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Rambo to the rescue By Loudon Wainwright Portrait: Penn & Teller Their two-man magic show-"for people who hate magic"—is leaving audiences spellbound By E. Graydon Carter

Tortoises and hares in the news race

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resurrecting the fads, fashions and follies of

A photographer returns to Vietnam to seek out children of Americans 107 Camera at Work Joel Meyerowitz captures the lovely and temperate essence of a summer's day 114 **PREVIEWS** Hot-Weather Honchos

SPECIAL REPORT

LEGACY OF WAR

Just One More

Children of the Dust

now illegal

The Trouble with Eestasy

The drug with the alluring nickname is seductive, controversial, dangerous-and

Cover: Janet Jones, starring in the movie A Chorus Line, photographed by Dustin Pittman; Tina Turner photographed by Deborah Feingold

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efti Californian Anna Nuyent, 45, took Ecstasy, or MDMA, as part of her therapy over the course of a year. An estimated 200 U.S. psychotherapists have treated patients with the drug. Nugent's innef voyage, which was aided by music and an, eyeshade to reduce distraction, focused on Garden of Eden Imagery. THE following day she wrote a poem about the experience entitled Revisioning UDE VOMI LURRE

swervingly outspoken about his

own use of MDMA for recreation,

which he terms "healing." He also

informed the DEA of the nation's first known MDMA-related death,

that of a California psychoanalyst

with a heart condition who took

double the normal dose in 1983

and suffered a fatal heart attack

an hour later. A second death, that of an epileptic woman from Dallas who drowned after suffer-

ing a selzure in her bathtub, has

hearings in Los Angeles and Kan-

sas City, make three points. They

a \$125,000 fine.

able: He says he's made more

than \$100,000 from Ecstasy, or

SMU hangout in Dallas asked each other cheerfully, "Are you x-

ing?" Commented a bartender

who was familiar with the drug's

dehydrating effects, "Count the

glasses of water-that will tell you

how many MDMA users there are in this bar." At another bar young

patrons nonchalantly charged

their Ecstasy (\$20 a round, plus \$1.33 tax) on their American Ex-

Police have found MDMA even

in grammar and high schools,

where the tablets are crushed and the fragments sold as "hits." But

according to DEA agent Frank Sa-

pienza, street abuse is still most

prevalent among college students, young professionals and

gays-"I guess because of the

drug's reputation for good sex." Claims that Ecstasy has aphro-

disiac properties have surprised

many doctors: While it promotes a

sense of emotional closeness, it also blocks male ejaculation.

roughly divided into three phases. The first half hour is often re-

ferred to as the WP, or Weird Peri-

od. When the drug first hits the

bloodstream, there is a feeling

Recreational users say that

erlence

Early this summer, when MDMA was still legal, kids at an

about \$4,000 a week.

press cards.

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The drug's supporters, some of whom testified at government

been similarly linked to MDMA.

say mass just because I'm fe-American could want: confimale" and embarked on a dence, happiness, verbal ease spiritual quest that has inand emotional intimacy. But cluded meditation, therapy detractors, including scienand postgraduate work in theology. Then, in tists at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1984, after contracting cervical cancer, Nugent say that while more study is needed, early evitried a psychoactive drug. It was a legal chemidence strongly suggests that MDMA may be cal substance, manufactured by a licensed psychologically addictive and cause brain laboratory, and 150 milligrams of it produced damage. A synthetic, nonhallucinogenic coma five-hour experience that she believes pound made in the laboratory and modeled on changed her life profoundly. She took the drug a substance found naturally in the oils of nutseven more times over the course of a year, dismeg and sassafras, its chemical name is 3,4cussing her revelations with her psychologist,

THE DRUG IS SEDUCTIVE, CONTROVERSIAL,

NOW ILLEGAL

HGEROUS-AND

nouncement from the '60s,

the pill Nugent took is rapidly

becoming the yupple drug of

the '80s. It is called MDMA,

Adam, XTC or Ecstasy, and users say it gives them every-

thing a self-absorbed young

methylenedioxymethamphetamine. In 1914 E.

