

PSYCHEDELICS IN PARADISE: MIND STATES – JAMAICA

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With a crowd of about 80 people, Mind States: Jamaica was a relaxed and intimate event, participants and speakers mingling and discussing consciousness in a lush resort setting.

This friendly environment made it a pleasure to represent MAPS at the conference, held in Negril October 1-6, 2002. The event was the third Mind States conference organized by Jon Hanna. Like the other Mind States events, the conference had an intensive seminar schedule, with our days filled with lectures from some of the most interesting speakers in the psychedelic community.

Some of these talks were primarily informative, like ethnopharmacologist Jonathan Ott's discussion on shamanic snuffs and chemist Sasha Shulgin's report on his recent research with psychoactive cacti. Others, like Mark Pesce's "Bios and Logos," were more abstract. This was a broad-ranging muse on consciousness development, predicting future trends and providing new insight into some of Terence

McKenna's work. I was particularly fascinated with a discussion by Earth and Fire, of the Erowid website, on theoretical aspects of working with drug information, and the potential for creating a grassroots peer review process. Richard Glen Boire, of the Center for Cognitive Liberty and Ethics, talked about drug prohibition and other aspects of control culture in the U.S.

One of my favorite talks was Ann Shulgin's "Psychedelics and the Shadow," about facing the dark side of the psyche in psychedelic therapy.

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Another highlight for everyone was visionary artist's Alex Grey's hands-on workshop, as well as his review of his own works and career. Other creative experiences included Stephen Kent's didgeridoo performance and workshop and Jon Hanna's video presentation on psychedelics and animation.

In breaks from our busy schedule, participants enjoyed the tourist offerings of Negril, attending a beachside reggae party, taking a glass bottom boat ride, shopping, and snorkeling. Negril is known for its sunsets, which were spectacular.

While most of the talks were fascinating, for me the best part was the chance to meet new people in the psychedelic community. There were 21 MAPS members present, including the speakers and staff, and I was able to meet most of them. Several other folks joined MAPS during the week. I was also very excited to meet the winners of the Mind States/MAPS raffle, which paid for three lucky people to attend the conference. Of the 221 entries, the winners were Jason Richard, of Austin, Minnesota, Bill Freimuth, of Los Angeles, California, and Chuck Hughes, of Tempe, Arizona.

If you missed this event, you're not too late for Mind States IV: Continuing Perspectives on Altered Consciousness, which will be held in Berkeley, CA, May 23-25, 2003. For more info or to register, go to <http://www.mindstates.org>. ■