



## Drugs and the Music Industry: Impact on Physical Cognitive and Creative Decline of Musicians

Cahyan Rizqi Kurniawan; Heni Kusumawati

Master of Arts Education Program, Faculty of Language Arts and Culture, Yogyakarta State University,  
Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

This article examines and correlates the relationship between drugs and the music industry where celebrities both domestically and abroad are closely associated with these illicit substances, focusing on the creativity of artistic work for music artist. This research aims to determine: 1) What influences are caused by drugs in the entertainment industry, particularly in the music industry? 2) The impact on cognitive abilities and physical decline, including physical and mental abilities? 3). The influence of drugs on musicians' creativity in creating songs or artistic works. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The results of this study are: 1). The used of drugs in the music industry is a phenomenon that has been ongoing on for a long time. Although some musicians report a temporary increase in creativity due to drug use, the long-term effects tend to be detrimental to their physical health, cognitive abilities, and their creative processes; 2) The tangible impact on the decline in physical quality is very significant because drugs erode the body from the inside out, affecting both physical and psychological health. These physical side effects not only threaten the lives of musicians but can also hinder their ability to perform and create optimally; 3) The impact on creative thinking abilities and cognitive abilities in drug users. Although drugs can provide a temporary boost to creativity, long-term use often results in decreased concentration, focus, and productivity. Dependency on drugs for inspiration can also hinder musicians from creating naturally, blur the authenticity of their work and reduce the quality of artistic output.

**Keywords:** *Music Industry; Drugs, Cognitive Decline; Musicians*

### **INTRODUCTION**

‘Narkoba’ and ‘NAPZA’ are two classifications of prohibited substances. ‘Narkoba’ is a combination of the words "narcotics" and "dangerous drugs", while ‘NAPZA’ is a combination of "narcotics," "alcohol," "psychotropics," and other "addictive substances". The origin of the word "narcotics" comes from Greek which means “*numb*”, referring to a state of unconsciousness or (*fly*). In English, the term narcotic focuses more on drugs that cause dependence. Narcotics include substances or

drugs that can be derived from plant or synthetic sources, which have the ability to alter the user's consciousness, relieve sensations, reduce or eliminate pain, and potentially cause addiction (Adam, 2012).

Narcotics, when taken orally, inhaled, or injected, can affect an individual's thoughts, moods, emotions, and behavior. The used of narcotics can lead to both physical and psychological dependence. In medical contexts, narcotics are used to relieve pain, particularly in the visceral organs or in the chest and abdominal cavities, and can cause prolonged confusion upon awakening and potentially lead to addiction. In Indonesia, narcotics are a complex issue with an increasing number of addicts and reported cases of abuse, negatively impacting social aspects and the future of the country.

Legal experts in Indonesia remain divided regarding the application of the death penalty. Some argue that the death penalty is more effective and in line with humanitarian principles. However, opponents argue that the death penalty does not always succeed and actually contradicts humanitarian values. In Indonesia, drug offences are regulated by Law Number 35 of 2009 on narcotics. This law stipulates various types of criminal sanctions for narcotics offenders, including prison sentences with a certain term, life imprisonment, fines, and the most controversial punishment, which has caused pro and con debates: namely the death penalty.

It can be concluded that narcotics are substances or drugs that have the ability to calm the nerves, induce a state of unconsciousness or drowsiness, reduce pain and discomfort, and trigger stimulating feelings. These substances also have the potential to cause effects such as confusion or stupor, and can lead to dependence or addiction. These substances are designated as narcotics by the Minister of Health (Mardani, 2008; Purbanto & Hidayat, 2023).

Although considered risky and potentially fatal, some research shows contrary results. Studies have shown that drug use can affect musicians' creativity. According to research conducted by David Greenberg of Cambridge University, musicians and drugs are inseparable, as reflected in the famous phrase "*Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll*" quoted from [dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk). Conversely, McMillen, in his book "*Talking Smack: Honest Conversations About Drugs*" from the University of Queensland Press, revealed to The Guardian that several successful Australian musicians have openly admitted that drug use has played a role in their creative achievements.

