

# Music, Substance Use, and Mental Health: The Cause and Effect of Creativity

Nicholas Chiaramonte  
Senior Capstone Project  
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Purchase College

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## Abstract

Musicians and substance use have been associated with each other since the beginning. Many musicians have indulged to the point of complete self destruction, as well as many impressionable young aspiring musicians. Because music has a certain tie to whatever cultural shifts are being experienced in a given time period, there has been an established cycle of substance use and abuse among the music community as well as the young community as a whole because these substances play a role in the shift. Any fan of popular music is well aware of this, yet it continues to happen despite years and years of evidence as to why this is a huge problem. There are numerous instances throughout history of complex situations in which the musician rises and tragically falls, and drugs as well as turbulent times usually play a role. These drugs play a role for a reason. They provide a world of creative boundary dissolution that would encourage any artist who didn't know better or care to surrender their inhibitions and ego to the realm of infinite possibilities.



The topic of musicians using drugs is a multidimensional phenomenon that has been attached to the craft since it came to be. From classical musicians abusing alcohol, jazz musicians abusing heroin, classic rock musicians abusing psychedelics and beyond, there is no escaping the undeniable allure that these things have to creative people with active minds. Music has always been thought of as a source of emotional regulation, with studies showing that listening to music portraying the opposite emotion that you are feeling can actually counteract the chemical reaction in your brain(Thoma, 2012) but sadly it proves to do more damage than good when dealing with people who choose it as a career. The combination of the musician's lifestyle and the chaos of the world in each of these respective time periods are only the tip of the iceberg when beginning to find a link to such abuse. Musicians site many causes for using these substances such as performance anxiety, boredom, social anxiety, creative purposes, insomnia, networking, or simply maintaining an existing addiction. It has also been reported that drinking and drug use is part of a professional sociability which is the need to be sociable and liked by one's colleagues and peers in order to increase chances and offers of work, or simply to retain existing work.” (Descotaux, 2014).

This study is about the impact of cultural movements in relation to popular music as well as various struggles on musicians throughout the years and their relationships to drug use and mental health issues. Is culture always to blame for these problems? Is any of the blame possessed by the musicians themselves? There are a multitude of answers to these questions. There have been many famous figures in music that have



created a pattern in respective music genres relative to different substance use. Jazz musicians Charlie Parker and John Coltrane were the first big names in the idiom to be known to abuse heroin. This started a trend among their peers both current and forthcoming to have a complicated relationship to the drug to both escape the pain of being African American in the mid 20th century as well as a tool to further help fancy themselves as another iteration of a legend. Studies have shown that jazz attracts a cerebral type of thinker, one that is satisfied in detecting complex patterns to make sense of chaotic things. Their tendency to do this with this specific type of music echoes into the way they try to make sense of life and themselves, often leading them to set difficult, sometimes unattainable standards to reach in order for them to be the musicians that they want to be and in the process use their famous contemporaries to try to reach it.

Classic rock acts Jimi Hendrix and The Grateful Dead are two of the most recognized musical figures in the counterculture movement of the 1960's alongside Syd Barrett. Their prominence in this era helped popularize the use of marijuana and LSD among the younger generation and was responsible for giving these drugs increasing media coverage. This would solidify the image as well as their position in the war on drugs for the rest of the century. The Grateful Dead were notorious for popularizing the use of LSD after playing at the "Acid Tests" held by Ken Kesey, a series of parties held with the intention of experimenting with the new drug. Their shows then became a haven for the drug due to their sound man Owsley Stanley being one of the first manufacturers of pure LSD and one of the largest distributors of all time. Original Pink





Floyd frontman Syd Barrett was another figure during this time who was notorious of his use of the drug and subsequent mental decline. A once charismatic, cheerful bandleader began experimenting with copious amounts of LSD and gained a considerable number of followers who idolized and encouraged him to reach new spiritual heights that they thought possible through ingesting the substance. This coupled with the stress of stardom caused Syd to crack and be forcibly removed from the band, giving them a foundation for much of their material that would solidify them in music history. Soft rock legends the Eagles have gained notoriety for their cocaine use and are commonly recognized for that as much as their music. They were each individually known for their own drug problems as well as various offstage antics, including cocaine studio binges with over a pound consumed at certain instances and numerous stints in jail.

