Top 10 Sci-Fi Drugs

Martin Anderson | July 7, 2008 **Original:** https://www.denofgeek.com/culture/top-10-sci-fi-drugs/

You shouldn't read this list whilst operating heavy machinery, blowing someone's head up or trying to fold space...

10: *Minority Report* (2002)– Neuroin

Intent: To give that Kodak moment a bit of beefing up. **Side effects:** You may end the movie twice and blow it the second time. **Notes:** Yep, that sounds pretty much like 'neural heroin' to me, and it's the vice of future-cop Tom Cruise in Spielberg's fascinating but very flawed re-imagining of Philip K. Dick's short story. The first time we see Cruise using it he is watching holo-tapes of his missing (presumed dead) son and his estranged wife, and a quick toot on the inhaler gets miserable old Tom smiling again.

9: *Robocop 2* (1990) – Nuke

Intent: To mess you up and mellow you out **Side effects:** Instantaneous addiction. **Notes:** Clearly based on the then fairly-new phenomenon of Crack, Nuke is a disturbingly red liquid in vial form.

8: *Logan's Run* (1976) – Muscle

Intent: To double reaction speed, similar to a super-amphetamine. **Side effects:** "shakes you to pieces–speeds everything up to a blur…" so says sandman Logan of this fictional speed-clone in one of the later drafts of the screenplay by David Zelag Goodman, from the novel by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson. **Notes:** The screenplay also mentions that use of the drug would kill anyone older than 13. Interestingly, one of the renegade youths that threatens Logan and Jessica in Cathedral proffers a toot of the drug as a menace to our heroes…

7: The Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch – Can-D

Intent: Relieve the boredom of the drafted colonists in their dreary and undeveloped frontier outposts by allowing them to 'translate' into the layouts of Ken & Barbie-like dolls 'Perky Pat' or her boyfriend 'Walt'. **Side Effects:** Like the main effects aren't enough! One couple who carry on an affair in their 'translated' guises as Pat and Walt wake up to do the same in reality. **Notes:** Can- D is an officially illegal drug which is nonetheless manufactured with little official impedance and routinely distributed to the mining colonies. It derives from a hallucinogenic substance found on Ganymede. In Philip K. Dick's typically mind-blowing novel, Can-D is superseded by Chew-Z, a legal alternative which has the additional side-effect of connecting all its users to the mind of mysterious and wealthy space explorer Palmer Eldritch. This conceit of an experience of collective or group consciousness is also found in a more televisual form in Dick's Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep, though this particular domestic ritual did not make it into *Blade Runner*.

6: *Screamers* (1995) – Reds

Intent: Stop the ambient radiation on the war-ravaged planet Sirius B from killing its inhabitants **Side Effects:** You don't die.. **Notes:** The idea of cigarettes that prevent cancer is unique to Christian Duguay's interpretation of the Philip K. Dick short story, and an obvious kick in the rear to political correctness. When a cloud of particularly dense radioactivity approaches the military base, a voice comes over the loud-speakers to order everyone to light up…

5: *Star Trek: TOS* - 'Mudd's Women' (1966) – The Venus Drug

Intent: Make the user irresistibly attractive by enhancing their own natural charms – women become more alluring and men more aggressive. **Side Effects:** Wolf-whistles; unbidden sleazy saxophone solos. **Notes:** The lothario and entrepreneur Harcourt Mudd is dosing up his cargo of miners' wives with the illegal Venus drug to ensure his procurement fees, until he ends up stranded with the fabulously attractive women on Kirk's Enterprise. Kirk later gives one of the women a placebo and it works anyway – so it was all in the mind…

4: *Scanners* (1981) – Ephemerol

Intent: The relief of morning sickness in pregnant women. **Side effects:** Rashes; dizziness; kids may end up with the ability to read other people's thoughts whether they want to or not, to set other people on fire or even blow other people's heads up in a nasty display of gore; Now available in strawberry. **Notes:** Ephemerol can also be used as inhibiting treatment for children whose mothers took the drug and who are now themselves 'scanners' (telepaths).

3: *UFO* (UK TV 1970) – 'The Amnesia Drug'

Intent: To wipe the recent memory of unauthorised personnel who have discovered the existence of SHADO, a worldwide clandestine military organisation that is secretly protecting the human race from aliens who want to harvest human organs for their own dying species. **Side Effects:** Of what? **Notes:** In the episode 'The Square Triangle', SHADO Commander Ed Straker (Ed Bishop) was forced to wipe the memories of a man and a woman –lovers – who were conspiring to kill the woman's husband. The illicit couple had encountered both aliens and SHADO, and once their memories of this were erased, they proceeded successfully with their murderous plot…as Straker well knew that they would. The drug itself is never named in the series, is usually administered by syringe – or by spiking a complimentary cup of tea in the SHADO waiting-area – and predates the flashing memory-wipers of the Men In Black – who needed their 'neuraliser' device for exactly the same reason –by two decades.

2: Brave New World – Soma

Intent: Keep the people sweet, placid and a liiiittle bit hippy. **Side Effects:** Hallucinations; under excess, death due to failure of that part of the autonomous nervous system that controls breathing. **Notes:** There is a real-life muscle relaxant called carisoprodol which is also known as 'Soma'. The intent of Huxley's fictional drug is to keep the citizens of his imagined utopia in perfect and blissful equilibrium, though it leaves them little prepared for the intrusion of a 'savage' from the world beyond the city limits (this role was played by 2001 actor Keir Dullea in a widely criticised US TV mini-series in the early 1980s) The popular rumour about Ridley Scott's new sci-fi project is that he will be taking on Huxley's classic – presumably and inevitably with Russell Crowe as the noble savage. Actually, that sounds pretty good…

1: *Dune* (1984) – The Spice Melange

Intent: To fold space so that the enormous freighters of the Spacing Guild can cross vast distances without moving. **Side effects:** Weight gain; euphoria; enlightenment; precognition; skull enlargement; increased skin thickness; ah hell, you're basically gonna turn into a huge thirty-foot slug that needs a cottage-sized floating glass tank in order to move about. **Notes:** Yeah, but it's goooood… **Better notes:** Mined exclusively, and at some peril, on the planet Arrakis, also known as 'Dune', where the giant sand-worms – whose larval form (rather disgustingly, if you ever see the full process in the appalling 'Alan Smithee' version) contributes the 'spice' – often swoop in upon the mining craft with little warning.

■ *Substance D (A Scanner Darkly – really, you could make a much longer list than this just from Philip K. Dick's fictional drugs); Vellocet (A Clockwork Orange); Plutonian Nyborg (Heavy Metal – 1981); Phenyldihydrochloride benzelex (Withnail and I – 1987. Not sci-fi, but just a great name!); Shadow (Blake's 7); Polydichloric euthymol (nasty addictive stuff from Peter Hyams' Outland – 1981).*