prepare the release of quality electronic music from a variety of international producers.

One of the core reasons for their increasing popularity and the growing reputation of the label is the aesthetic principle underlying the design and production of both music and artwork, which harnesses the talents of a network of creative individuals and results in a unique product which catches the attention of both the eye and the ear in equal measure. Financial constraints necessarily meant limiting the number of items released, and this further added to the collectability of their material.

After such a long, and at times difficult evolution, things have now started to move fast for Spezialmaterial. In 2000, the first compilation - SM1 - was self-distributed on CDR, as well as other albums by SM artists such as Person, Intricate, 6000 (now Solotempo), Staubsauger / Solarium and Monoblock B. The major turning point in terms of design came with the SM2 compilation, given out as an oversized cardboard foldout package stamped on the inside with track details. This and other efforts were recognised and rewarded in the form of financial awards from cultural institutions in Lucerne and Zurich, which paved the way for the possibility of the label's first releases on vinyl in 2002. Innovative design, and music of an equally high standard ensured that early SM releases started to attract a good deal of international attention, and with the help of Smallfish in London and a host of other long-term supporters and friends, hype began to grow around the label. A selection of press reviews can be found in each artist's page. The result of such positive feedback has led today to worldwide distribution by Baked Goods with a small amount reserved for Warpmart and Smallfish.

Having played live in various venues across Switzerland for years, Spezialmaterial artists have also had a range of other live experiences, performing in the UK, Germany, Greece, Spain, France and New York. The first major SM tour took place in Germany in November 2002, and included long-term UK accomplices Posthuman (Seed records), Lee Grainge and Guy Veale. The second major SM tour will take place in the UK in October. The third major SM tour will take place around northern Europe, with co-Swiss label Domizil in November / December 2003

Despite their increasing notoriety, the Spezialmaterial crew remain a mysterious lot, occasionally sighted at a few select venues across Europe and occasionally in the USA, but most of whom are shy and prefer to tend their crops and look after their families at home; they are as happy on the football field (they have their own team, and t-shirts, honest) or in their electronic laboratory-bunkers as they are wakeboarding behind the chrome & wood luxury of a 1950 design (V8 / 185 HP engine) Riva Ariston speedboat on Lake Lucerne under the shadow of the mountain (Bürgenstock) where label manager Cio,s dream date Audrey Hepburn repeated her marriage vows from the previous day,s wedding to Mel Ferrer in a special religious ceremony on 25/9/54.