Where Does Mephedrone Come From?

Mephedrone is the best-known of a group of drugs based on the alkaloid cathinone; its chemical name is 4-methylmethcathinone, abbreviated to MMCAT - hence its childish-sounding meow meow nickname. Cathinone is found in the khat plant, which was considered a divine food by the ancient Egyptians, who took it to start a process known as apotheosis. To this day, it is used across East Africa and the Arabian peninsula - most notably in Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia - both for recreation and, in some cases, by labourers in order to ease physical fatigue. Users tend to chew the plant’s fresh leaves to achieve the desired effect.

The synthetically manufactured mephedrone itself was first identified in 2008 by the EU’s Psychonaut Research Project. Its laboratory origins are still murky, though it appears to have first emerged in Israeli clubs during the Noughties under the name 'hagigat'. In 2005, Israel outlawed cathinone use in response to this.