Heavy metal pioneers Metallica and Ozzy Osbourne were notorious for their rambunctious behavior and heavy alcohol and drug abuse. Metallica were famous for pioneering the thrash metal genre and remain the most revered heavy metal band of all time, but in the early days were almost as popular for their rampant alcohol abuse, so much so that they were referred to as Alcoholica. As a result of these days as well as many other inner struggles frontman James Hetfield still battles alcoholism to this day. An entire generation of metal fans identified with this lifestyle, something that helped heavy metal gain its destructive and hardcore image. In fact, there have been numerous studies that have shown links to adolescent substance abuse problems with heavy metal music. The desire that exists within young people to find belonging in a



community which shares the same destructive tendencies prompts many people to live their lives in this niche, and the lyrics of this music help many(while not all) heavy metal fans find philosophies to live their lives by (King, 1988). There are also studies that prove that people often align their music with political beliefs, with conservatives being more partial to country/commercial rock and liberals to hip hop/R&B (North and Hargreaves 2007). Ozzy Osbourne was arguably the least stable of his contemporaries and has become a pop culture figure strictly on his many addictions and ludicrous behavior. In his days with Black Sabbath in the early '70's, him along with his other band members were ingesting copious amounts of cocaine. At one point, they spent more money on the drug than they did recording their fourth album, "Volume 4". Ozzy was the most detrimental to the group as a result of this behavior, and was subsequently asked to leave the group in 1978. As he embarked on his solo career, he kept this behavior going throughout the 1980's and made headlines for outrageous antics while under the influence, such as biting the head off of a bat on stage and peeing on the Alamo wearing his wife's wedding dress. These antics as well as Ozzy's entire demeanor appeal to the sensation seekers of the world. Studies have shown that the "sensation seeking" part of the brain and people who are more inclined to follow it are drawn to heavy metal and punk music because of it's freeing and powerful nature, which is almost the antithesis of the type of brain that enjoys jazz. These studies have hypothesized that subjects with high levels of SS would exhibit psychophysiological reactions to this music in a controlled environment, which proved to be correct and continues to in concert settings(Nater, 2005). There is also evidence of music being an



auditory cue for certain substance users. There has been a specific study conducted in which 19 substance abusers were compared with 19 non substance abusers and compared their emotional reactions to happy and sad music. The substance users reported little reaction to happy, relaxing music, but reported intense craving when presented with a song they listened to while they were using, or a song that detailed their substance of choice (Short and Dingle, 2015).

Grunge frontman Kurt Cobain was also a prominent figure in 1990's pop and subculture, inadvertently bringing about a dark trend of self destruction among the younger generation due to public speculation about his struggles with depression and drug abuse. Kurt Cobain was known to have many health problems and a heroin addiction, and through his music as well as his suicide created a sense of despondence throughout American youth. However, people who knew Kurt were adamant about his kind and loving nature, his cheerfulness, and wholesome dedication and approach to music. He himself expressed concern about kids reading too much into his lyrics and trying too hard to emulate and understand his lifestyle, stating that the lyrics did not have as deep of a meaning as people were making them out to and that drug use was a waste of time. There have been studies that have proven that adolescents who don't identify with traditional values tend to find simple yet unconventional answers to life's problems in musical lyrics (King, 1988). This is a continual problem amongst young people because their brains are not fully developed, and they have difficulty processing the right things in the right way. The cause of this problem is multifaceted, and can't be attributed to just one thing. It is a combination of media, societal norms and desire