Of the 14 musicians interviewed, nearly all had experienced drugs at some point in their lives. Furthermore, Damon Albarn, the renowned vocalist of Blur and Gorillaz, revealed that heroin isn't always as scary as it's often portrayed. "Once I tried it, I found it to be very enjoyable at first and very inspiring," he said, as reported by [mic.com](http://mic.com).

However, not all musicians support drug use; some even condemn its abuse. One example is Eric Clapton, a legendary musician who founded the Crossroads Rehabilitation Center in 1998 on a Caribbean island. This rehabilitation center was established specifically to help individuals experiencing problems due to drug abuse and has received international recognition. "Crossroads is different from other treatment centers. It is the perfect place to start the recovery process and utilize a combination of effective therapies to overcome addiction," the singer of the song "Tears in Heaven" told [looktothestars.org](http://looktothestars.org). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, there are also those who have experienced similar things, such as the band Slank. Almost all of the Slank band members have been caught in drug cases and now all of the Slank band members are no longer using it. As in an interview with Bimbim, Slank's drummer, he revealed that during their time using drugs, life became disoriented, many concerts involved riots and were even banned from performing in areas in Indonesia, quoted from an interview on the Tonight Show program on Net TV.

Meanwhile, the influence of drugs is also significant on a person's cognitive abilities. Cognitive theory focuses on understanding individuals' thought processes when they encounter persuasive stimuli,

as well as how thought and cognitive processes determine changes in their attitudes and the extent to which those changes occur.

Therefore, the author proposes the following research questions: 1) What influences are caused by drugs in the entertainment industry, particularly in the music industry? 2) The impact on cognitive abilities and physical decline, including physical and mental abilities? 3). The influence of drugs on musicians' creativity in creating songs or artistic works.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a phenomenological perspective that refers to social phenomenology because it looks at a phenomenon that exists in society about many artists using drugs for whatever reason. In origin, phenomenology comes from phenomenon and logos. The phenomenon itself comes from the Greek verb, *phainesthai*, which means to 'appear', related to words such as fantasy, fantom, and phosphorus which refer to light. From here, a verb is formed that contains the meaning of 'appear' or 'visible because it shines', which can literally be interpreted as 'light'. In this context phenomena are interpreted as symptoms or manifestations. Donny (2005) wrote that phenomenology is the study of the essences of consciousness and the ideal essence of objects in relation to consciousness.

According to Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, phenomenology is a reflective effort to examine human consciousness from the perspective of the individual experiencing it. The primary goal of phenomenology is to describe human experience as perceived through various aspects such as thought, imagination, emotion, and inner drive. Husserl further explained that phenomenology analyzes the human lifeworld as individuals experience it, both from subjective and objective perspectives, and in relation to others (Wattimena, 2009). Others argue that phenomenology is a conceptual framework and methodological approach. As a philosophical school, phenomenology believes that knowledge comes from direct observation of phenomena (Kuswarno, 2009).

Phenomenology, as the name suggests, is the science (*logos*) of visible things (*phenomena*). Therefore, any research of work that examines how something appears or shows up is a form of phenomenological study. Phenomenological studies assume that each individual experiences phenomena with full awareness. Thus, phenomenological research aims to investigate the subjects' in-depth understanding of their experiences in an event (Hasbiansyah, 2008).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Drugs and Music Industry**

The music industry is known for its creativity and glamour, but is also often tinged with dark undertones, such as drug abuse. This phenomenon is nothing new and has been a part of music history for decades. The role of society in the fight against drugs is reflected in the entertainment world, particularly through music groups or bands. These groups, as artists, use their daily lives as inspiration to express their thoughts and feelings through the songs they produce. This is comparable to other artists who express themselves through various media such as theater, painting, poetry, and others.

A number of prominent music groups, both nationally and internationally, have expressed their concern about the distribution and abuse of drugs through their music. Some have voiced anti-drug messages through their songs or speeches during performances, raising awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy environment. Internationally, many famous musicians have been active in anti-drug campaigns. They distribute stickers and pins with the logos of famous musicians and create posters urging

people to keep away from drugs. For example, in 2008, the American band Fall Out Boy held a concert specifically to voice their opposition to narcotics and distributed t-shirt with the words "Say No to Drugs". In England, the band The Verve created a song titled "The drugs don't work", which describes their experiences of feeling they didn't get any benefits from using narcotics, even making them less intelligent. The band Arkarna also produced a song titled "Rehab", which tells the story of their vocalist's experience during drug rehabilitation. Through these works, these musicians contributed to voicing their opposition to drug use and abuse in society. Just like what the Queen vocalist, they held a concert titled or themed around HIV and drugs, while it went viral at the time because at that moment the rate of drug users and those infected with the HIV virus was very high.

