

## “TO BE A ROCK AND NOT TO ROLL” \*. ARTISTS AND THEIR DRUG OF CHOICE

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**Abstract:** *This study analyses the relationship between artists and the use of illicit drugs, the causes and circumstances that determine the use, the types of agreed drugs, the manners of consumption, the effects produced, as well as their opinions on the drug phenomenon. Many artists performing in various fields experimented with drugs, their effects were and still are often appreciated as positive, while the artists believe that, under the influence of drugs, they become more creative. In this paper, we made a brief history of the connection between artists and the phenomenon of drugs, a short presentation of the theories regarding drug use, of the institutional context. For better understanding, we referred to previous research by specialists in the field who analysed the artist-drug relationship. We used documentary analysis and biographies to conduct the study. The results of the research describe the general image of a group of individuals with a lifestyle which does not exactly match the classical pattern considered by society to be "normal". They are open to experiences with drugs, non-conformists, and rebels, and this is noticeable not only from their actions and values, yet most of the time from a physical point of view.*

**Keywords:** artists, celebrity, drug use, effects of drug addiction.

### 1. Introduction

Drug addiction is practiced since ancient times, and drug trafficking is one of the biggest problems of the entire planet, due to the fact that it is an extremely profitable business. It covers all countries, all social strata, all social activities and does not consider age. Psychiatrists, psychologists, neurophysiologists, neurochemists, pharmacologists, pedagogues, lawyers, sociologists, etc., from all over the world, approached the study on drugs from various perspectives, drug addiction being the subject of many discussions. Drug studies concern different aspects, which aim at their biological, psychological, and social consequences.

As a paradox, in a contemporary society where inventions, discoveries and achievements in all fields reached an incredible level, many individuals appeal to illicit drugs, and thus, take refuge in a hallucinatory world, from which, very often, they never come back. The reasons behind drug use are diverse, being nevertheless mainly divided into three categories: biological, psychological, or social.

In this study we tried spotlight the fact that one of the groups of society that enormously suffers from the drug problem is represented by artists. Although not everyone resorts to illegal substances. Although, it is a fact that they are more inclined to become victims of various types of drugs, because they have easier access to drugs. The drug is a substance that the use turns into habit and which directly affects the brain and nervous system, changes mood, perception and/or state of consciousness. (Campbell, 2001: 10) The process of creation "appears as a flexible and surprising reuse of human experience and knowledge." (Mărcuşanu, 2005: 120)

The man was and is in a continuous *process of creation*, which permanently separated him from the animal world. This creation of the new represents "the highest form of human activity, that dimension of personality, studied not only by psychology, which is *creativity*."

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\*Led Zeppelin, "Stairway to Heaven." Led Zeppelin IV. Atlantic, 1971

(Golu and Păiș, 2000: 160) The *creativity* "makes possible the creation of real or purely mental products, as it is a progress in the social plan", and it has as main component the imagination, although it also assumes motivation, willpower, and perseverance. (Cosmovici, 2005: 154).

The man was always interested to find ways to break away from the daily routine and create ephemeral pleasures. Drug addiction is practiced since ancient times, and its traces are almost lost in the mists of time. This was widespread in primitive societies, as well as in the Middle Ages (Sandu, 2002: 5). Since ancient times, some drugs were not only used for their supposed therapeutic effects, yet also for recreational purposes. In some of the most developed ancient civilizations, psychoactive plants played important roles in both the economic and religious fields (Ray and Ksir, 1996: 6). Although some of the names used by the ancient civilizations were preserved until now, some of the corresponding plants are no longer known and much knowledge disappeared in the mists of time (Șelaru, 1998: 11). This also happened with the terms of *Soma*, a mystical liquid also known in Vedic culture as the *nectar of the gods*, or the ambrosia of the Greeks, of which a single drop was said to bring immortality.