thereof to deviate from them, creative drive, desire to belong, desire to evolve, and mental instability that keep this problem a constant in societies throughout the world, especially America. The actual creative benefits of drugs are arguably the worst of them all, and the monumental part that they play in many pivotal points in musicians careers is something that is so catalytic of monumental change that it is almost destined for disaster. I will examine these phenomena through books and peer reviewed articles. I will first examine the Grateful Dead because of their monumental influence in the beginning of drug culture in relationship to mainstream media and the psychedelic movement. I will further examine the impact of the psychedelic music boom, rock stardom, and the drugs used at the time on Syd Barrett, founder of Pink Floyd. Through examining all of these artists I will make connections to direct consequences on these musicians that were faced as a result of this drug use as well as successes of the musicians involved with these acts that were not afflicted. In doing this I will prove that drug use is ultimately destructive to creativity.

In the mid 1960s, culture in the United States was experiencing a monumental shift that would set a precedent to how a majority of teens and young adults lived their lives for decades after. The discovery of LSD-25, the drug that became a staple in the counterculture movement regarding expansion of consciousness came on April 16, 1943 when Hoffman accidentally absorbed the 25th version of LSD he had produced by touching his finger to his mouth. This miniscule portion of the drug had profound effects on his psyche, and led to numerous discoveries. "Put simply, it seemed that evolutionary survival needs had required the limiting of the minds capacity for





sensory input, and LSD reopened the valve. For a few hours, reality became a flood instead of a trickle. Haight Street philosopher Stephen Gaskin quoted a critic as saying, “Acid lowers your powers of discrimination until everything seems important.”(McNally, 2002).

The drug was an integral part of the trajectory of the Grateful Dead. Owsley “Bear” Stanley was the sound technician for the band, who also doubled as the alchemist and the largest scale producer of LSD in the world. The band would then experience highs that connected the members on levels that were never matched again. One such incident occurred in 1966 in Los Angeles when Phil Lesh, Jerry Garcia, and their girlfriends ingested LSD on a canyon in Mount Wilson and supposedly experienced telepathy. “Information came in extraordinarily fast bursts, ten minutes of material exploding into each brain in a few moments. It would be the closest Lesh would ever feel to Garcia off the stage, and it staggered him. They were well and truly connected. And then a test rocket and the nearby Rocketdyne facility exploded through the sky, severing their gestalt.” (McNally, 2002). One figure that furthered the Grateful Dead’s journey with the drug was Neal Cassady. “Disguised as a loony, mad-rapping speed freak, Neal Cassady was very possibly the most highly evolved personality they would ever meet, and was certainly among their most profound life influences other than the psychedelic experience itself.” (McNally, 2002). He was often found at Ken Kesey’s acid tests and was adopted as a protege of Columbia University graduate Justin Brierly, who connected him with famed authors Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. He was sentenced to two years in San Quentin Prison after being arrested for the possession of



two marijuana joints, a stint that would cause his family life to disintegrate. He soon visited Ken Kesey, who also had adopted a profound interest in LSD. The two of them along with a group of like minded friends the Merry Pranksters embarked on a journey to New York in 1964 on a 1939 school bus which they named "Furthur".

Once they arrived to New York, one of their intentions was to document themselves and their interactions with everyday citizens while they themselves were heavily under the influence. On August 7th, 1965 they arrived in La Honda, California, where they were approached by Hunter S. Thompson, a journalist from Kentucky. He was working on a book about the Hell's Angels, a notorious motorcycle gang who was bent on derangement, who Thompson subsequently introduced to the Pranksters. This was the beginning of the first Acid Test party. This was an opportunity for the Grateful Dead not only to play what they wanted exactly how they wanted to play it, but also one of the first venues in which LSD was revealed to be a teacher of higher consciousness as well as a good, crazy time. Owsley Stanley was introduced to Ken Kesey in the later months of 1965, and was exposed to the music of the Dead. After having a profound psychedelic experience in which "I let totally go, went off into the universe, and there was no one running my body, which was running around doing crazy goofy things because I had left. I had gone off into a part of the universe that was just a spiral, and every so often I would be presented with some fantastic scene." (McNally 2002). This as well as subsequent acid tests was the defining factor in the Dead's relationship to their audience. The factor of giving love to an audience and in turn receiving it was at the root of what they were trying to do, but there was also a newly discovered element of the



audience joining them on a psychedelic spiritual journey. This is something that would solidify their cult following but eventually be exploited by mainstream media and in turn gain them a reputation as a dangerous scene for young people to be involved in.

