

Positive Negatives

Recognising that too many images of drugs focus on the sordid and destructive, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is running a competition to encourage the best photographic visions of approaches to the drug problem. "The aim," according to the EMCDDA's *DrugNet Europe* magazine, "is to convey drugs not as an unwieldy monster, but a fact of modern life that is being tackled by strategies with a positive impact."

The competition closes on 1 May, and if you'd like to enter, you can get an application form from the EMCDDA Information Department, Rua da Cruz de Santa Apolonia 23-25, P-1100 Lisbon, Portugal, or you can e-mail them on info@emcdda.org.



DRUGS ALCOHOL FINDINGS

Finding for the evidence base

The latest drug field buzzword is soon to have its very own news bulletin. *Drug and Alcohol Findings*, produced by SCODA, Alcohol Concern and the National Addiction Centre will make the 'evidence base' a concrete reality, ensuring that service commissioners, planners and providers have the right information to make decisions.

The National Addiction Centre's John Strang, explains why they decided to start up the quarterly publication, due to be formally launched later this year. "There are nuggets of information out there that could save waste, do more for our clients, help prevent problems and make the most of limited resources, but to get to them you would have to scour libraries, do a round robin of research centres and attend conferences practically on a weekly basis. There would be no time left to put the findings into practice."

The three addiction bodies have enlisted the help of *Druglink's* former editor, Mike Ashton, to ensure that *Findings* marries rigorous analysis with accessibility. Culling work from academic journals and reports, the bulletin will also incorporate research in progress, research yet to be published and local evaluations. The key to inclusion will be practical relevance to the treatment field, and one of the by-products is hoped to be a strengthening of the links between practice and research, so that research becomes more relevant and practice more evidence-based.

For more information, contact Mike Ashton on 0181 888 6277 or by e-mail at Findings@mashton.cix.co.uk

Crash claims ecstasy icon

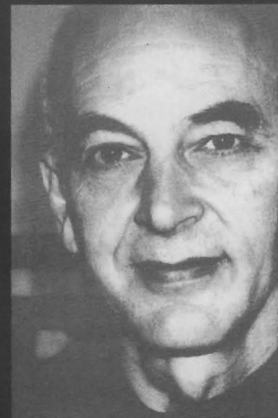
Nicholas Saunders, ecstasy author, counterculture trend-spotter and DIY entrepreneur, died on 3 February when the car he was travelling in flipped three times outside Kroonstadt, South Africa.

As with the other late great drug evangelist, Timothy Leary, Saunders came late to the drug with which his name is associated, trying ecstasy for the first time when he was 50 years old. Five years later in *Druglink*, he wrote of this experience:

"I felt extraordinarily relaxed and enjoyed stretching out like a cat. Life was good, my mind was clear and my mood optimistic. It was exhilarating, like parachuting from a plane, floating above the world it was euphoria, elation - ecstasy."

It was to lead him to produce the three classic texts on the drug, *E for Ecstasy*, *Ecstasy and the Dance Culture* and *Ecstasy Reconsidered*. At the time of his death, he was researching yet another book, looking at spirituality and drug use worldwide.

His first brush with ecstasy, was not, however, his first brush with drug culture. Born the son of the Director of the London School of Economics, he was sufficiently cushioned financially to 'drop out' in style - in the sixties, he lived in a house with a duck pond in the living room and a machine for blowing giant bubbles into the street. Dropping acid in 1966 for the first time, he immersed himself in the hippy lifestyle, and in 1970 published the first edition of his best-selling *Alternative London* guide. The first three editions sold 150,000 copies, and collated as much practical information as he could find on spiritual and political movements, free things to do, housing, even elementary DIY and, of course, drugs.



Nicholas Saunders
25 January 1938 - 3 February 1998

Always in the right place at the right time, he then snapped up a warehouse in a derelict area off Covent Garden just when the area was about to be redeveloped. Thus began his Neal's Yard 'business empire' - though he was always a curious empire-builder, often preferring to give others a leg-up and then move on. Buying up more rock-bottom buildings in the area, he helped finance a wholefood store, a coffee house, a bakery, dairy and apothecary, and when he sold up, he set up an alternative therapies centre and a desk-top publishing studio.

But it is the last decade for which he will be best remembered, with his work on ecstasy variously casting him as either a researcher keen to dispel myths and provide concise information or a bandwagoner and drug apologist, refusing to compare like with like. Whatever the case, his lasting legacy is not difficult to identify: accessible, benchmark books (with 50 page bibliographies) on a drug still shrouded in mystery.