Sometimes, not even the name of the substance used is known, nor the plant from which originates. Thus, it is known that the Pitia of Delphi foretold the future placed on a tripod, from under which a smoke with hallucinogenic effects was coming out from the burning fire. The drug used by the "initiates" of that time is not known to date. In other cases, the tribes of Mexico, for example, have preserved from the distant times of the Aztec civilization the secrets of use of some plants in certain rituals, and some of such plants were discovered by our civilization only in the last few decades or in the last century. (Șelaru, 1998: 12-13) The tablets of the Sumerian civilization prove the knowledge of opium about seven millennia before our era. The Babylonians, who were descendants of the Sumerian civilization, transmitted during their expansion the knowledge of the cultivation and preparation of opium to the Egyptians and Persians. (Șelaru, 1998: 21). Hence, poppy and opium first appeared in Asia Minor. The Greeks also knew opium. Homer speaks in the "Odyssey" about a drink that Helen, Zeus' daughter, gives Menelaus to drink to forget about troubles and unhappiness. At the same time, the opium is also mentioned in the Aeneid, by the poet Virgil.

In the year 450 B.C., Herodotus described how opium was consumed by the Scythians, namely, by burning the seeds and inhaling the smoke (Edwards, 2006: 176). The Egyptians were using opium in rituals, and the Chinese, although they learned about opium when it was brought by the Arabs in the ninth century, they used it only in medical treatments. In India, cannabis was used in some religious rituals. It was known since the Middle Ages that the use of the flour that resulted from cereals that were grown in unfavourable conditions and attacked by fungi, were generating mental and somatic disorders known as ergotism, causing hallucinations, convulsions, and gangrenes of the extremities. These disturbances were called the holy fire, the fire of St. Anthony, etc. It was later learned that the fungus that caused these disorders was the ergot. Lysergic acid was identified as the active ingredient that was causing hallucinations (Șelaru, 1998: 20). Our ancestors, the Geto-Dacians, used a series of cures obtained from plants with narcotic and hallucinogenic properties, in religious rituals or in medical treatments.

In modern society, drugs play a much different role than they had even 100 years ago. Major events occurred in pharmacology and medicine, which have brought revolutionary changes in the manner we look at drugs, influencing our behaviour about drugs and drug consumption. (Ray and Ksir, 1996: 7). Drug addiction became a social phenomenon in the '60s, first in America, with the hippie movement, which was born in the student campuses in the United States, although it also spread to other countries. Its members developed their own lifestyles, declaring themselves against materialism and repression. According to the British Encyclopaedia, hippies promoted recreational use of hallucinogenic substances, especially marijuana and LSD, for so-called "journeys of the mind", justifying consumption as a way of expanding consciousness.

In the 1970s, marijuana was considered a harmless drug, fact that encouraged pro-marijuana groups to even call for its legalization. The "harmlessness" was based on inconclusive studies, the number of users being much lower than today, and the power of the drug was less significant than now. (Campbell, 2001: 161). With the coming of the '70s, the consumption of both cannabis and amphetamines has increased, these years marking the stage of "powders".

In the 80s, the heroin use became a major problem for different states, along with the use of MDMA (ecstasy). With the '90s, ecstasy became an extremely popular drug among young people, being associated with the *rave* movement. The followers of the movement participated in parties with electronic music, at which impressive shows of lights and lasers, as well as the most unusual outfits, were always present. This has often been compared to the hippie movement, due to the positive attitude, libertine style and nonconformism manifested by its followers.

In recent decades, there was a significant increase in the concerns of researchers in various scientific fields for the development of theories on drug use, abuse, and dependence. Hence, there are three types of explanatory theories: biological, psychological, and sociological.

- ❖ Biological theories. These theories focus on the genetic or constitutional mechanisms of the human body, trying to find an explanation for the fact that some individuals start using drugs or become addicted to them (genetic factors, metabolic imbalance)

- ❖ Psychological theories emphasising the mechanisms of "re-strengthening of the person" or the type of personality of the consumer (potential/negative, re-strengthening, inadequate personality, predisposition to problematic behaviours)

- ❖ Sociological theories. Unlike biological and psychological theories emphasising individualistic factors in drug use and dependence, sociological theories consider structural factors. Thus, drug use becomes a group phenomenon, which is learned, like any conduct (social learning, social control, subculture, selective interaction/ socialization).

## **2. Artists and drugs over time: celebrities, victims of drugs**

In psychology, creativity is defined as "the unitary set of objective and subjective factors that lead to the creation by individuals or groups of an original and valuable product for society". (Zlate et al., 2005: 128) Regardless of the field in which they operate, many artists did not remain indifferent to the influence of illicit substances on the human being and, at the same time, on the process of creation, considering, among other things, that drugs would make them more creative.