There are many differing accounts amongst Dead fans about what it means to be a “Deadhead”. The traditional definition of a Deadhead is “Someone who loves-and draws meaning from- the music of the Grateful Dead and the experience of Dead shows, and builds community with others who feel the same way.”(Weiner, 1999). However, many people agree that the shows were a haven for psychedelic drugs, and through the ‘80s and ‘90s became increasingly removed from the original positive approach that the band was taking to their career. The idea of “seek your own bliss” that had become a philosophy among the fans proved over the years to be harmful not only to the Dead community but to the families of those engulfed in it. Writer George Will cited a specific example of the Von Nester couple, who abandoned their three year old child to follow the band on the road. He described them as a symptom of the spirit of the ‘60s, which at its core was about liberation from the oppression of social constraints. In this claim he stated that “During the band’s 30 year life the costs of liberation from such inhibitions have been made manifest in millions of shattered lives and miles of devastated cities. The band has been a touring time capsule, keeping alive the myth that there is something inherently noble in adopting an adversary stance toward “bourgeois” or “middle class” values.” (Weiner, 1999). This perfectly encapsulates the trap that many people fall into that stifles their potential. It also can be proved with the band’s own Garcia. One of the most innovative guitarists in his own right who inspired



an entire genre of music and style of playing had fallen onto his own dagger so to speak. What began as an endless mind opening, creative journey in the spirit of the 1960's quickly changed to drug dependency in the '70s up until his death in 1995. He struggled with heroin and cocaine addictions, as well as diabetes that became so severe because of its coupling with his copious drug use that he slipped into a coma. This coma was so severe that he subsequently had to relearn how to play guitar. After numerous stints in rehab he finally succumbed to his poor health, and died of a heart attack in 1995. This was a telling incident detailing one of the possible natural progressions of complete uninhibited use of drugs as a young adult. The other members of the Grateful Dead indulged in similar use of psychedelics and narcotics, but none were as afflicted with the disease as Jerry was. After his death, the band went on to have successful reunions and currently tour as Dead and Company, playing original music with John Mayer filling Jerry Garcia's role.

Both the Grateful Dead and the 1960's counterculture movement were highly publicized, and the allure of the previously mentioned discoveries by Albert Hoffman, the band themselves along with 20th century philosophers were enough to pique the curiosity of many impressionable young people. German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen was a prominent voice of the 1960's, and was thought of by many to be a genius in his own right. He was also credited with creating electronic music, creating the records Study 1(1953) and Study 2(1954), which were thought of as the first examples of this music in its most identifiable form. The 1960's were a time in which great emphasis was placed on the higher self, and achieving ultimate consciousness.





Stockhausen was among the key figures in articulating the state of humanity at the time. His ideals were expressed in “Manifesto for the Young”, which was originally published in 1968 in the Journal Musical of Paris: “The higher self should provide reason with something to think about, receiving its impulse from the intuitive consciousness which is in turn fed by the higher and higher consciousness, linking every individual consciousness with a supra-personal cosmic-consciousness. The rationalists will ultimately lose their unholy wars because they are ossified and lack the higher beings supra-consciousness.” (Marwick, 1998). This was among the many dimensions of the moral rejection of established rationality in the ‘60s, which led to many positive societal achievements and the desire in many to reach a divine consciousness. However, this was and still is a delicate topic that needs to be tested with great care, and sufficient knowledge on how to approach it.