The following factors contribute to a musician's involvement in drug cases:

- a. **Creative and Professional Pressure:** Musicians often face significant pressure to continuously innovate and produce successful works. Drug use is sometimes seen as a way to increase creativity and stamina. This statement is also explained by Trinugroho (2017: 77) who states that local musicians often face significant challenges, particularly given the high demands placed on creativity and productivity by the music industry.
- b. **Culture and Social Environment:** The music industry's often tolerant environment for drug use, coupled with peer influence and easy access to drugs, can encourage musicians to use drugs. According to Purwanto (2009: 73), "all other people or humans who influence us, either directly or indirectly." Setiadi & Kolip (2011: 181) also emphasize that the social environment is "a place or atmosphere where a group of people feel like members, such as the workplace, neighborhood, educational environment, Islamic boarding school, and so on."
- c. **Touring and Performance Life:** The grueling touring schedule, the pressure to perform flawlessly on stage, jet lag and lack of rest, have led some musicians to turn to drugs to overcome fatigue.

Physical fatigue is a condition in which physical work capacity decreases due to activity. Decreased work capacity indicates a reduction in the quality and quantity of physical movement performed. Focusing on the quality of movement, fatigue arises from a decrease in that quality (Giriwijoyo, 2010). Fatigue is often associated with a decrease or loss of a person's ability to respond to certain stimuli. Similarly, muscle fatigue refers to a condition in which the muscle's ability to respond to stimuli decreases or disappears (Parwata, 2015).

The music industry, often considered a world of creativity and glamour, also has a dark side involving drug use. This problem has existed for decades, creating significant challenges for musicians and society. The community's role in combating drugs is often seen through musical works that speak out against substance abuse. For example, famous bands like Fall Out Boy and The Verve have used their music to convey anti-drug messages. Concerts and songs that address this issue serve as tools to raise public awareness of the dangers of drugs. Furthermore, creative and professional pressures, a social culture that is tolerant of drugs, and the exhausting touring life are some of the factors that lead musicians to drug abuse. As several studies have revealed, the high demands of the music industry, social influences, and physical and mental exhaustion are the main triggers for drug use among musicians. Therefore, a collaborative effort between musicians and the community is essential to reduce drug abuse in the music industry.

## 2. Physical Impacts of Drug Use

The problem of drug abuse in society begins with offers from drug dealers. Initially, they are given drugs several times, and after becoming addicted, the dealer begins selling them. Once they become regular customers, they are pressured by the dealer to persuade others to try the drugs.

Drug abuse refers to the illegal or non-medical use of substances known as narcotics (narcotics and addictive drugs). This use can damage health and disrupt the productivity of the lives of those who consume them (Sofyan, 2005). According to Hawari (2006), people who are dependent on drugs experience mental disorders that hinder their ability to function normally in society. These disorders are reflected in changes in social functioning, occupational function, or difficulties in educational settings, and a lack of self-control. Common symptoms include excessive crying, runny nose, dilated pupils, excessive sweating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, yawning, high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, difficulty sleeping, irritability, emotional reactions, and aggressive behavior.