In 1821, "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" by Thomas De Quincey appears, in which he describes the effects of opium on his life. Despite all the praise that De Quincey had for opium and the effects it had on him, he suffered from consumption. For long periods of his life, he was unable to write because of his addiction, even declaring that "opium gives and takes back at the same time." Other famous English writers who lived during that period, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning or Samuel Taylor Coleridge, were also addicted to opium. (Ray and Ksir, 1996: 339-340)

In 1840, the psychologist Jacques-Joseph Moreau also founded a club whose members were writers such as Théophile Gautier, Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire, Eugène Delacroix, Gérard de Nerval, Alexandre Dumas, and Honoré de Balzac. They met monthly in a hotel in Paris and consumed a green paste made from hashish to explore drug-induced experiences. (Wishnia, 2008: 14). In 1843, the poet Théophile Gautier described the experience of cannabis use as having similar effects to those produced by LSD: "A dose as big as a full teaspoon is enough for those unaccustomed to this delight of true followers... I sat on the divan, lying down as comfortably as possible among the Moroccan pillows, in anticipation of ecstasy. After a few minutes, I was engulfed by a general numbness. My body seemed to melt and become transparent. I could see perfectly in my chest the hashish I had consumed in the form of an emerald that spread millions of sparks... From time to time, I could see my friends disfigured, half people, half plants, with the thoughtful air of the ibis sitting on one leg or of some ostriches

that were waving their so extraordinary feathers that I was bending of laughter in my corner..." (Edwards, 2006: 178)

The British Havelock Ellis conducted a series of tests on some friends with an aesthetic sense, and paraphrasing Charles Baudelaire, in 1902 he published an essay on mescaline, called "Mescal: A New Artificial Paradise. (Edwards, 2006: 230) Intrigued by the drug's potential to amplify aesthetic responsiveness, Ellis persuaded an artist to visit his apartment in the Temples and swallow Peyote. Nothing happened at first, so Ellis suspected that he had not extracted the active substance properly. He tried again, and "to make sure of success, the experiment was repeated with four mushrooms". The result was perhaps the first negative experience induced by a hallucinogen and described in the literature. The victim wrote about the experience: "I saw how a very intense blue light begins to play around all the objects. Such a silent and sudden illumination of all things around... it seemed to me as a kind of madness that engulfed me from the outside, and its strangeness affected me more than its beauty. Wanting to get rid of it, I headed to the door. However, a sudden difficulty in breathing and a numbness of the heart caused me to let myself back into the armchair from which I had just risen. From this moment on, I began to be engulfed in a series of attacks that I can only describe by saying that I felt like I was dying... I had imagined that I was on the brink of death, and I felt how the power to resist to the violent sensations that manifested within me was weakening with every moment." The terrified artist felt "a nauseating and suffocating gas that was rising in my head." Undeterred, Ellis continued and recruited two poets for his experiments. One of them did not like mescaline at all, stating that he prefers hashish much more. The second reached a state of bliss and, while playing the piano with his eyes closed, "he saw one or two shapes that could have been shields or breastplates." (Edwards, 2006: 23)

Marijuana became popular among musicians in the '20s and '30s with the phenomenon of jazz. The "vipers" (the name refers to the hissing that was heard when pulling from the joint) accompanied the sounds of instruments such as piano, drums or trumpets in boogie rhythm. It followed a long line of songs about marijuana, such as <<When I Get Low, I Get High>> of Ella Fitzgerald, <<Sweet Marijuana Brown>> of Duke Ellington, <<Texas Tea Party>> of Benny Goodman or the famous hymn of the fans of this drug from the jazz period <<If You're a Viper>>. Mezz Mozrow, a clarinetist who worked with Louis Armstrong and Sidney Becket, stated that "marijuana elevates the musician into truly mastery spheres, "making him hear everything "right" all at once. Henry Anslinger also believed that this drug makes artists in the jazz world able to play multiple notes. Armstrong was arrested in 1931 for smoking weed in the parking lot of a Los Angeles club and was also the first celebrity to be arrested for the drug. After prohibition, songs about marijuana began to decline, although the drug was still consumed by musicians. In the early '40s, Malcolm X was funding and selling grass to bands that followed him around the country. He wrote in his autobiography that at least half of a band's musicians smoked marijuana. (Wishnia, 2008: 19)

The drug-induced euphoria improves the appreciation of music, and numerous rock and jazz artists have stated that under the influence of marijuana they would perform better, even if this effect was not objectively confirmed. (Mihai, 2005: 81)

Billie Holiday, also known as Lady Day, was one of the greatest singers in the history of jazz music. She was discovered in the '30s, when she was singing in clubs, later becoming one of the black singers who collaborated with white musicians. She was using marijuana since the age of thirteen, yet in the '40s, she became addicted to heroin. In 1947, she was arrested for possession and spent a year in prison. In 1959, she was arrested again while lying on the hospital bed. Suffering from cirrhosis as a result of drug and alcohol use, Billie Holiday dies at forty-four years of age.