Because these ideals along with psychedelic drugs were so new, there was a dangerous amount of newfound freedom of thought and lifestyle with very little knowledge of the consequences. One particular musician who suffered these consequences was Syd Barrett, original founder of Pink Floyd. Those that both knew Syd personally and were fans of the band will attest to the rapid rise and fall of the once charismatic, talented musician that formed one of the most successful bands in history. Syd Barrett and Pink Floyd were not as eager to please the London music scene as they were to push boundaries. Many people would go to see them and expect a typical blues show, and leave confused when they were given a light-show spectacle with elaborate instrumentals played in between their hits. They were seen as outsiders who



were very gimmick based, as they started out playing private parties with themes centered on masquerading in strange costumes. They eventually graduated to the UFO club, a haven for the era's fellow light show performers that included Boyle and Joan Hills, Peter Wynne Wilson, and Jo Gannon. These artists used this club as a haven for projecting and perfecting their art form. It also helped that LSD was being sold at the door and even given out for free.

This was when Syd began experimenting with the creative aspects of the drug. It was known to be his "creative zenith". He was heavily influenced by the influx of "Sandoz Acid", one of the first iterations of pure LSD that could be found on the streets and at parties such as these. "Immersed in liquid projections and riding the crest of that final pure wave of Sandoz acid before the supply lines were shut down, Syd dissolved his ego in dappled shades of lime and limpant green, turquoise, violet, and indigo. Hunched over his guitar he threw spontaneous improvised shapes and patterns on his Telecaster to match the improvised shapes and patterns that were being projected onto him"(Chapman, 2010). These are the kind of enticing experiences and descriptions that drew so many people to this drug. This is a very crucial stage that was a staple in most musician's transitional period in their careers at this time. For Pink Floyd, it was a window into efficiently sidestepping the conventional stage show and experimenting with their instruments. These shows eventually gave way into bigger shows such as Psychedelic Mania, which was an all night rave with performances from Pink Floyd, the Move, the Who, and the Mothers of Invention. It was advertised as a psychedelic



spectacle, and bore the slogan “Come and Watch the Pretty Lights”, a nod to the LSD users at the time.

Sonically, they were able to channel these turbulent times into certain pieces of music that solidified them as contributors to the bohemian excursion of rock music at the time. *Interstellar Overdrive* was a good example of this change. It had a drive that was reminiscent of rock music, but at the same time was inspired by the new jazz that was forming at the time. The main difference was the fact that the band wasn't as technically skilled as jazz musicians were at the time and that missing element of conventional improvisation was what made them resort to using the resources available to them to “create something entirely new out of ensemble playing”(Chapman, 2010). As Pink Floyd was releasing their debut single “Arnold Layne”, an homage to a crossdresser spotted in Cambridge, England, there began to be allusions to LSD heard in most psychedelia that was being released at the time. The irregular elongations of syllables in that song(strange/hobby; aaaaall mirror) were meant to simulate the profound disorientation that one experienced while on the drug. The Beatles were also sonically contributing to this with “Penny Lane” and “Strawberry Fields Forever”, with the sounds of each track representing both the euphoria as well as the hazy stream of consciousness experienced. Pretty soon after the release of these songs, musicians began to take inspiration from the child-like wonder that was being depicted. Syd inspired many of the formerly contemporary artists to “throw off the shackles of R&B and get in touch with their inner infant”(Chapman, 2010). Most of this innovation in songwriting was inspired by LSD, but almost as much of it was inspired by imitation.



There were many songwriters who “merely donned paisley and chiffon and pretended in the name of the cause, overlaying their routine Route 66” riffs with suitably lavender-scented lyrics and prettified vocal delivery”(Chapman, 2010). Soon, record companies began to grant people recording budgets that would forge them their career, and commodifying the psychedelic sounds of string sections, brass, mellotrons and indian sitars that were originally birthed from contemporaries such as Syd and the Beatles.

