Writer’s Note

The Molecule began with a story I had known for years about Albert Hofmann, the Swiss chemist who discovered LSD. I had always been fascinated by the famous bicycle ride home through Basel after he deliberately experimented with the substance and thought it could make an incredibly cinematic sequence. Once I started researching Hofmann, though, I discovered a much larger story.

What interested me most was the complicated relationship he developed with his own discovery. Hofmann believed LSD could become an important tool for psychiatry and for understanding human consciousness. He wanted it studied carefully, administered responsibly, and surrounded by clinical safeguards. Instead, he lived long enough to watch it move far beyond the laboratory and into places he never could have controlled.

Something about that made me think of Oppenheimer. I don't mean that their discoveries or the consequences are remotely equivalent. What interested me was the narrower similarity of a scientist creating something enormously powerful and then watching other people decide what it would become. Hofmann could argue for responsible use and scientific rigor, but LSD was soon being interpreted by psychiatrists, governments, intelligence agencies, counterculture figures, politicians, and millions of people.

That tension became even more interesting because Hofmann himself seemed drawn to order. In the screenplay, he believes deeply in measurement, protocols, and the idea that careful study can keep a powerful discovery under control. Yet the substance he is trying hardest to contain becomes famous for experiences that challenge boundaries, certainty, and control.

Timothy Leary gave me a natural counterpoint. Hofmann sees enormous therapeutic potential in LSD but becomes deeply troubled as Leary helps move it out of controlled settings and into popular culture. At the same time, Hofmann is eventually forced to confront something less comfortable: recklessness isn't limited to counterculture figures. Governments and respectable institutions can misuse a discovery just as easily.

I didn't want the movie to deliver a simple verdict on LSD. The history is much more interesting than that. Researching *The Molecule* also pulled me much deeper into this period than I expected. I originally thought Timothy Leary might become another feature, but the more I learned about him, the less I believed his life could fit honestly into two hours. That research eventually became *The High Priest*, a six-episode limited series that stands on its own but also works as a companion to this film.

I like that the two projects approach the same substance through two men who responded to its possibilities very differently. Hofmann spends much of his life trying to establish boundaries around what he discovered. Leary becomes fascinated by what might happen if those boundaries are removed. Between them, the story becomes about who gets to decide what happens once a discovery leaves the hands of the person who made it.