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## EXTENDED PLAY



### Superpitcher

BY DAVE MORRIS October 18, 2007 14:10

SUPERPITCHER With DJs Adam Marshall, Terence Kissner. Tue, Oct 23. Loki, 577 King W. \$5. 10pm.

The Kompakt building in Köln looks the way you'd imagine a boutique German techno label to be – spare, minimal and gleaming. You'd never know that in the basement there were a bunch of lanky musicians smoking and fooling around with keyboards and drums in the studio like a jam band sequestered in

a farmhouse.

“Everybody was putting in the instruments we had, so it's fully equipped. We've been jamming,” Superpitcher (real name Aksel Schaufler) explains over the phone from his home in Köln, almost apologetically. “We're so happy to just use real instruments and record and record and record and then edit the next day. We mostly use the computer now like a tape machine.”

For an electronic music label, even one with as much of a maverick reputation as Kompakt, using live instruments is daring. It's a testament to their production skills that tracks such as “The Art of Letting Go” by Supermayer – Superpitcher and label co-owner/producer Michael Mayer's duo project – fit comfortably into the Kompakt aesthetic. A disco bassline comes in, funk guitars start to chime; there's even a live trumpet in there. Judging from the critical reaction to their full-length Supermayer *Save the World* as well as how cuts such as “Two of Us” have been turning up in DJ sets from Ibiza to Coachella, nobody's shunning them just yet.

Schaufler and Mayer have been friends since they met at one of Mayer and Tobias Thomas' now-legendary Total Confusion parties, though what inspired the Supermayer album after years of collaboration was the label's expansion into its own building, which houses the label's distribution

arm, shop and recording studios.

“We had this basement where we could build up four studios,” says Schaufler, “and one of the studios I share with Michael.

“Actually, we share it because we both wanted to smoke in the studio, and at the time Michael was a smoker. A few weeks later he quit, so now I'm forced to... ah, not smoke so much,” he explains with a wry chuckle.

“I was just sitting with Michael and I don't know if it was him or me who was about to work on a remix, but we just sat there and had a good time [collaborating on it] in the studio. And we did a few remixes together and we really liked the way of working together after working for so many years on our own in our bedrooms or whatever.”

Their studio is a lot more fun than their bedrooms, if the relatively giddy atmosphere of *Save the World* is anything to go by. From “Heroin,” the 2001 single that drew his fellow DJs' attentions, through his '04 full-length *Here Comes Love* and his frankly spectacular '05 mix disc *Today*, Superpitcher was synonymous with lush, melancholy tech-house; if the beats were technically minimal, the emotion in both his productions and his hushed, intense voice certainly weren't. *Save the World*, on the other hand, bumps with a warm and positive vibe – “Planet of the Sick” feels almost garage-y, with organ stabs and a swinging beat, while the xylophone loop in the extended album version of “Two of Us” gives the track an anthemic quality perfect for kicking a DJ set up a notch or 10.

Though it's something of a departure for Schaufler (who plans to work on his next artist album in the coming year), *Save the World* isn't dominated by Mayer either. It's an organic move forward for both of them, in keeping with Kompakt's reputation for not resting on their laurels. And although the label's collective have resisted being pigeonholed by switching up their style – particularly when they originated and then dropped schaffel, a craze that proved to be short-lived – they've remained a gateway drug for non-techno fans through every stage of their evolution. Schaufler understands this, having been himself won over by the Kompakt crew in the very beginning.

“At that time when I came to Köln, I liked electronic music but I was not really used to going to techno parties because they were no good in the south of Germany. I really understood when I came to Köln what makes a really nice party, or what you can call a techno party.

“I think it was always the Kompakt people, Michael and those guys, they always have been looking for something behind the machines, like warmth or deepness or soul in the music, you know? Even if it has a straight kick drum.”

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