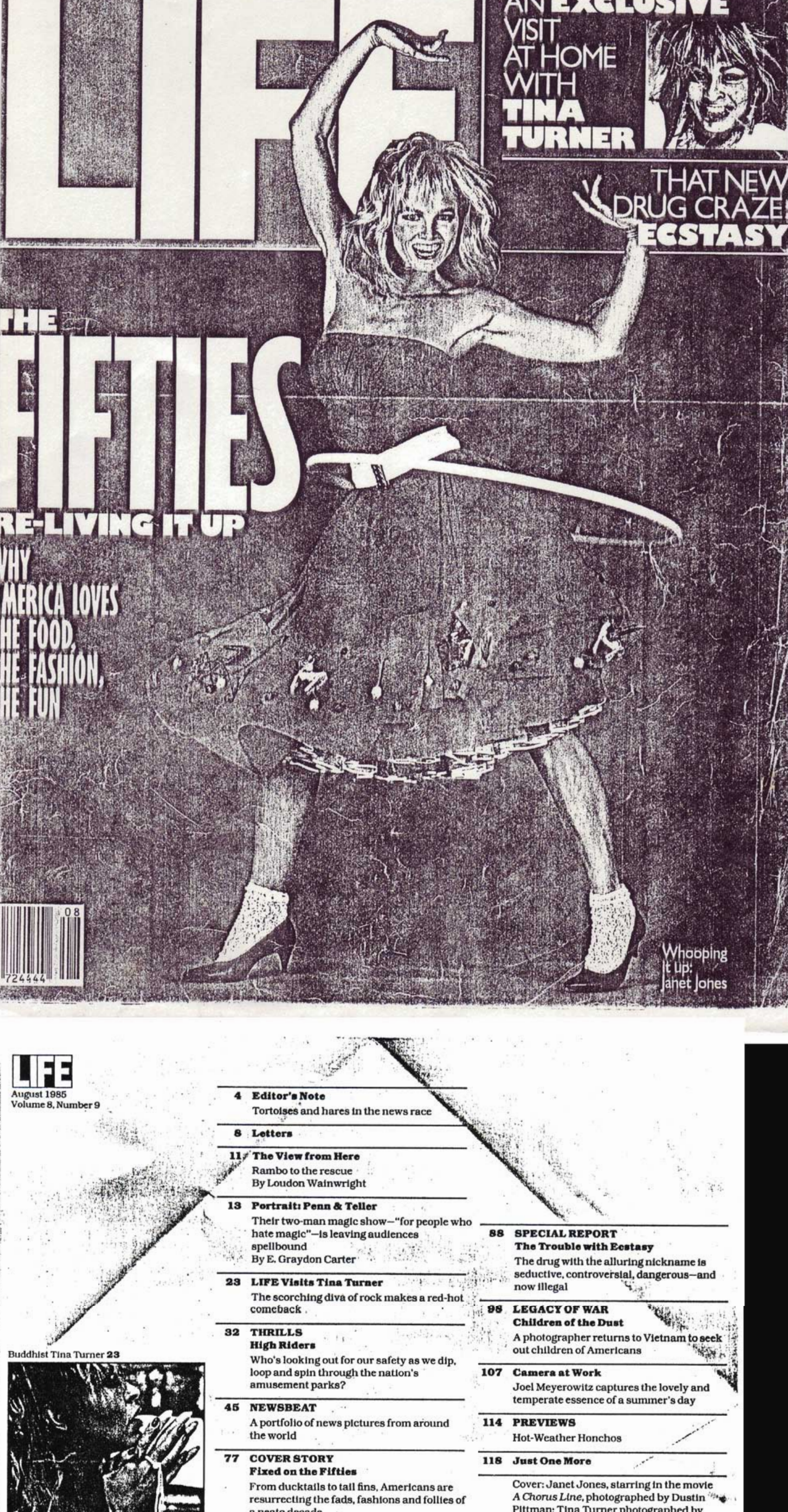


AN EXCLUSIVE VISIT AT HOME WITH TINA TURNER

THAT NEW DRUG CRAZE! ECSTASY



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



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# THE TROUBLE



Left: California... Anna Nugent, 45, sees a month, only two or three... MDA, as part of her therapy over the course of a year. An estimated 200 U.S. patients with the drug, Nugent's... which was aided by... to reduce distraction, jobless on Garden of Eden imagery. The following day, she wrote a poem about the experience entitled "Revisiting Birth Sierra."

# THE ECSTASY

THE DRUG IS SEDUCTIVE, CONTROVERSIAL, DANGEROUS—AND NOW ILLEGAL

Left: California... Anna Nugent, 45, sees a month, only two or three... MDA, as part of her therapy over the course of a year. An estimated 200 U.S. patients with the drug, Nugent's... which was aided by... to reduce distraction, jobless on Garden of Eden imagery. The following day, she wrote a poem about the experience entitled "Revisiting Birth Sierra."