Syd had a life before the music. He was studying at Camberwell Art College as a painter, and had a strong relationship with the head of the department who gave him a sabbatical on account of his desire to leave and pursue his music career. Many of Syd’s friends were surprised at this decision, and felt that he was too nice of a person to get mixed up in the rock world. Furthermore, people who knew him best didn’t even recall music being his primary concern in the first place, and asserted that this was not an easy decision for him to make. When asked about this, Syd’s close friend Anna Murray said of him and his relationship to painting:“His temperament suited it better. I was really surprised when he took off into the music so hugely. I felt he was swept up and it wasn’t necessarily his intention or driving force. It wasn’t apparent to me that it was the most important thing in his life at all”(Chapman, 2010). This wasn’t an easy decision or transition for Syd to make, largely to due with the combination of drugs and the spotlight.

The band signed to EMI records for an advance of 5,000 pounds. This was a notoriously straight-laced label and coincidentally during this time, the British tabloids





were beginning to pick up on the popularity of psychedelics among the British youth. Scaremongering campaigns were designed to inform their readers of the specifics. The tabloid *News of the World* was in the middle of a 3 part expose` on essentially every pop star that was in the limelight at the time, including Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Cream, and Donovan. This series provided the tip off leading to Keith Richards and Mick Jagger being busted for drugs at their Sussex home. It also concluded by directly linking Pink Floyd to the psychedelic drug scene. This was something that the label began to distance themselves from, as they were a newly signed band who they felt would taint their image if they were in fact known as a “drug band”. Of the media, exec Peter Jenner stated “They didn’t quite get what was going down and how rampant the whole psychedelic drug thing was, and the theology of it”(Chapman, 2010). Syd on the other hand, was the most in tune to this lifestyle out of any of his bandmates. He would partake in the use of LSD because he was not as afraid of releasing his ego as the other members in his band, particularly Roger Waters. But this is what many other contemporaries felt necessary. Albert Hoffman, the discoverer of the drug in its most recognized form, reported profound memories of his childhood and oneness with nature he had experienced. John Lennon, who had written about ego-death on “Tomorrow Never Knows” and “She Said She Said”. This is what Syd was after. “Barely out of his teens, for him acid was the magic ingredient that enabled him to dissolve the fortress walls of adulthood and skip gleefully back to infancy”(Chapman, 2010). This played a direct part in his songwriting. Syd was always heavily influenced by fantasy writers of the mid to late 19th century such as Lewis Carroll



and Edward Lear. Their imagery of botany, animals, and various degrees of nature both realistic and make believe influenced his symbolism and ability to transcend to and from the mystical world with a pivotal sentence such as "Wondering and dreaming, the words had different meanings, for all the time spent in that room, the doll's house darkness, old perfume" (Chapman, 2010). These scattered pastiches were enough to evoke curiosity in a listener to the point of meticulous dissection, something that only true pure imagination is capable of. Syd was thought to be on another plane of existence when compared to his fellow musicians, even the ones in his own band. The mixture of these many things, the psychedelic enlightenment, the natural depth, and being a famous pop-star is what would eventually cause the decline in Syd's psyche that everyone is so familiar with today.

The underground scene that Syd was a part of was not ready for the mainstream attention that it was beginning to receive, and it was beginning to become evident that although most bands had their counterculturally dedicated "Flamboyant extremists, they also had members who, despite their long hair and floral shirts, still clung to a decidedly brown-ale consciousness and would probably never change. Too many didn't believe a word of all this counter-culture malarkey, and were only embracing the trend as another avenue to rock-business success." (Chapman, 2010). This would be the dividing fact that would separate those who went on to become successful in subsequent decades and those who would perish at the hands of their own self sabotage. Syd was one of the latter, and he was soon to be swept away.