Merck, a German pharmaceutical firm, devel-

oped it as a prospective appetite suppressant,

but it was never manufactured. In 1953 the

U.S. Army covertly tested it on animals, along he says. "It could put people like me out of busiwith several other psychoactive drugs, to see if ness." A hysterectomy removed the cancer, but Nugent feels that the drug helped her face it might have a military use. In large doses the question of death less fearfully and that it MDMA proved highly toxic to monkeys and greatly enriched her family relationships. "It dogs; it was never tested on humans. is a tool that has helped me gain religious The compound did not resurface until and personal insight," she says. "For me, 1970, when a few psychotherapists began to it has been part of a serious path toward selfrecommend it to patients. Extravagant claims were made-that MDMA could cure alcohol Though that may sound like a hippie proand cocaine addiction, mend marriages and

July

Anna Nugent, 45, a hospital

administrator in northern

California, has been married

for 21 years and has two chil-

dren. Raised as a Catholic,

she became dissatisfied with a God "who wouldn't let me

who has supervised its therapeutic use by 50

of his patients. "A five-hour session can be

equivalent to five months of regular therapy,"

AGENT

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Dallas DEA chief Phillip Jordan briefs agents who began enforcing the MDMA ban on July 1. Don Darling, 54, a retired Navy lieutenant commander, and corporate consultant Lindsay Robinson, 39, took Ecstasy in several \$150 sessions with a prominent Santa Fe psychiatrist.

argue that MDMA can be of real "These are the same wishful medical value for people suffering claims that were made with LSD, from schizophrenia, depression, PCP and even with cocaine freeldiction, anxiety and family dif ficulties. Don Darling, a former drug either. It is not a magical naval officer who took the drug under a doctor's supervision, says The DEA's conservative posiit gave him "magical" insight into tion rests in part on Siegel's studies of recreational Ecstasy users. personal relationships. MDMA Says Siegel, "We do have evidence advocates maintain that it is not habit-forming since its unpleasthat there are a number of physical effects such as nausea, vomitant side effects increase with higher dosages and its euphoric ing, fluctuations in blood pressure and heart rate, blurred properties decrease with frequent use. They also claim that bona vision, and tension in the jaw and fide scientific research will be styfacial muscles." Even MDMA's mied. The patent on the drug has supporters do not recommend the run out, and with no windfall profdrug for people with a medical its in sight, no pharmaceutical history of hypertension, epilepsy, company is likely to foot a \$10 heart disease, diabetes, hypomillion bill for the exhaustive glycemia, glaucoma-or psychottesting necessary for Food and ic episodes. The case is often cited Drug Administration approval. of a psychiatrist who disappeared DEA supporters are scornful. for a week after taking psyches, even promote world peace. Word spread of the new, harmless, legal panacea whose blissed-out devotees were beginning to call it Ecstasy. By the summer of '84 its use had increased so dramatically that the federal Drug Enforcement Administra-

KIDS/ASKED tion took emergency measures that started on July 1, 1985, to make trafficking in MDMA punishable by 15 years in prison and It was the marketing of Ecstasy as a party drug, particularly in Dallas, that alerted the DEA. According to one local dealer, monthly shipments of 400,000 tablets were routine. A student publication at conservative Southern Methodist University recently published a cartoon depicting a crowd of bug-eyed students surrounding a single normal coed. The caption: "Guess who isn't high on Ecstasy?" Dealers explain that the drug became especially popular in Dallas because SMU banned liquor from campus, inadvertently making MDMA the only legal intoxicant students could possess. Observes one young entrepreneur, "We just applied basic principles that we learned last year in our SMU marketing course, and things took off. It was fun!" Not to mention profit-

"Cops versus docs is not the is-

sue," says Dr. Robert DuPont, for-

mer chief of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. "No researcher

has had trouble getting LSD for le-

gitimate research. The people be-

hind permissive use of MDMA to-

day are the same ones who gave

us LSD and pot and who flirted with coke. They are just looking for a safe high." Ronald K. Siegel,

a UCLA psychopharmacologist

who studied LSD in the '70s, testified for the DEA. "To have a drug

that is useful in psychotherapy,

that increases communication

and insight and empathy-it would be wonderful." he says.

VIEW AND THE DE GEROU

Dr. Alexander Shulgin, 60, a neuropharmacologist specializing in

psychoactive substances, leaves a Los Angeles hearing. Before MDMA

became Illegal, Shulgin supervised its synthesis for medical research.