- a. Types of drugs: 1) Opiates or Opium (*opium*): is a group of natural narcotics that are often used by inhalation; 2) Morphine: is an active substance (*narcotic*) obtained from opium through chemical processing. Generally, opium contains 10% morphine. How to use it is injected under the skin, into the muscle or blood vessels (intravenously); 3) Heroin: is a group of semi-synthetic narcotics produced by chemical processing of morphine through 4 stages to obtain the purest heroin with a content of 80% to 99%. Pure heroin is in the form of a white powder while impure heroin is grayish white (street heroin). This substance very easily penetrates the brain so that it reacts stronger than morphine itself. Generally used by injection or inhalation. A very fast sense of activity/rushing sensation arises ( $\pm$  30-60 seconds) followed by a pleasant feeling like a dream full of peace and satisfaction or peace of mind (euphoria). Always want to be alone to enjoy it; 4) Marijuana: comes from the *cannabis sativa* and *cannabis indica* plants. This plant contains 3 main substances, namely *tetrahydrocannabinol*, *cannabinol* and *cannabidiol*. How to use it is smoked by compacting it like a cigarette or by using a smoking pipe; 5) LSD or lysergic acid or acid, trips, tabs: Included in the hallucinogen group (creating fantasies) which is usually obtained in the form of small square paper the size of  $\frac{1}{4}$  stamps in many colors and pictures. There are also those in the form of pills or capsules. How to use it by putting LSD on the surface of the tongue and reacting after 30-60 minutes later and ending after 8-12 hours; 6) Cocaine: has 2 forms, namely the acid form (*cocaine hydrochloride*) and the base form (free base). Cocaine acid is a white crystal with a slightly bitter taste and is more soluble than the odorless, bitter-tasting free base form. Street names include *coca*, *coke*, *happy dust*, *snow*, *charlie*, *srepet*, *snow*, and *white*. It is abused by snorting, which involves dividing a pile of cocaine into several straight rows on a glass or flat surface. This is then inhaled using a plunger or rolled up piece of paper. Another method is to burn it with tobacco, often called *cocopuff*. Snorting cocaine carries the risk of injury to the inner nostrils.
- b. The dangers of drug use include various negative effects. First, hallucinogenic drugs can cause hallucinations, where a person sees or experiences things that are not actually there. Examples of these drugs include cocaine and LSD. Second, stimulant drugs can increase the function of organs such as the heart and brain, providing a temporary feeling of energy and pleasure. Third, depressant drugs can depress the central nervous system and reduce the body's functional activity, causing a feeling of calm, even sleep or loss of consciousness. An example of this drug is putaw. Finally, drugs often lead to dependence. People who have used drugs tend to want to use them again because of their addictive effects. This can lead to a passive state and affect neural function in the brain. Examples of addictive drugs include marijuana, heroin, and *putaw*.

There are various types of drugs, including: *Opiates* or *Opium*, which are natural narcotics that are often smoked; *Morphine*, which is an active substance obtained from opium through a chemical process; *Heroin*, as a semi-synthetic narcotic resulting from chemical processing of morphine; *Marijuana*, derived from the *cannabis sativa* and *cannabis indica* plants; *LSD* or *lysergic acid*, including the hallucinogen group which is usually consumed in the form of colorful paper; and *Cocaine*, with two forms, namely acid and base. The impact of drug use varies widely, including: Hallucinogens can cause hallucinations; Stimulants can increase energy and mood temporarily; Depressants can suppress the central nervous system and cause a feeling of calm to the point of wanting to sleep; Addictive, because it can trigger a strong desire to consume drugs again and again.



Figure 1. *A woman using drugs before and after*  
(Source: Detik Health 2012)

The image of the woman above shows the effects of drug use. The image above shows the woman's first use of ecstasy pills in 2001, while the image below shows the woman's face in 2008 due to excessive use of ecstasy. This can occur over both long and short periods of time, with physical changes caused by drug dependence. The effects of addiction can cause both physical and mental disorders due to damage to the central nervous system (CNS) and other organs such as the heart, kidneys, liver, and lungs. The effects of drug use on each individual can vary depending on the type of drug consumed (Damanik, 2020). According to the 2004 World Book, individuals addicted to drugs face medical and social consequences, such as decreased motivation, memory impairment, personality changes, and broken relationships with family (Wilis, 2010).



Figure 2. *A man showing before and after quitting drugs*  
(Source: Brilio.net 2019)

In contrast, this man in the picture actually does the opposite, becoming more presentable after quitting drugs. He initially looked thin, but now he's become more muscular and healthier. From the picture above, we know that not only the lower classes are affected, but also the wealthy can be affected by the vicious effects of drugs. Individuals with financial wealth but lacking attention or exposed to unhealthy environments have the potential to become drug addicts (Eleanora, 2011).