Pierre Mari and Patrick Mignon analysed the importance of the connection between jazz music and drugs. In the late 1980s, they published an article in "Esprit" magazine in which they talked about the jazz phenomenon that appeared in New Orleans with the development of marijuana use. They pointed out that many musicians were creating songs with references to

the drug, such as <<Muggles>> (marijuana cigarettes), which was recorded in 1930 by Louis Armstrong, or <<Reefer Man>> (marijuana seller) by Cab Calloway. In their opinion, marijuana and jazz were related. (Turlea, 1991: 26)

An essential ingredient of the mass bohemia of the '60s was cannabis, spreading everywhere with the cultural and political rebellions of that time, with the "total assault on culture," as the radical hippie poet John Sinclair said. Artists who claimed the style of some like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti were proud marijuana smokers, using the drug to stimulate spontaneous versification in the jazz bop style, such as Kerouac's poem <<Mexico City Blues>>. Like the jazz phenomenon, rock music culture popularized marijuana among the masses of the '60s. In 1964, the members of the famous group The Beatles were persuaded by Bob Dylan to smoke for the first time, and the effects were soon to appear in the more complex and nuanced music of the songs included on the album "Rubber Soul". With the advent of the hippie subculture, grass and LSD became its ships of "expansion of consciousness." Songs with subtle messages about drugs began to appear and reach the charts, such as <<Eight Miles High>> of The Birds, <<White Rabbit>> from Jefferson Airplane, or Bob Dylan's <<Rainy Day Woman #12 & 35>> in which he urged people to take drugs. (Wishnia, 2008: 20-21)

Numerous artists from the rock music world have been picked up by police for marijuana possession, such as John Lennon and George Harrison of The Beatles, The Grateful Dead, or Brian Jones and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones. Keith Richards had received a year in prison after allowing guests to smoke in his home, even if he was released after The Times newspaper in London criticised his conviction in an editorial. A member of the legendary band The Neville Brothers of New Orleans, Charles Neville spent three years in Angola prison in Louisiana because of two cigarettes with marijuana. One of the most drastic cases is that of Rocky Erickson, lead singer of the psychedelic-garage band in Austin, The 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators, who spent three years in a prison for insane criminals for possession of a single marijuana joint. (Wishnia, 2008: 23) According to Edwards (2006: 244), in 1968, a twenty-three-year-old with long hair and wearing an old but shiny military tunic presented himself at his clinic. He was the guitarist of a well-known band. His personal doctor refused to prescribe him the ration of 30 tablets of Dexedrine (dexamphetamine) which he considered necessary every twenty-four hours. The combination of insomnia and drugs makes him almost unconscious. "Man, I'm not coping without," he says. He was offered a treatment to gradually reduce the number of tablets, but he left and did not return. In the 1960s, the link between amphetamine and music spread widely. The 1960s were of historical importance because they marked the beginning of an association between drugs and dance culture, which has been perpetuated in the rhythm of many other types of music, until now.

In the '30s, the Rasta movement was born, with cannabis as a symbol, the "grass of wisdom" being used by Jamaican spiritual visionaries who found support in the Bible. In the late '60s, both grass (ganja) and Rasta found a niche in the expanding music industry. The birthplace of reggae music was Studio One, becoming popular very quickly among musicians. Musician Horace Andy told the author of <<Reggae Music>>, Lloyd Bradley, that people came there because they could smoke weed and knew they would find the necessary condition for the music. By the mid-70s, the influence of marijuana was evident in both music and lyrics, the most influenced genre being the dub (remixed instrumental versions of reggae, adapted for sound-system halls), with a simplified rhythm and cryptic vocal fragments lost in echo, powerful bass and drums amplified to a mysterious intensity. In 1975, Peter Tosh reached number one in Jamaica with the song "Legalize it", 3 years after being beaten by the police to the point of fainting during a raid for marijuana). Although in the '80s, Jamaican audiences turned *en masse* to reggae styles made for dancehall, songs about ganja never stopped appearing, from Wayne Smith's Under Mi Sleng Teng in 1985 to Sister Carol's Red Eye in 1996 and Junior Kelly's Boom Draw in 2001. (Wishnia, 2008: 28-29)