Anna Nugent, 45, a hospital administrator in northern California, has been married for 21 years and has two children. Raised as a Catholic, she became dissatisfied with a God "who wouldn't let me say mass just because I'm female" and embarked on a spiritual quest that has included meditation, therapy and postgraduate work in theology. Then, in 1984, after contracting cervical cancer, Nugent tried a psychoactive drug. It was a legal chemical substance, manufactured by a licensed laboratory, and 150 milligrams of it produced a five-hour experience that she believes changed her life profoundly. She took the drug seven more times over the course of a year, discussing her revelations with her psychologist, who has supervised its therapeutic use by 50 of his patients. "A five-hour session can be equivalent to five months of regular therapy," he says. "It could put people like me out of business." A hysterectomy removed the cancer, but Nugent feels that the drug helped her face the question of death less fearfully and that it greatly enriched her family relationships. "It is a tool that has helped me gain religious and personal insight," she says. "For me, it has been part of a serious path toward self-discovery."

announcement from the '60s, the drug took its place as the yuppie drug of the '80s. It is called MDMA, Adam, XTC or Ecstasy, and users say it gives them everything a self-absorbed young American could want: confidence, happiness, verbal ease and emotional intimacy. But detractors, including scientists at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, say that while more early evidence strongly suggests that MDMA may be psychologically addictive and cause brain damage, a synthetic, nonhallucinogenic compound made in the laboratory and modeled on a substance found naturally in the oils of nutmeg and saffron, its chemical name is 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine. In 1914 E. Merck, a German pharmaceutical firm, developed it as a prospective appetite suppressant, but it was never manufactured. In 1953 the U.S. Army covered it up on animals and with several other psychoactive drugs, to see if it might have a military use. In large doses MDMA proved highly toxic to monkeys and dogs; it was never tested on humans. "The compound did not resurface until 1970, when a few psychiatrists began to recommend it to patients. Extravagant claims were made—that MDMA could cure alcohol and cocaine addiction, mend marriages and

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Dallas DEA chief Phillip Jordan briefs agents who began enforcing the MDMA ban on July 1.

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 sensation, 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 afterwards—sleeplessness, nervousness, light-headedness—can last longer. "Ecstasy makes you what everyone wants to be," says one aficionado. "Self-assured, loving, friendly, it's the hug drug." However, users say it merely intensifies 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 profoundly 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 minutes."

Both sides of the MDMA debate are especially bitter in Dallas, where the drug is used by a former naval officer who took the drug under a doctor's supervision, says it gave him "magical" insight into personal relationships. MDMA advocates maintain that it is not habit forming since its unpleasant side effects increase with higher dosages and its euphoric properties decrease with frequent use. They also claim that bona fide scientific research will be stimulated by Ecstasy. A student run out, and with no windfall profits in sight, no pharmaceutical company is likely to foot a \$10 million bill for the exhaustive testing necessary for Food and Drug Administration approval. DEA supporters are scornful,

The weekend before the ban, Dallas residents indulged in their last legal MDMA celebrations at bars and parties. The coed above ecstatically danced the night away at the exclusive Starck Club.

On July 1, MDMA was placed in Schedule I, a category of controlled substances including heroin, LSD and other drugs that are considered to have high potentials for abuse, no safety standards accepted by the Food and Drug Administration, and no accepted medical use. That last criterion has caused the greatest furor in medical research circles since LSD was outlawed in 1956. 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 Difenidol and pargolone, in the less restrictive Schedule III, which allows medical use and research.

Recollections are saying that Ecstasy has been roughly divided into three phases. The first half hour is often referred to as the WP, or First Period. When the drug first hits the bloodstream, there is a feeling

Dr. Alexander Shulgin, 60, a neuropharmacologist specializing in psychoactive substances, leads a Los Angeles hearing. Before MDMA became illegal, Shulgin supervised its synthesis for medical research.

The most energetic crusade for MDMA has been coordinated by a group called the Earth Metabolic Design Foundation. Originally inspired by counter culture architect Buckminster Fuller, the lapsed doctor was recontacted in 1984 by Rick Doblin, a student from Sarasota, Fla. Doblin, 31, whose ambition is to become the first "psychedelic psychotherapist," hopes to start a legitimate drug company with funding from Ecstasy users. Foundation members, including therapists, researchers, pharmacologists and spiritual leaders, recently broke with Doblin over what they considered impolitic tactics. Doblin had been un-

psyches, even promote world peace. Word spread of the new, harmless, legal panacea which blazes a trail for Ecstasy. By the summer of '84 its use had increased so dramatically that the federal Drug Enforcement Administration took emergency measures that started on July 1, 1985, to make trafficking in MDMA punishable by 15 years in prison and a \$125,000 fine.

Text: Claudia Glenn Dowling Reporting; Edward Barnes, New York; Susan Peters, Los Angeles; Janet Zich, San Francisco.

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