

Networking with the **Psychedelic Community**

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THE INTERNET has been the single most significant connection I have to the psychedelic culture at large. From my inception as a naive, recreational psychonaut, the resources of the Web have cultivated a refined experience of synchronicity and expansion of consciousness. From social networking with other like-minded individuals, and researching the scientific and cultural histories of various chemical compounds, to more philosophical endeavors, my understanding of the psychedelic phenomenon would not be so enriched without the aid of technology. Though where I live is a more condensed sample of the psychedelic community at large, nationally and worldwide we are a spread out group, and the current social climate doesn't allow for open communication regarding obscure and taboo subjects—such as the use of psychedelics.

The computer revolution has truly created an extension of external reality (much as psychedelics do for inner reality). File sharing networks have spawned viewer-created content as an alternative source of culture, available outside the mass media. This has become a catalyst through which we have been able to more openly network as a community. The Internet is a vast, highly specialized, and intangible venue that allows freedom of speech and information to flow more easily because it bypasses limitations such as location, social creed, race and religion. It would only make sense that this invaluable virtual terrain would be the grounds for broadening the psychedelic community. All areas of expression—visionary art, experimental music, films, pod-casts, interactive forums, blogs, event organization, chemistry, history, archival literature, and philosophy—are all tied together into this single network available to those who seek it.

There are several types of social networking and online communities—such as Erowid.org, Deviantart.com, Deoxy.org, Tribe.net, and

Matrixmasters.com—that provide a place for individuals to cross-reference experiences, opinions, knowledge, and creative commons. Not long ago, vital information regarding psychedelics was scarce, often transmuted from person to person. Now that we have a digital medium, this knowledge can be pooled into massive virtual archives. Under the scrutiny of peer-editing, people can make more educated decisions for themselves regarding their interactions with psychedelics.

Electronic music has played a significant role in my personal psychedelic experiences. It has acted as a guide through that often bewildering landscape, reinforcing the intent of the trip; opened vistas of inspiration and awakened my auditory senses to new realms of discovery. Modern electronic music was largely inspired by the use of psychedelics and newly created synthetic compounds. With its repetitive drumming and ambient soundscapes, it is akin to the ancient tool of shamanism, its rhythm echoing the primal heartbeat. This drumming is also used now to induce trance and ecstatic states of consciousness. The resurgence of this archaic character is largely due to the creation of electronic music. Being that Western culture had long been separated from the use of entheogenic plants, it is fitting that these plants and newly created compounds would inspire the return of these timeless qualities in music.

Computer animated visual imagery further propels and enhances the trance-like psychedelic state. Myriads of fantastic fractals, and digital mandalas envelop the mind in a cocoon of mirrors reflecting inner worlds. Along with cascading melodies, they blend the boundaries of perceived frequencies, slipping the psyche into synaesthesia. Once while I was at such an electronic music event, the video display included a montage of golden spirals in nature. Nautilus shells, hurricanes, and galaxies all swirled in unison. Its juxtaposition of imagery shot at rapid-fire succession into the audience's visual



"Event Horizon"
by Sara Huntley & Jordan Price

cortex and it was one most powerful moments of cinema I've ever experienced. It hypnotized my mind with the beauty of geometry. It was brilliantly timed with the music and propelled my brain into the Milky Way.

For me, personally, this nonlinear mode of thought has brought together fragments of information to paint an incredibly visceral portrait of our world, of what our technologies have done to the environment. Technology was once hailed as the savior of humanity, a means of

attaining a better life, yet in the hands of greedy corrupt people technology has sown the seeds of our own destruction.

To paraphrase Einstein, our technologies were created at a limited level of awareness. The disharmonies of that technology in the environment will be proportional to the lack of awareness. It will take a new level of awareness to recognize this disharmony and to create more efficient means of achieving equilibrium. I think that this idea is typically too large to be processed on a personal level by most people. Though I thought I had been relatively aware before, after the wake of this experience the stark reality of the situation became inescapably urgent. This realization in itself is just one step in redefining the individual in relationship to the collective and the environment.

Leaps of human understanding have completely changed the way we see ourselves in the cosmos. Our minds now peer into realms of micro and macro perception, and exchange information and culture at a dizzying rate all across the world. This experience is unique to our position in human history. Growing up in such a technological culture, alternatively navigating one's existence between authentic and virtual realities, is a novel and strange path for our and future generations to take on. Humans have for millennia used technology in the service of social identity. For me, personally, psychedelics have opened a deeper understanding of this new multifaceted techno/spiritual/natural relationship we have with the global network.

Technology serves a human desire of fulfilling the imagination, of creating magic by controlling science. Psychedelics also serve a human desire of exploring dreams and musing over the mystery that is the nature of reality. These two facets reflect dualism and a commonality; they both promise us new worlds. •

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