

From time to time I (Dave Van Arnam, of 1730 Harrison Ave, Apt 353, Bronx, NY 10453, sole prop of this fanzine, which rides for free with Andy Porter's SF WEEKLY) get this feeling that no one pays any attention any more to FIRST DRAFT, which doesn't particularly bother me except that I feel that I've got some things to say, from time to time. I also get the feeling that people think I'm just rambling on about things. Perhaps this is true; for the last two issues I went on at great length on one aspect of what I had billed as a vigorous massage of the Media. Ok, let's see how far I can get into the next phase without losing track of what I'm getting at.

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NIXON FOR PRESIDENT!

Topic: Is something new happening?

I don't know. But if it is, it's beginning to be absolutely certain that the Media are going to be the last to know it (with some notable an pleasant exceptions).

I count myself, by the way, as a reasonably disinterested observer; I have found no answers and, like Gertrude Stein, may not even know the questions. I'm a Nixon Republican (one of my few long-time Causes), I've never taken LSD, I'm not a speed freak nor a marijuana addict, I intend to sign the petition sent to SFWA members stating support of the US commitment to South Viet Nam, I think that if we don't do something for the Negro pretty soon they're really going to start burning down the cities and are going to be slaughtered (this is the most negative aspect of the current war), and I have lots of other eclectic ideas. By this I only mean to point out that I am, as I said, reasonably disinterested in terms of having any single attitude or solution. For now, anyway.

Since I have not taken LSD, I cannot say from my own experience whether it is a good or a bad thing. However, most of what I have heard and what I read seems at this point to indicate that it may well be a very good thing indeed, if you know what you're getting into. When LSD causes harm, the cause seems usually traceable to one or more of several things.

[1] Approximately 2% of the human race shd never take LSD under any circumstances; these people, I understand, are those who are schizophrenic in a particular fashion that happens to be chemically verifiable (the East Village Other once printed a New Jersey address where such tests could be made for a small charge). If these people take LSD, it can cause all sorts of horrendous psychoses and whatnot. But some go ahead anyway, thus providing fodder for the scare-Media. [2] An LSD trip shd never be taken alone and, what is more, shd never be taken without a thoroly competent guide in whom you have full personal trust. Take a trip alone and you're liable to wake up dead on the sidewalk because no one was with you to prevent you from flying out your fifth floor window. Take a trip without a competent trusted guide and if your trip starts to go bad the incompetent and/or untrusted guide won't be able to help you, and you're liable to wake up in Bellevue freaked out of your mind for a few months. [3] Know what a trip is. It looks to me as if a lot of bad trips are simply caused by the subject's negative response to sensations, perceptions, experiences he didn't expect. There was a long thing on

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hippies and psychedelics in LOOK some months back, and it included a revealing account of a bad trip taken by one of the magazine's editors. He wanted to find out what the LSD experience was about; apparently he didn't take the trouble to study up on it first, because his writeup at no point indicates any real understanding of what he says was happening. And as for the bad trip, he himself inadvertently gave away the reason for it when he wrote of panicking at last when it seemed to him he was struggling on the lip of some mental whirlpool that was trying to make him let go and fall into...whatever it was. Now as I say, I haven't taken LSD myself, but from what I've read, at that point the man had come up against the drug's insistence that he simply let go and let the substance do its job. Since he fought, it turned the whole thing into a bad trip.

There are other points I could number and add on, but I'm not writing a treatise on how to turn on. I simply wanted to point out that the indications at present are that the much-vaunted dangers of LSD can be substantially minimized by proper care. I've no doubt that there are trippers in fandom who will tell me that I don't know what I'm talking about, and they may be right. But I'll bet they tell me I'm closer to being right than the hypothetical non-user who will probably write me to tell me I don't know what I'm talking about.

Hm, yes, there are two major dangers we're warned about I didn't cover. One seems a justifiable warning -- pregnant women, and women who have decided to become pregnant in the very near future, should not take LSD. LSD originally was derived from ergot, which, as I understand it, has been used for millenia to cause abortions. It seems quite possible that LSD, like ergot, can cause abortion. Point against LSD. (But one, obviously, that can be ignored by men, and women content to remain on the Pill.)

There is also some evidence LSD causes chromosome damage, though different investigators have come up with conflicting reports. There are several considerations that apply here in taking some of the curse off this possibility. One is that there is as yet no evidence that this fact (if it is a fact) means anything. Another is that many common substances cause similar chromosome breaks, including, I am told, coffee, aspirin, artificial sweeteners, etc., from which I will allow you to draw your own conclusions. A third is that LSD has been around for some years now, and a lot of babies have been born to women who have taken LSD, yet no one has come up with a single baby that can be said to have been harmed by LSD chromosome damage. A recent case has come up of a partially-deformed child whose mother had taken LSD, true; but she took it during the first three months of pregnancy, and as I said above, the facts already seem to show that that is absolutely contraindicated.

The Federal Narcotics Bureau has frequently gone on record as being absolutely...puzzled, should I say?...by the vast surge of interest in using psychedelics among the young. Their feeling is that the psychedelics are dangerous and harmful, and, a level lower, below their verbalizations but in range of some other critics who have explicitly said this, that the psychedelics [a] do nothing, are useless, are escapism, [b] result in the formation of a way of life that would ultimately mean the destruction of The American Way of Life. This last concept is sort of big in the Media right now, usually by snide implication, and in a way it may be what I am leading up to. Next week I'm going to try to deal with the results that seem to come from this growing use of psychedelics. Preview: I'm not too sure... [] Still, I am hoping that you are the same...