

Dope



XTC: The Drug of the '80s—by Dr. Timothy Leary

Sociologists tell us that every stage of human culture produces its own art, its own music, its own literary mode, its own sexual style and its own unique slang. And its own ceremonial drug.

Take the 1980s, for example. The style of this decade comes from our leader, Ronald Reagan, who has given us an inhibited sexual style, a nostalgic, '50s aesthetic, a series of Moral Majority witch-hunts as public sport, a gloomy Cold War paranoia and an uncharitable ethic of corporate selfishness.

And, as an antidote, this decade of cold rhetoric is producing its very own line of hot new drugs. Their generic name is empathogens, referring to a state of clear empathy and compassionate understanding activated in the user's brain.

Versions of this drug are called MDA, MDMA, Adam, Clarity, Venus and Zen. But the most popular is a member of the MDA family of psychoactive substances called XTC.

Dozens of researchers have described the feelings of well-being, insight, understanding and sympathy that are activated by MDA and, in particular, XTC. Claudio Naranjo, the distinguished Chilean psychologist, has published this typical report: "The MDA peak experience is typically one in which the moment that is being lived becomes intensely gratifying in all its circumstantial reality. . . . The dominant feeling is . . . of calm and serenity . . . love, as it were, embedded in calm.

"The perception of things

and people is not altered—lives are held in abeyance and replaced by unconditional acceptance. This is much like Nietzsche's *amor fati*—love of fate, love of one's particular circumstances."

The eminent Cornell psychopharmacologist Thomas Pynchon suggests that "the circuits of the brain which mediate alarm, fear, flight, fight, lust and territorial paranoia are temporarily disconnected. You see everything with total clarity undistorted by animalistic urges. You have reached a state which the ancients have called Nirvana, all-seeing bliss."

The effects generally last

around five hours, there is no distortion of reality, and you can perform normal functions—like play tennis or drive a car. But you don't want to. Who'd want to play tennis when you're sitting on the mountain of blissful wisdom?

The Dangers of XTC: The experienced person hearing a drug described with such pushing superlatives is led to inquire: Come on, what are the drawbacks?

Clinical reports suggest that around 25% of first-time users experience mild nausea, which passes quickly. If not, you heave, pass go and proceed onto Nirvana.

The experience is so pow-

erful that everyone feels a bit drained the next day. Most users take the drug in the afternoon and by midnight are ready for a wonderful refreshing sleep, preferably in the arms of a loved one.

The XTC drugs are not genital aphrodisiacs. The extraordinary sensuality of the experience is generalized over the body. At the height of the session, caressing is the standard mode of communication, and after three or four hours sexual relations may be in order.

Legality: At the present time, XTC drugs are legal. Why? Because there are no cases of abuse. The drug is not addictive. It doesn't distort reality or lead to antisocial or destructive behavior. There has never been a recorded case of a bad trip.

One reason for the positive response to XTC is consumer expectation. Its word-of-mouth reputation emphasizes love and peace. If you're a belligerent biker or a bar-room rowdy itching for a fight, the last drug you'd take is XTC.

A Typical XTC Experience. In the fall of 1978 my wife Barbara and I were visiting New York City. We had cocktails one evening with a friend named Brian, who told us of this wonderful "love drug." He gave us ten tabs. Now I must add, Brian was not a dealer hanging around dark alleys pushing dope. He was a well-known psychologist using XTC in his psychotherapy practice. He advised us to take the drug on an empty stomach.