The legendary Bob Marley, the most iconic figure in reggae music, was a heavy cannabis user and has always made arguments to support its legalization, arguing that it is absurd for a natural plant created by God to be illegal. One of his best-known pieces, <<I Shot the Sheriff>>, depicted the fate of a marijuana grower harassed by a fanatical officer of the law. He was arrested in 1977 after London police found marijuana in the apartment where he was staying. However, because he was on his first offense, he got away with a fine and a warning. (Moskowitz, 2007: 42) The back cover of the album titled "Kaya" (Jamaican term for cannabis) depicted a colour drawing of a spliff growing from a marijuana plant to match the title. The album was seen as an intimate portrait of the lifestyle that Bob Marley loved. (Moskowitz, 2007: 87)

While in the '70s, after hip-hop has emerged, there were only a few songs with clear references to marijuana, the situation has changed since the '90s. Cypress Hill released their first album in 1991, featuring grass-referenced titles such as <<Stoned is the Way of the Walk>>, <<Light Another>>, and <<Something for the Blunted>>. (Wishnia, 2008: 37) The British writer Aldous Huxley, who even influenced some Romanian writers such as Mircea Eliade or Anton Holban, was very popular during the hippie period. His works were influenced by mysticism, and in "The Doors of Perception" and "Heaven and Hell", he describes his experiences with the use of mescaline, a drug with which he came into contact in 1953. In 1960, he told "The Paris Review" magazine that it is important for people to realize that the monotonous universe in which most live is not the only one that exists and that it is healthy for everyone to have the experience caused by LSD. He believed that he could not generalize when it comes to the effects of LSD because everyone reacts differently, and it could indirectly help some artists in the process of creation. (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, 2000: 17). He died in 1963, following a dose of LSD in an intramuscular injection, which he asked his wife in writing because he could no longer speak. Aldous Huxley had some influence even on the musicians, the name of the rock band "The Doors" being inspired by the title of the work "The Doors of Perception". In choosing the title, Huxley was also inspired by a quote from the poet William Blake. The lead singer and leader of "The Doors", Jim Morrison, began taking drugs while studying cinema at the University of California in Los Angeles, such as LSD. He used mostly cocaine, claiming heroin is harmful for him. In 1971, Jim Morrison died at just twenty-seven years of age from a heart attack. According to his girlfriend, it was allegedly caused by a dose of cocaine. However, his death remains a mystery to this day, with various hypotheses.

Brian Jones, the founder, and guitarist of the famous band "The Rolling Stones", ended up abusing drugs, due to the fame and success of the band, as well as to the fact that he had begun to feel pushed aside by the other members. He was arrested in 1967 after authorities found marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine in his apartment. Although he admitted to smoking marijuana, he denied that he would use other drugs. In 1968, he was arrested again for possession of cannabis, but due to the sympathy of the judge, he got away with only a fine and a warning. His use of drugs, his estrangement from his bandmates, as well as the problems created by his arrests, led to his exclusion from the band in 1969. Just a month after the public announcement, he was found dead in the pool of his home. Brian Jones' death was the first among artists who belonged to the rock phenomenon of the '60s, who died at the age of 27, followed by Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, and Jimi Hendrix.

A lot of people believe that LSD is closely related to creativity. Numerous experiments have attempted to study the effects of LSD on it. There is no evidence to show that this hallucinogenic drug would increase creative capacity. After an experiment that had professional artists as subjects, it was concluded that the drug is more likely to produce negative than positive effects on their creativity. (Ray, Ksir, 1996: 380)

