

Delta Particles: A generation asleep

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Below the melancholy strum of the Seattle grunge sound, and above the sour-note melodies of Santa Monica rock, a new generation of Beat musicians wails into the night at the Savoy Tivoli in San Francisco's Northbeach district.

It's the better part of a Friday night, and as my body creeps with fatigue, the rest of the inhabitants of the Savoy Tivoli look as though they've only just woken up hours ago, shaking off their inhibitions and easing into the night. The lights are kept low and a blue haze swirls about in an artificial atmosphere overhead and the band tunes their next set.

Tonight I'm here to meet up again with "Sonya", who has agreed to be my host and guide through the equally

hazy and burgeoning culture of nippers, a generation of users to emerge in the past decade.

"It's the best selling show."

Sonya strides in and is instantly recognized by the staff behind the bar. She's a familiar face on the weekdays, but a fixture of the place on the weekends. She doesn't realize that she's over 40 minutes late. To a nipper, there is no past, or future; no ticking of the clock, instead just a single flow of time where everything that ever was, and will be, coalesces around them.

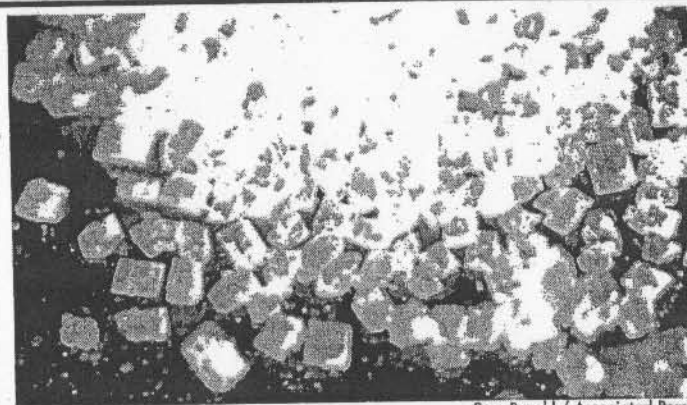
When Sonya finally joins me at the table, I can tell that she's already using, but even as she sits down she's already pulling out a brass antique cigarette holder and plucking a hand-rolled cigarette from within. She pauses for a moment (no, it's more graceful

than that) and offers me the pick of the lot, but I politely decline her again.

"It's the best selling show."

She exclaims in a cool manner, then flashes me a smile in a way that would make even Steve McQueen blush. She's referring to a drug that goes by several street names: Danny-Ray, Space Dust, St. Anthony's, Fab-Fried-Freddy, Orb, Delts, Nip, but most commonly, it is known as Delta Particles.

She begins telling me her misadventures since we last met and lights up, inhaling nicotine and Delta Particles into her lungs. Delta Particles in their unaltered form have the appearance of a colorless, odorless powder with a slightly tangy flavor. In a pinch it can be ingested into the body in this form, either straight or mixed into a drink, but is



Sam Bruehl / Associated Press

Delta Particles shown in its unaltered form, it has a sugary appearance of a colorless, odorless powder with a slightly tangy taste.

usually manufactured into small stamp sized sheets called dabs, which the user places in the mouth or under the arm or hip, absorbed through the lymph nodes.

Delta Particles are chemically based on an anticholinergic—a drug type used in many pain killers and muscle relaxants which affects the nicotinic acetylcholine receptors—its effects are heightened when taken with nicotine,

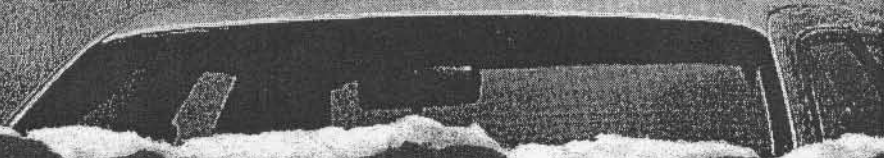
but Sonya isn't concerned with those reasons why. She informs me "The only nippers who take delts as a powder are the uninformed, the inelegant and the high schoolers. But it still happens. The poor lot." Smoking Delta Particles is a more sophisticated high, but more importantly, it's cooler.

Miracle Drug C9H13N
Delta Particles didn't always have such a vogue im-

Delta continues on B10

With all the awards it's won, you might think we'd be satisfied.

America's award-winning sedan.
The day it first rolled off the assembly





Karl Parakenings / The Chronicle

Russian sensation, Pleazant Cosmodrome, playing live at the Savoy Tivoli in San Francisco's Northbeach District.

I ask Sonya about the culture of Delta Particles; if it's ever gone mainstream or been recognized in literature or music. I'm trying to understand a nipper's motivation to want more, because Delta Particles aren't physically addictive, like heroin for example, but psychologically addictive like gambling.

She tells me of the poet Sonny Callanta's work, which

is a hauntingly beautiful account of Delta Particles from the other side. He describes the *daseinsgefuehl*, or existence-feeling--essentially a nipper can become enveloped and accustomed to the certain existence--a separate existence--that Delta provides them.

