

## New Hope from Dope

Four years ago, the federal government blocked a proposal to conduct clinical research on the use of marijuana to treat veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder. But in March, after protocol modifications and a second review by an independent agency, the study's sponsor received approval from the Department of Health and Human Services. With the approval of the Drug Enforcement Administration—a final step expected soon—the research could begin early next year.

Federal permission is coming none too soon for the nonprofit organization that is sponsoring the study, the Multidisciplinary Association for

Psychedellic Studies in Santa Cruz, California. "Marijuana is the linchpin of the rapidly crumbling war on drugs," says Brad Burge, a spokesman for the association. "By blocking research that could definitively show the benefits of whole-plant marijuana for specific medical conditions, federal agencies and university administrations protect the public image of marijuana as a drug of abuse with no medical uses."

The study calls for a placebo-controlled, triple-blind test of 70 veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress, men and

women who have not shown improvement after undergoing medication or psychotherapy. "The drug has enough merit to deserve being studied in a rigorous, controlled environment," says psychiatrist Sue Sisley, the principal investigator for the planned study. For the veterans participating in the study and many others tormented by war-induced depression, medical marijuana holds a measure of promise.

—TOM BENTLEY



## The Day of the Luthier

In the counterculture of the 1960s, building a guitar from scratch was primarily a means of personal expression; today, that same activity is artisanal—not to mention lucrative. Handmade instruments can sell for \$10,000 or more in a collecting market stimulated by festivals and workshops. "We even have our own anthropologist," points out one enthusiastic luthier.

That would be Kathryn Marie Dudley of Yale University, whose *Guitar Makers: The Endurance of Artisanal Values in North America* is to be published in October. Dudley spent six years researching the book. Immersed in the lutherie community, she interviewed 150 guitar makers, musicians, collectors, material suppliers, dealers, and festival organizers in the United

States and Canada. A guitar lover herself, Dudley's goal was to understand a craft that seems to run against the logic of capitalism.

It makes little sense to make 10 or 12 guitars a year, she says, "when factories and robotic technologies can produce hundreds of high-quality guitars a day." So why are connoisseurs willing to

pay double, and sometimes even 10 times as much, for a handmade instrument? Artisanal markets, she argues—whether in guitars, cheese, or surfboards—create alternative systems of value. In such markets, interacting with the materials is more important than mass efficiencies.

Expressions like "this guitar *presented* itself to me and *demand*ed that I buy it" should be taken seriously, Dudley contends. "There is urgency to listening to what nonhuman matter has to tell us."

—CHLOE TAFT