There were few artists that rose above the rhetoric of the counterculture movement and actually meant it, and Syd was one of them. Pink Floyd was given the opportunity by EMI to record at Abbey Road Studios with state of the art equipment and a promise that their records would be aptly promoted and sold to the public. This was a nod to the fact that the Floyd were on the verge of becoming stars, and Syd's approach to stardom was that of anti-stardom; a reluctance and refusal to conform to the paradigm that did not give him a choice to do so and ultimately would be the driving force that caused him to banish himself from his own band. The process was messy and debilitating. When recording "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn", the band was paired with producer Norman Smith, a hard headed perfectionist with a jazz background that was adamant about polishing and fleshing out Pink Floyd's otherworldly improvisations to make them palatable for the record consuming public. This proved difficult for Syd to adhere to, as he was accustomed to superseding anyone's discipline other than his own. It became increasingly noticeable when Pink Floyd was featured on *Top of the Pops* in 1967, a variety show in which the era's most relevant pop stars were asked to play their hits in front of a live audience. Syd along with many other artists detested the program, and wished not to pander to the public but instead express himself and his own personal ideas through his music. But he was left with no choice, and was visibly fed up with the obligations he was beginning to face. During this performance Syd hung his guitar lower than he could reach in order to competently play, hung his head down and did not even attempt to mimic his role in the song.



This was a recurring theme in following performances that year. After the release of the album, Syd became the most famous of his peers from Cambridge. None of the band members were prepared for this. Writer Duggie Fields said of the band: “I don’t know how conscious they were of wanting to take it anywhere. They were just doing it and then suddenly they got this huge response out of nowhere. Shockingly suddenly they were *the* underground band. Syd certainly wasn’t prepared for it”(Chapman, 2010). It was said by bandmate Nick Mason “Syd didn’t realize what being a pop star means. That you actually do have to get up in the morning and that they’ve scripted you lots of interviews and you’ve got to talk to money people all the time. You’ve gotta do studio work, you’ve gotta sign photographs- and this goes on and on and on. And then in the evening you get to play. Syd was quite shocked by that, and this was a side of the coin that he hadn’t foreseen”(Chapman, 2010). As the pressure was beginning to take its toll on him, he began to act more and more erratically. The band was booked to record a session for the BBC Light Programme the *Saturday Club*, and Syd walked out of the session before they could even set up.

He began to gain a reputation for his erratic behaviour. His successor David Gilmour remembers visiting a session in which they were recording “See Emily Play” and received only blank stares from Syd. People who hadn’t seen Syd since the beginning of the year had reported that what was once a twinkle in his eye and prance in his step had been replaced by a vacant and detached disposition. When Pink Floyd was scheduled to play the International Love-In at Alexandra Place in London, Syd was excessively tripping on LSD and was not capable of performing. This continued for





another show until the band was forced to cancel all of their performances for the following month, including performances that were crucial to their touring career such as the Festival of the Flower Children and the Seventh National Blues and Jazz Festival. They were making headlines as “flakes” and Syd was reported to be suffering from “nervous exhaustion”. In the late summer of this year Syd and his girlfriend moved into a house on Cromwell Road. This was where his decline was rapidly accelerated due to the people he began to associate with during this period. Most of these people were what were known as “acid crazies”, who thought of Syd as a sort of spiritual guru. They were all in awe at his mind and continued to give him increasing amounts of acid to further help him expand it. Writer David Gale explains that “The times were feverish and Syd was a creature of those times. He subscribed up to the hilt, he really wanted to be a part of it. You have to remember that the systematic and wilful suspension of rationality was widespread”(Chapman, 2010).

This was what ultimately sealed Syd’s fate. This coupled with his desire to be left alone. He did not want this responsibility of being his generation’s spokesman. He didn’t see himself as fit to do it and he didn’t see a reason for it. He was known to retreat into his room and slowly begin to retreat into himself, a large contrast to what he once was, the center of attention and the most charming member of his group. He began to be a subject of speculation not for his songwriting, but for the possibility of his becoming a drug casualty and his deteriorating mental state. He was soon deemed unable to perform, although he contributed many singles to the band’s repertoire as well as solo albums subsequently. Every lyrical contribution that was made going forward was