Drug addiction can also be cured, as long as one has a strong determination to break free from the clutches of drug addiction. To support a client's rapid recovery from drug addiction, support from family members, such as parents, siblings, partners, and other family members, is crucial. With the help of a counselor acting as a mediator to facilitate communication between the client and family, family members also feel responsible for the client's recovery. The result is a growing sense of security, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility for themselves and their families (Wilis, 2010).

Prevention of drug abuse, distribution, and addiction is often advocated by the public, including the government. We know that *Badan Narkotika Nasional* (BNN) has long launched various initiatives to prevent drug addiction. As explained by Gono (2011), BNN has designed three main strategies to prevent drug addiction: Promotional, Preventive, and Advocacy and IEC (Communication, Information, and Education). The promotional strategy is specifically aimed at individuals who have no experience or knowledge about drugs. The preventive strategy includes various activities such as controlling and breaking the chain of drug distribution in the community, anti-drug abuse campaigns, and education, development, and training programs within peer groups. Meanwhile, the Advocacy and IEC strategy involves structured and ongoing communication to provide understanding and support for drug prevention policies, as well as interaction and communication between program providers and individuals, families, or communities to ensure acceptance and implementation of drug prevention programs. Considering that drug crimes are international and organized, preventive measures continue to be carried out by security forces, BNN, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through preventive, preemptive, and repressive measures with the aim of making Indonesia free from drug abuse, (Hariyanto, 2018).

Drug abuse has serious physical impacts on users. As previously explained, drugs can affect not only the physical but also the mental health of a person. Furthermore, drug use can cause damage to the nervous system and other organs. The most common physical symptoms experienced by drug addicts are tears and fluid discharge from various parts of the body, such as the nose and pupils, profuse sweating, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, goosebumps, yawning, and a rapid heartbeat. Drug users also often experience difficulty sleeping, emotional instability, and irritability, leading to more aggressive behavior. Over the long term, drastic physical changes such as weight loss, premature aging, and skin damage become apparent. This declining health condition is often accompanied by psychological and social disorders, further worsening the quality of life of drug users. The physical and mental suffering caused by drugs demonstrates the importance of preventing and addressing drug abuse in society.

### **3. The Impact of Drugs on Musicians' Creativity and Cognitive Processes**

Drug abuse clearly has a significant impact on the cognitive abilities and creativity of musicians. According to Rusdiana (2014), creativity is the ability to generate innovative ideas and find new approaches to solving problems and identifying opportunities. It is the skill of developing new ideas or concepts through creative thinking with the goal of creating something that has never existed before. The resulting ideas can help solve existing problems in society and unlock the potential for profit from these efforts.

Cognitive refers to the visible results of the process of acquiring knowledge through personal experience. The cognitive domain involves mental activities. According to Chung, "In Bloom's taxonomy, the cognitive domain is one of the basic frameworks for categorizing educational objectives, developing tests, and curricula worldwide." According to Anderson & Krathwohl, "The six main categories of the

cognitive domain, in order from the lowest to the highest level, are: knowledge; comprehension; application; analysis; synthesis; and evaluation." (Setiadi, 2016).

The following are discussion points regarding these impacts:

a. Decreased concentration and focus

Drug use significantly impacts a musician's concentration and focus, indirectly impacting their performance on stage and can lead to a decline in creative abilities. Concentration refers to a mental state or connection that arises in response to bodily sensations. To trigger these sensations, a calm and pleasant atmosphere is necessary. When a person is tense, their brain's ability to function optimally is impaired, causing their mind to go blank (Dennison, 2008). As stated by (Prihastuti, 2009), a pleasant atmosphere describes a state in which a child feels completely relaxed, free from any disturbing pressure, either physically or mentally. Meanwhile, concentration is the ability to focus the mind or mental capacity to sort out relevant information and ignore unnecessary ones. This opinion is also expressed by Matlin (in Sari, 2006), who defines concentration as part of attention because attention has a broader scope than concentration. Attention allows a person to receive additional information or receive various messages. The ability of attention to filter out unwanted stimuli among various existing stimuli is also part of concentration. Concentration, as a mental activity, falls within the domain of attention. Moray (in Sari, 2006) expressed a similar opinion to Matlin, stating that concentration is similar to attention, in that both are the ability to select one available stimulus for further processing.

