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### Drugs addiction and musicians

For many years, music and drug use have been intertwined with one another for various reasons. This situation has been linked to increasing need among musicians for wealth, social standing, and glamour among other reasons (Yang 2). For instance, it is relatively common for people to associate Sid Vicious and heroin, or Snoop Dogg and weed. In addition, it has been common for many popular musicians to be caught in drug scandals, and others being sent to rehab due to drug addiction, or even in some worse cases others die due to drug overdoses (The Music of Orrin Hatch 2). The level and popularity of drug usage differs from one genre of music to another. A recent study by the University of California, Berkeley's School of Public Health found out that illegal drug use in rap music has increased by six times since 1979. It is the fear of many parents and public health officials that the trajectory in rap music poses a serious threat to the society, particularly among the youth. Pop and rap music is very appealing to the majority of young individuals, most of whom are looking up to rap, jazz, and pop artists as their role models (Yang 3). This paper delves into drug addiction and musicians, particularly addressing the reasons as to why drug addiction is so omnipresent in musical circles.

Drugs have often been associated with music scenes, and celebrated musicians such as Miles Davis, Jimi Hendrix, and Keith Richards, have been addicted to drugs at one time or another. The close relationship between drug addiction and musicians is well reflected in a short fiction by James Baldwin "Sonny's Blue". In this story, an African American schoolteacher

disagrees with his younger brother “Sonny” about his ambition of becoming a musician. Soon after Sonny is arrested for heroin use and sent to rehab. After a short while, he watches Sonny performing at a Jazz club and he feels deeply connected and enlightened with Sonny’s blues (Baldwin 21). However, what is apparent from the story is that Sonny is suffering from drug addiction and he is a musician. He displays characteristics of a drug addict such as being an introspective and quiet person with the tendency of withdrawing inside himself. He is also wild and behaves in a manner that is not expected of him. Nonetheless, he has a passion for jazz music and he goes ahead to become a successful musician (Baldwin 42). Sonny is in a community of many other musicians who are addicted to drugs. Considering the positive and negative effects of drug addiction on musicians, it is critical to examine the various aspects related to these two issues.

There is no doubt that drug addiction is very common in musical circles. In fact, there are numerous evidence of famous musicians who have battled alcoholism and drug addiction for the better part of their music career and some have even succumbed to drug addiction. Famous politicians such as Bob Marley, Britney Spears, Keith Richards, Jimi Hendrix, Whitney Houston, Amy Winehouse, and Michael Jackson among others battled with drug addiction. So, why are drugs so omnipresent in musical circles? Many musicians use drugs largely because drugs including alcohol are extremely prevalent in the music industry (The Music of Orrin Hatch 3). Every music events, big and small, have people using harder drugs; the music industry is considered a “party industry” and it is somewhat expected apart from entertainment, there should be upbeat emotions during performance. In many cases, drugs are used in the musical circles to enhance entertainment, as well as in enhancing emotions. It is for this reason that drug use has become part of music culture where famous music stars and even fans have made it a

mainstay(Aldridge and Jorg 91). It now appears awkward to many musicians mainly in pop, rap, and jazz music industry not to use drugs during their performance.

The other reason as to why drug use is so omnipresent in musical circles is the link it is believed to have with creativity. Many musicians argue that there is a like between many drugs and creativity in the music industry. Some of these claims have been proven while others have not. For example, it has been proved medically that marijuana improves the creativity of a person especially when consumed regularly. In addition, there is an obvious link between psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs with the ability of a musician to create unusual lyrics. Popular songs such as “Black Balloon” by Goo Goo Dolls, Cab Calloway’s “Reefer Man” and Amy Winehouse’s “Rehab” have been linked with drug use (The Music of Orrin Hatch 4-5). It appears that music and drugs are forever intertwined in certain ways and it is less likely that the music world will ever let go of its drug influencers.

Drugs have some positive values to musicians, particularly as they constantly seek for ways of improving their performance ability. While it is true that professional musicians cannot fully benefit from artificially increased performance through drugs, they sometimes derive some benefits from drug use. Firstly, drugs help musicians to reduce anxiety related to performance. It is nothing new for musicians to suffer from performance anxiety, also known as “stage fright”. Typically, performance anxiety is an issue treated as a mental challenge (Aldridge and Jorg 95). As such, every professional musician has a trick or technique they use in helping him or her to remain focused and calm during performances, drug use being a popular technique. Some musicians have trouble obtaining levels of relaxation and focusing on use of other techniques such as mental exercises. Therefore, in order for them to perform at their level best, they resort to alcohol and drugs to fight symptoms of performance anxiety. Drug use helps musicians to reduce

their performance anxiety level and therefore allowing them to reach much high consistency levels during their performance. As a result, musicians are able to meet or even exceed the expectations of the popular musicians (Manning 60). This is important for the music industry in terms of broadened fan base. In addition, it helps musicians to get high revenues, and this is important not only in enabling them to lead a comfortable lifestyle but also in enhancing their music careers.

However, there are negative effects of drug use on musicians. Those opposed to drug use by musicians argue that drug use by some musicians eliminates level playing field in the music industry. They argue that drugs provide an artificial edge to some musicians over the others. This has negative effects on the career of musicians who do not use drugs (Aldridge and Jorg 102). It is also argued that drug use by some musicians deprives the music industry the natural form; musicians using drugs create artificial products, which is not representative of their natural ability. In addition, drugs addiction among musicians may cause physiological and psychological disorders that can negatively affect the career of the affected musicians. In worst cases, drug addiction may cause deaths of the musicians. A number of famous musicians have died due to drug addiction-related complications (Manning 64). They include Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston and Amy Winehouse among others. Another negative effect related to drug addiction by musicians has to do with its effect on the society and particularly among the young people. Many young people view popular musicians as their role models (Aldridge and Jorg 119). As such, their use of drugs may encourage drug abuse in the society especially among the young people.

Like other people, musicians undergo a certain process of drug addiction. The first stage is that of pre-contemplation where they are concerned that their drug use is an issue but it appears to them that they are under control. The second stage is that of contemplation where

something happens forcing them to think about their drug use. Subsequently, they feel the urge of being “high” all the time or during a certain time in order to achieve a particular goal (National Institute on Drug Abuse). When they are in this state, they get an illusion of complete happiness and relaxation. This gives them a misconception that their body is functioning properly while it is not. Like other people, musicians undergo certain recovery process in order to get away from drug addiction. Medication and behavioral therapy are the main processes and can be administered at home, hospital, or at a rehabilitation center. The two processes are often combined to achieve maximum effectiveness. Usually, it begins with detoxification, then followed by treatment and then relapse prevention (National Institute on Drug Abuse). Several famous musicians have recovered from drug addiction and they include Elton John, Lou Reed, and Keith Richards among others.

To sum up, it is evidently clear from the above discussion that drug addiction and musicians are principally intertwined. As has been noted, drug addiction is omnipresent in the musical circles. Many musicians opt to use drugs in order to enhance their performance and meet or even exceed the expectations of their fans. While there are some positive values of drug use by musicians, there are negative effects as well. It has also been noted that like other people, musicians undergo near similar if not similar process of drug addiction and recovery from drug addiction as well.

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