analyzed to death by critics as indicators of his descent into madness. The actual proof of this ensued. He would go onstage and do absolutely nothing. He would detune his guitar and just stand there mashing on the strings. During Pink Floyd's appearances on *The Pat Boone Show* and *Dick Clark's Bandstand*, Syd was "Standing open mouthed, eyes rolling back into his head, arms limp by his side, refusing to mime the songs and meeting his hosts attempts at an interview with a catatonic state"(Chapman, 2010). Even more chilling, his flat mates at Egerton Court reported disturbing evidence of a distinct change in Syd's behavior. Syd was living with his girlfriend Lyndsay in the bottom level of the flat and his housemates would report banging sounds and screams. He allegedly would tickle her to the point of her screaming for him to stop and he wouldn't, and would beat her up, becoming totally abusive. Friend David Gale stated that "This angelic boy became this thousand yard stare, sullen, black bags under the eyes, pale, listless, not talking, moody, impossible to work with, violent man"(Chapman,2010).

The most prevalent cause of this aside from the powerful drugs that he was using was failure to intervene by his peers. The spirit of the '60s was very laissez-faire and people didn't give anybody's lifestyle a second thought. It was almost expected to be eccentric, so the lines between eccentric and erratic weren't always clear. People were not aware of the severity of mental illness or even the signs of it. "Freaking out" was thought to be normal, poetic in Syd's case due to his status in the creative world. Eventually, the band recruited David Gilmour to replace Syd, and continually played shows without him even knowing. Keyboardist Richard Wright, who lived with him at the



time, would lie and tell him he was going out to get a pack of cigarettes when really he was off to play a show without Syd, and Syd believed him every time until eventually catching on. Many people believe that Syd was kicked out of the band solely due to the fact that they couldn't deal with his madness, but it was more to do with his unreliability and lack of professionalism. Roger Waters foresaw the disintegration of the band and took the proper action.

As the band went on, Syd became more and more withdrawn, lacking any purpose or skill for human interaction. He spent all of his time holed up in his room and gardening, occasionally working on his paintings. Eventually, he was unfit to even take care of himself and live on his own full time. He was forced to live with his sister and intermittently live in his own home. He became one of the first cautionary tales of LSD, and a complete debunking of the counterculture mentality. He is proof that drugs are ultimately destructive when used irresponsibly, and a prime example of the stresses that can weigh on one that is not cut out for fame.

After Syd left the band, Pink Floyd went on to become one of the most famous acts in the history of pop music. None of the other members were fond of using drugs, and at most used them a handful of times in their entire lives. They recorded *The Dark Side of the Moon*, an album hailed by critics as one of the greatest albums of all time, as well as one of the best selling albums worldwide. It brought them international fame and fortune and solidified their status in rock history. Subsequent album *Wish You Were Here* went on to sell 13 million copies and *The Wall* went on to sell 24 million copies and is one of the most widely renowned concept albums ever.



In conclusion, my findings from this research solidified my claim of the two distinctly different paths that musicians took during the counterculture movement of the 1960s. The drug using musicians that I focused on went on to lead dark and destructive lives and became infamous symbols of the dangers of psychedelics and various other hard drugs. The musicians alongside them that abstained from excessive usage went on to carve their way into music history. I also found that the counterculture movement of the 1960s contributed to a widespread disarray among young adults and impacted the way that musicians looked at creativity due to multiple groundbreaking changes in the thought process regarding rationality in America. The combination of the denouncing of the American norms, countless new bohemian philosophies, a desire for divine consciousness, and an atmosphere free of judgement ultimately contributed to disaster and the antithesis of what it once was projected to be.

Philosophies of free love, no judgement, and hippie culture collapsed onto themselves when it became clear that mental stability was sacrificed for complete societal liberation. Nobody growing up in this scene that was an active participant in the drug use took into account that they would have lives beyond this era, and that society is not designed to be deviated from. It can only be sidestepped with the utmost care, and carelessness is all that ensued. The musicians that went on to succeed were the ones who were conscious of professionalism, health, and the importance of the preservation of natural creativity.





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