This experience grips a user like a severe OCD episode. It's not physically demanding, but the psychological effects are inescapable. Nippers can also often be confused as depressed, except they seemed content or even cheerful.

She tells me "Using delts is like removing a tight sweater. It frees you up, allows you to breathe. It opens a door tapping directly into people's creativity." She continues to explain that most nippers enjoy the existence as a personal achievement, and never give any thought to producing their experience for others to enjoy, but at the same time, music has always played a pivotal role in heightening the existence.

I also learn about Delta bands like Tuxedomoon, Factrix, Romeo Void, MX-80, The Residents, but it's an obscure Russian progressive-

rock band called Pleazant Cosmodrome that was both heavily influenced by, and influential to, a generation of Delta Particle users. Their music remains one of the most accurate--and intelligible--accounts of the psychotropic effects of the drug. Between weeping guitar riffs and moaning vocals, one learns of the "other-worldly" and euphoric effects of Delta Particles on the user, also sometimes accompanied by hallucinating glowing particles or microorganisms floating around them in the air.

A Generation Asleep

As I grew up, a child of the 60's, our parents feared for our subversion at the hands of drugs, sex and rock n' roll. These were, after all, the Devil's play things. Today, these kids--these nippers--exist outside the reach of those harms, but not through devout parenting or moral superiority.

Instead, by ignoring their parents' fears they've finally found a drug that leaves them so unplugged, so extended from our waking world that the evils of my day don't even exist in the same realm as them. Their minds are left adrift in a world of artistic stimulus that one could spend the better part of a lifetime trying to tap into naturally.

The hour finally catches up to me, and my body protests to go any further. After all I've learned tonight, all I've been exposed to, I still don't feel any closer to understanding the sway Delta Particles

hold or the underlying culture that follows it.

These kids don't push an agenda. They don't want to make love; not war, or give peace a chance. They don't care to keep on truckin' or relax when shit happens. They simply want to be; to just exist, where ever it is they find themselves, existing through Delta Particles.

I thank Sonya for her company, and regret that I'm tired and should probably head home. She just looks through me with steely blue eyes, flashes that enchanting smile at me again and gets up from the table, floating away like a dandelion seed on the wind.

Debt from page B3

Gambling debts of personal accounts attributed to college and professional sports is racing towards an all time high, and at an alarming rate, it looks like it could become the next lucrative market to wage bets on.

It is estimated that the city wide debt rates of this year so far have more than tripled from last year's, prompting an inquiry by City Hall to determine whether or not this behavior is leading to larger, more serious consequences down the road. But what City Hall isn't telling you is that it's not the individual they are concerned with, it's the business community they are solely interested in.

Without the disposable income around to keep
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120 YEARS

Delta from page B2

age. Instead it's origins sound more like a bad joke: A Soviet chemist, Native American tribe and the US-USSR space race, walk into a bar. But the punchline is that a drug intended to aid in emergencies beyond the stars is now just leaving a generation lost in their own cosmos.

Almost 30 years ago, back in 1967, a Soviet chemist by the name of Dr. Chtcheglov, and his associate Aleksei Yunusov, a Soviet ethnographer, collaborated to create a self-proclaimed "miracle drug" that could be utilized by cosmonauts amid emergencies in orbit and the outer reaches of space. However, in 1975, the bad publicity garnered from the exposure of Dr. Chtcheglov's casual experimentation of his own product coupled with negative opinions held over the revelation of Dr. Chtcheglov and Yunusov's co-opting the basis for the drug from the ritual of an obscure Native American tribe led an image-conscious Soviet government to pull the plug on the project.

The Kremlin's concerns over their reputation during the joint Apollo-Soyuz missions left C9H13N, or Delta Particles, an unfinished super-medicine, and it's legacy as such died along with Dr. Chtcheglov's career. The man behind the name would fall into obscurity as well, popping up only briefly as

historians would learn his role in Ethiopia's Red Terror.

The drug was sold to Mengistu Haile Mariam--the leader of the Derg, the military junta that governed Ethiopia from the mid-70s until 1987. In 1977, Mengistu's "Red Terror" began against the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party when he gave "freedom of action" to a mass of his supporters and distributing weapons. Mengistu's forces included an experimental group of soldiers, most of whom were students, called the Delta Faction, who were given C9H13N and amphetamines in hopes of becoming what Mengistu simply called a "supersoldier."

It didn't work. The resulting two years saw the Deltas doing little more than meander around Addis Adaba with a same carefree, time-relaxed air about them. Despite Mengistu's wild fervor and public smashing of blood-filled bottles--a literal representation of his enemies' fate, the Delta's portrayed the same demeanor Sonya does today. Most of Mengistu's "supersoldiers" disappeared from Ethiopia by 1979 and Dr. Chtcheglov's name never surfaced in history books again.

The Rabbit Hole, Returned.

Delta Particles is used today by people with no clue that the drug played a small, if not unsuccessful, part in what was fundamentally a genocidal mission.