Jimi Hendrix was probably the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music, the guitar hero of all time. Many people tried to overcome his interpretive technique but no one has been able to match his incredible achievements. His image is often associated with drug culture. He was consuming cannabis, hashish, LSD, and amphetamines (especially on tours), as well as

occasionally cocaine. Despite the severe lectures that Hendrix received from some close friends about how dangerous and destructive LSD was, he consumed it in large quantities as its fame grew. It blurred his mind and began to change his mood. (McDermott, Kramer, 1992: 146, 170). Producer Tony Bongiovi said that it was not just once that Hendrix tried to convince him to try drugs. He remembers how once, when he was in the studio, Hendrix's girlfriend, Devon Wilson, was smoking in his face trying to get him to smoke marijuana while Hendrix immobilized him. (McDermott, Kramer, 1992: 185) The phenomenal success of Hendrix had generated a wide base of supporters and admirers. Many of the fans even sent him drugs in envelopes. Some contained bizarre mixtures of substances subject to a special control regime. A fan in northern California sent him some LSD accompanied by a brief description of the "journey" he would be able to enjoy if he used it. An Indian from Arizona offered him peyote, along with detailed instructions on the extraction of strychnine. Most fans even wrote their addresses on envelopes, wanting Hendrix to share with them his experiences. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 228) In 1969, Hendrix was arrested in Toronto after customs officers found several packets of heroin and a pipe with unprocessed hashish in his luggage. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 255) Musician David Crosby had stated that Hendrix had remarkable physical endurance, being the only man he knew able to play after consuming acid (LSD) and that whenever he tried, he had the impression that his guitar strings were melting. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 276).

Michael Jeffery, Hendrix's manager, had noticed that Hendrix was consuming more and more drugs at a frightening rate, having an insatiable appetite for cocaine. He had learned that Jimi had even snuffed out heroin, an incident that terrified him. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 316) In September 1970, at just twenty-seven years of age, Jimi Hendrix passed away, following asphyxiation with his own vomiting, during sleep. It was made official that he took a dose of sleeping pills, yet not higher than usual. Despite the death certificate, there are numerous theories regarding the death of the artist that has aroused numerous suspicions and has remained a mystery to this day.

Janis Joplin, one of the representative singers of the hippie period, became known in the '60s. With success, drugs have become present in her life, consuming various drugs, such as psychoactive ones, amphetamines or even heroin. She died in 1970 from a heroin overdose and was found in her hotel room by her manager. Janis Joplin remains in music history, people often speaking of her as the female version of Elvis Presley.

Elvis Presley, an American singer, and actor, also known as King of Rock'n'roll, consumed surprising amounts of drugs throughout his life. In her memoirs, the ex-wife of the famous Elvis Presley, Priscilla Presley (1993: 160), says that he had impressive knowledge of drugs, taking amphetamine and sleeping pills, although Elvis claimed he did not need them and that he would not develop an addiction. Because of boredom and anxiety, over time, he began to depend more and more on drugs, believing that the fast pace of life helps him get rid of destructive thoughts, nevertheless the result was a false self-assurance and an aggressiveness that was not in his nature, ending up losing confidence in himself and in others. (Presley, and Harmon, 1993: 298) Elvis was curious enough to try the LSD one night with his closest people. As a result of the experience, they all became cheerful, and then they watched the tropical fish in an aquarium, which, although, there were about two or three of them, in their eyes had become a whole ocean of bright fish. At dawn, Elvis and Priscilla went outside and looked at nature in all its details. They considered the experience to be an extraordinary one, because they knew that LSD was a drug that was too dangerous to be taken just by fun, they never touched it again. (Presley and Harmon, 1993: 222) As an avid badge collector, Elvis wanted to get the badge of the Federal Narcotics Office and didn't leave until he got one. The fixed idea was because Elvis imagined that this badge would give him the right to carry as many illegal drugs as he wanted, to any country. (Presley, 1993: 301-302) Elvis Presley died in 1977, at the age of forty-two, from a heart attack and drug use had major implications in his death.

Keith Moon, drummer for the rock band "The Who," was known for his unique performances and eccentric style, as well as for his destructive behaviour. With the success of the band, he adopted a chaotic lifestyle from which there was no shortage of banned drugs, this starting with amphetamines. In 1978, he died of an overdose of medications prescribed to ease his symptoms during the alcohol rehab process. Keith Moon is still regarded today as one of the most talented drummers in the history of rock'n'roll music.