ror in medical research circles since LSD was outlawed in 1966. An Illinois psychologist, a Harvard psychiatrist, a lawyer on the Harvard Medical School faculty and a psychiatrist who used MDMA in his Santa Fe practice challenged the DEA's scheduling and demanded governmental hearings. Their claim: that while the drug needs to be regulated, It properly belongs, like Doriden and paregoric, in the less restrictive Schedule III, which allows medical use and research. The most energetic crusade for MDMA has been coordinated by a group called the Earth Metabolic Design Foundation. Originally inspired by counterculture architect Buckminster Fuller, the lapsed foundation was reconsti-

tuted in 1984 by Rick Doblin, a

student from Sarasota, Fla. Doblin, 31, whose ambition is to be-

come the first "psychedelic psy-

of considerable disorientation-

"Something is happening," explained one user, "but you aren't

sure what." The WP is followed by

the "rush," a wave of tingling sen-

sation, sometimes accompanied

by spasmodic jerks. Soon the

body adjusts, the pupils widen until there is almost no iris visible,

and a sense of happy sociability

takes over. For most users the "high" lasts three to five hours,

though some aftereffects-sleep-

lessness, nervousness, lightheadedness-can last longer.

"Ecstasy makes you what ev-eryone wants to be," says one afi-

cionado. "Self-assured, loving, friendly. It's the hug drug." How-

ever, users say it merely intensi-

fies their preexisting moods. As

one student cautioned, "If you take it when you're depressed,

you just get more depressed." And

for some users, MDMA is pro-

foundly unpleasant. "It was one of the worst experiences of my life,"

says one disappointed dabbler. "I

had the jitters for fifteen hours

and felt good for about fifteen

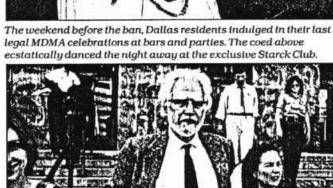
in Schedule I, a category of controlled substances including her-

oin, LSD and other drugs that are

considered to have high poten-

On July 1, MDMA was placed

minutes.



the demand with other, more dangerous drugs such as the muchabused hallucinogen PCP, or Angel Dust. Of course, the search is also on for new legal substances. One dealer who quit selling before the July 1 ban took effect says that he expects a shipment of another drug within weeks. He says that this one, called EVE, will be "a little milder than MDMA." But, more to the point, he won't go to prison if he's caught dealing it. The emergency ban can remain in effect for up to 18 months before MDMA is placed perma-

The party's over. A bartender at Tex's Ranch in Dallas, which had raffled off two tablets every 15 minutes the night before, announced the end of over-the-counter sales just before midnight on June 30. MDMA and surfaced in another city directing traffic. Other opponents point out that a chemically similar drug called MDA causes severe brain damage in rats. Such proponents as Dr. Alexander Shulgin, a ploneer in the study of psychoactive drugs, respond that Sudafed, a nonprescription decongestant, is also chemically similar. David Smith, M.D., the director of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic, reports that of some 400 drug-related problems the clinic sees a month, only two or three are caused by MDMA. And even then, he says, "Typically we find the person has actually taken a combination of drugs." Both sides of the controversy are concerned about illegal street

laboratory and not the street."

Though MDMA is now illegal,

street sales are not expected to di-

minish significantly. What will

change is its chemical purity, as

well as its distribution system.

Young Dallas dealers say that the local organized crime network is

already beginning to build pro-

duction facilities that will keep

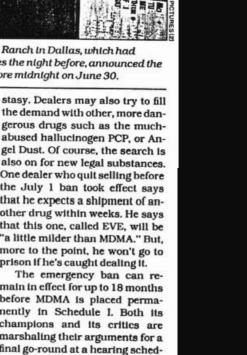
their city well supplied with Ec-

nently in Schedule I. Both its champions and its critics are marshaling their arguments for a final go-round at a hearing scheduled for this fall in Washington, D.C. All they can agree on is that some form of control is necessary. "If this drug does anything like its supporters suggest-and I don't believe it does-then it's too damned important to leave it to such cavalier dispensing," says

trade. Says Harvard psychiatrist Lester Grinspoon, one of the leading advocates of MDMA's therapeutic use, "There are people who would abuse horse manure if you put it in capsules. It's very important that the data come from the

psychopharmacologist Siegel. "It must be studied with all the scientific integrity that we can muster. because we have the physical and psychological lives of our patients at risk."

Janet Zich, San Francisco.



chotherapist," hopes to start a legitimate drug company with

tials for abuse, no safety standards accepted by the Food and Drug Administration, and no accepted medical use. That last criterion has caused the greatest fu-

funding from Ecstasy users. Foundation members, inc therapists, researchers, pharmacologists and spiritual leaders, recently broke with Doblin over what they considered impolitic tactics. Doblin had been un-

Text: Claudia Glenn Dowling Reporting: Edward Barnes, New York; Susan Peters, Los Angeles;

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