Barbara and I proceeded to a French restaurant, where we consumed a deli-

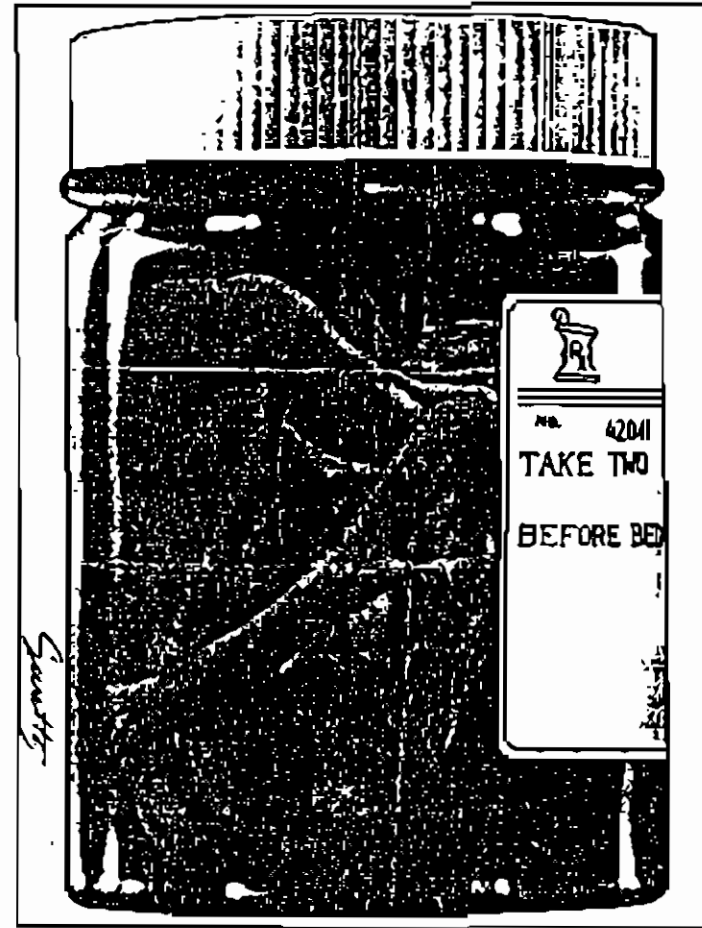


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ctious dinner and a bottle of Maison Pierre Groleau wine. We felt pretty mellow, as I recall. Then Barbara looked at me with that "let's do it, baby" twinkle in her eye. What could I do? The greatest successes in my life have come from saying yes to Barbara's invitations.

We each dropped one tab. I waved to the waiter and made a signing motion.

The drug hit me before the waiter returned with the check. Zap!

Barbara looked at me and laughed. "You're so lucky," she sighed. "It always hits you first."

I was sitting there feeling better than I'd ever felt in my life. (And I've had some pretty good times.)

"Look, Barbara," I said, "you're gonna have to pay the check and take a spoon and ladle me into the cab."

She shot me an envious look.

Twenty minutes later we arrived at our hotel suite. Without a second's delay we stripped off our clothes and hit the bed. I lay on my back. Barbara sat on top of me, her head and chest next to mine. Our bodies were glowing. A film of scented moisture, like the sheen of a lotus blossom, covered our skins.

We looked into each other's eyes and smiled. This was it. We both understood everything. All our defenses, protections and emotional habits were suspended. We realized joyfully how perfect we were designed to be. Apparently the only thing to do was caress each other.

Well, the experience went on and on. When we started to come down after three hours, we took another hit. Funny things happened. We chatted away like new-born Buddhas just down from heaven. The next day we flew back to Hollywood. Three days later we were married.

Here, the cynical observer says: "So you had to take more XTC to get back to that narcotic state of bliss. . ."

Nope. That's not the way it works. The drug seems to activate the empathy-clarity circuit in the brain. Once it's turned on, it stays operative. It's like booting up your home computer.

Barbara and I have taken XTC around 12 times in the past six years. We can return to that blessed state of fusion without the drug—by lying close to each other or by looking at each other in a serene environment.

And since our brain-marriage in 1978 we have watched dozens of our friends share the experience. It's a 90% success rate—if taken with the right motives in the right place. It surely does help things along if you sincerely want to get there. And you must take it with someone you want to love.

XTC is not a party stimulant. It's not a recreational hit. It's not a street drug.

In the past six years we have heard

many reports on XTC experiences from high places around the country—New York, Maui, San Francisco, Santa Fe, San Diego, Ann Arbor, etc. You get the picture—it's a very sophisticated, highly thoughtful cult phenomenon. Is there anything wrong with that?

Many "New Age" psychologists use XTC with their clients. After all, clarity is the aim of any program of self-improvement, isn't it?

One new problem has emerged: the XTC Instant Marriage Syndrome.

Lots of people who didn't know each other too well have shared the experience, activated the love-empathy circuit and rushed off the next day to get married. In some cases, after the rose colored smoke cleared, the couple realized that although they did, for a while share the highest region of love, the practical aspects of their life were not in synch. You might say it's a cosmic summer romance.

To tell you the truth, it got so bad in Boulder, Colorado, that bumper stickers and T-shirts were printed with the message: DON'T GET MARRIED FOR WEEKS AFTER XTC.

At this point the question may arise in many minds: "Sounds great! Where can I get some?" And here is where practical cosmic reality appears.

Let's face it, we're talking about an elitist experience. XTC is a drug that is known, by word of mouth, by sophisticated people who sincerely want to attain a high level of self-understanding and empathy. We're talking about dedicated researchers who are entitled, who've earned a bit of XTC. This is why the general public hasn't heard about it. No one wants a '60s situation to develop where sleazy characters hang around college dormitories peddling pills they falsely call XTC to lazy thrillseekers.

The basic rule of neurological common sense applies. Don't take any drug unless you know, trust and admire the person providing it. There's little chance that you can get your hands on XTC through the usual channels of drug distribution. Colombian gangsters and Mafia pushers aren't interested in selling a love-peace-wisdom drug.

If you want this experience, your next step is obvious. Start hanging around smart, spiritually ambitious, "together" people who exhibit in their behavior the qualities that the drug promises.

Even if you aren't interested in taking drug XTC, you could do worse than be the lookout for people and places that give off that glow. Keep alert. When you're ready, it will happen.

Do you understand what I'm saying? When you're really ready, you'll get the XTC you can handle.