American jazz singer and trumpeter Chet Baker began using heroin in the '50s, developing an addiction that lasted the rest of his life, and in the early '60s, he spent more than a year in a prison in Italy because of it, being arrested countless times. As the years passed, the artist was getting better and better, despite the physical degradation. In 1988, at the age of fifty-nine, Chet Baker fell from the balcony of his hotel room, his death being accidental. At the autopsy, it was confirmed that he had heroin and cocaine in his blood, drugs that were also found in his room.

The visual artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat, is known especially because of his "primitive" style, as well as for his collaboration in the 80s with the artist Andy Warhol. He first attracted attention with graffiti works, and as his popularity grew, he entered the world of drugs. After a long battle with heroin addiction, Basquiat died of an overdose in 1988 at the age of twenty-seven.

River Jude Phoenix was an American actor, musician, and activist, becoming known for his appearances in films such as "Stand by me", "Indiana Jones" or "My Own Private Idaho", although his close friends knew that his true passion was playing the guitar. He was also known for his involvement in animal and environmental protection activities for PETA and beyond. After he began to be recognized for his merits in the world of actors, he started to occasionally use marijuana, cocaine and heroin, along with some friends. He died at the age of twenty-three in 1993 from an overdose of cocaine and heroin, collapsing in front of a club owned by Johnny Depp at the time.

About Shannon Hoon, the lead singer of the rock band Blind Melon, is said to have been a talented and charismatic, impulsive musician. Shannon and his band came to the public's attention after he became friends with vocalist Axl Rose, an old friend of his sister's. Axl proposed a collaboration and they recorded several songs with the legendary band "Guns N' Roses", as the second voice, including for the song "Don't Cry", even appearing in the video. In 1995, at the age of twenty-eight, he suffered an accidental death on the bus used by his band on tour, following an overdose of cocaine.

The 2000s also took with them many artists known and loved by fans. With the grunge movement of the early '90s, the rock band "Alice in Chains" experienced international success. The band's lead singer, Layne Staley, was known to be addicted to heroin and cocaine. Over the years, his physical condition deteriorated deeply, as he became unable to perform live. In the last years of his life, he isolated himself from family and friends, rarely leaving his apartment. He stated that he was aware that he made a big mistake when he started using drugs. Layne Staley passed away in 2002 at the age of twenty-four, in the same way as actor River Phoenix: accidental death due to the lethal combination of heroin and cocaine.

Paul Gray was the bassist and one of the founders of the numerous award-winning metal band "Slipknot", including a Grammy, and was known for their chaotic and energetic live performances. Paul Gray has long struggled with drug addiction, leading to his death at the age of thirty-eight in 2010 as a result of an overdose of morphine.

Amy Winehouse, the Jewish singer, known for her strong voice and the ease with which she combined musical styles, struggled with drugs and bulimia, being a subject to which the media paid a lot of attention. After unsuccessful rehabilitation attempts, Amy died in her own home in 2011 at the age of 27 from alcohol poisoning.

Whitney Houston was one of the most beloved and award-winning pop artists of all time. There was no shortage of drugs in her life, as she admitted to being a consumer of marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, and other drugs. She died at the age of forty-eight in 2012. She was



found unconscious in the bathtub after drowning. After the autopsy, it was learned that Whitney had consumed cocaine that day. Although drugs have destroyed the lives and careers of many artists, some have managed to overcome their addiction. Among the happy cases is the American actress Melanie Griffith, who has struggled with drug addiction for many years, especially cocaine. English comedian and actor Russel Brand has stopped using since 2002, having been addicted to heroin. American actor Robert Downey Jr. has become addicted since childhood, yet he has not been taking drugs since 2003. The famous musician Elton John faced the problem of drugs (especially cocaine) in the 80s, but he no longer consumes. The American jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis, who was one of the most important musicians of the twentieth century, managed to overcome his addiction to heroin and cocaine. The musician Ray Charles, a consumer of drugs like marijuana since his teens, he then became addicted to heroin. He overcame his addiction in 1966 at the age of thirty-six.