Drugs disrupt the calm and pleasant mental state necessary to trigger bodily sensations. The tension created by drug use impairs the brain's ability to function optimally, resulting in a blank mind. Consequently, the ability to concentrate and focus decreases, affecting musicians' performance on stage and even leading to a decline in their creativity. In this context, concentration is considered part of the broader focus, where attention allows a person to process additional information and select relevant stimuli for further processing. Thus, it is important to understand that drug use not only impacts physical aspects and health but also has the potential to impair a person's mental abilities and performance in certain areas, such as in the case of musicians.

b. Decreased memory capacity in the brain

Drugs such as alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine can impair short- and long-term memory function, impairing musicians' ability to remember and learn new musical material. Furthermore, the brain's capacity to remember and enhance memory capacity is gradually impaired. Three systems form the structure of memory: (a) sensory memory; (b) short-term memory (STM); and (c) long-term memory (LTM). This paradigm is known as the model developed by Atkinson and Shiffrin, which was later refined by Tulving and Madigan. According to Bhinnety (2008), understanding long-term memory begins with understanding the concept of short-term memory. However, the structure of human memory is so complex that the notion of short- and long-term memory is merely a model or representation, not an actual structure within the brain.

c. Mental disorders

Drug use can exacerbate emotional disorders, compounded by the busy schedules of musicians. Mental health, as defined in Law Number 18 of 2014 concerning Mental Health, refers to a state in which a person can grow holistically, physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially, enabling them to recognize their individual potential, cope with stress, perform productively, and make positive contributions to society. Mental well-being also has a significant impact on a person's physical health and ability to be productive. Mental or emotional disorders can affect anyone. According to the 2018 Basic Health Research (Risksedas), the number of people aged 15 and over experiencing mental disorders such as

depression and anxiety reached approximately 6.1% of the total Indonesian population, equivalent to approximately 11 million people (Mardani, 2008).

Drugs can also cause drastic mood swings, which can affect the emotional stability and creativity of musicians, this can happen because if in a state of withdrawal, the body's condition cannot be controlled or controlled, even the impact of all people who use drugs tends to have free sex which can cause HIV. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a viral infection that attacks white blood cells (lymphocytes) in the human body, causing a decrease in immunity and increasing susceptibility to various diseases. This infection makes it difficult for the body to recover from opportunistic infectious diseases and can lead to death (Director General of P2PL RI, 2012). Meanwhile, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a series of symptoms that appear as a result of damage to the human immune system caused by the HIV virus. (Ministry of Health RI, 2020).

Drug abuse significantly impacts musicians' creative and cognitive processes. Creativity, the ability to generate new ideas and innovative methods, can be impaired because drugs reduce concentration and focus, which are essential for creative thinking. Decreased memory, both short-term and long-term, hinders musicians' ability to remember and learn new material. Furthermore, drugs can exacerbate mental disorders, causing drastic mood swings and affecting emotional stability, ultimately harming their productivity and creativity. With reduced ability to focus and retain information, along with the emotional instability caused by drugs, musicians experience a decline in the quality of their work and creativity.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes: First, drug use in the music industry is a long-standing phenomenon, with numerous cases still occurring, with complex and diverse impacts on musicians. Although some musicians report a temporary increase in creativity due to drug use, the long-term effects tend to be detrimental to both their physical and cognitive health, as well as their creative process. Furthermore, the environment may significantly influence musicians' drug use habits.

Second, the real impact on physical well-being is significant because drugs corrode the body from the inside out, both physically and psychologically, due to the numerous additives contained in the drugs themselves. Drug use can cause various serious health problems, including organ damage, heart problems, decreased immune function, and even death from overdose. These physical side effects not only threaten musicians' lives but can also hinder their ability to perform and create optimally.

Third, the impact on creative thinking and cognitive abilities in drug users can also be detrimental because drugs have side effects that can cause withdrawal, which can significantly hinder musicians' ability to learn music and their creative abilities. While drugs can provide a temporary boost to creativity, long-term use often results in decreased concentration, focus, and productivity. Reliance on drugs for inspiration can also hinder musicians' natural creativity, clouding the authenticity of their work and reducing the quality of their artistic output.

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