### **3. Romanian writers and drugs**

Historian and anthropologist Andrei Oişteanu conducted a study entitled "Romanian writers and narcotics", published in several issues of the 22 journals in 2008. We find out that the psychotropic substances were not unknown to some writers from the Romanian space. One of them is Daniil Scavin (1805?-1837). Suffering from depressive states, the opiomaniac writer committed suicide at the age of thirty-two, in Iasi, by administering large doses of mercury and opium. If at first, some substances were used for medicinal purposes, then they spread to the artistic and bohemian environments of the big cities. A victim of morphine addiction was Alexandru Odobescu, who committed suicide in Bucharest in 1895 with an overdose of morphine. Influenced by French writers like Gautier or Baudelaire, Alexandru Macedonski was taking hashish pills and probably smoking opium. The case of Ion Barbu involves a "drug addiction". He first discovered cocaine and ether, and then became addicted, writing poems under the influence of drugs. Another Romanian writer who is known to be a drug user is Mircea Eliade. He smoked opium at the age of twenty-two seeking to "escape"; in the early '30s, he smoked cannabis thinking it helped him in mental focus and meditation and in the '40s, he treated a depression with amphetamines.

### **4. Conclusions**

Many drug-using people suffer from depression, and some have active suicidal tendencies. The specialists who work with these people can diminish the possibility of suicide, primarily by helping them stop using drugs, because many suicides occur when they are under the influence of drugs. Specialists must always evaluate suicidal behaviour at the first contact with a new client. (Blume, 2011: 194-196) There are famous cases of suicide among artists who were known to be drug users. One of these cases is of the leader of the rock band "Nirvana", who in 1994, was diagnosed with bronchitis and severe laryngitis. Shortly after, Kurt Cobain's body was found inanimate on the porch of the artist's home in Lake Washington, and he was shot in the head. Under a flowerpot, it appears that the artist of only twenty-seven years left a letter from which it was understood that his death was a suicide. He was addicted to heroin, and at the time of his death, he had heroin and diazepam in his blood.

Fashion designer Alexander McQueen also committed suicide in 1994 by hanging himself because of his depression at the age of forty. Before committing suicide, he took a mixture of cocaine, tranquilizers and sleeping pills. Another famous case of suicide is that of Sid Vicious, bassist of the British band "Sex Pistols", and his image has always been associated with the punk-rock movement. Being raised by his mother in an inappropriate environment, his first contact with drugs was in childhood, and in his high school years he entered their world. His tumultuous relationship with Nancy Spungen, a heroin addict, greatly influenced Sid. In 1978 he was charged with her murder by stabbing, and shortly after, he had two suicide attempts. In 1979, at just twenty-one years old, Sid Vicious died of a heroin overdose. Even to this day, it is

not known for sure if it was a suicide or if the rumours are true that his mother gave him a lethal dose because she feared that her son would return to prison.

Drug use is one of the most serious social problems facing contemporary society. In attempts to prevent illicit drug use, a detailed and appropriate knowledge of drug use and addiction is necessary to access certain resources. Informing and educating the population about the risks they are exposed to by drug consumption is essential. Many artists face the problem of drugs, in the darkest corners of public life. To stimulate creativity, many of them seek resort in drugs, seeing them as a source of inspiration. Many cases in the world gradually came to the attention of the public, as many artists dying from overdoses. Thus, drugs prematurely ended the careers of many individuals with potential.

Among those who used drugs, a large part ended up in that situation because of lack of information or erroneous information, as well as due to the creation of a positive image regarding certain types of drugs. The list of celebrities succumbed because of drugs is very long. Over time, many young talents who would have had a promising future, became victims of this seductive and at the same time life-destroying phenomenon. Some celebrities were destroyed by the same drugs that may have given them a boost in the creative process at some point. Unfortunately, not all of them managed to escape from the spell of drugs, and many of them did not survive and ended tragically. However, even today, many artists struggle with drug addiction, wanting to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Was the work of any celebrities influenced in any way by the drug's use? Would Jimi Hendrix still be considered the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music if he did not consume drugs in such large quantities? Would he still have had those incredible achievements? Would Elvis Presley still be considered the "King of Rock'n'roll" if he didn't consume huge amounts of drugs throughout his life? All these are each generation questioning itself, but they failed to reach an answer. This is a theme to be explored in a future study. It is a reality that illicit drugs have considerably influenced the life course of some great names in the field of art, continuing to be associated with them or with different subcultures, even after the years passed. There are many suspicious deaths of celebrities attributed to drug consumption. However, no one can ignore the entire industry which starts to build around those celebrities, which means, at the end of the day, lots of money in someone's pocket, other the musician him/herself.

The analyses should be continued to understand all the reasons and what causes the start and continuity of the drug consumption by the artists. A question to be answer in future study is why their staff supports their addiction. Many aspects need to be considered and corelated.

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