

Article in National Geographic

Drugs in Music: A Cause of Death?

In 2017, rap artist Lil Peep died of a suspected overdose on opioid painkillers. While some think it was a suicide, others think it was for respect. The truth is that it has not been determined, although it is said Lil Peep talked about depression in an interview that was never published. In an article on Pigeons and Planes, it is written that he said, “I suffer from depression” and “It’s more of an escape” (Moore, *Lil Peep Talks Depression, Drugs, and Goals in Unpublished 2017 Interview*). Peep also spoke about drugs and why he sings about them. He says, “I am always around drugs so I sing about it” and “They’re one of my biggest inspirations”. All of this may have led to Peep’s death, because he was tested positive for fentanyl and

Xanax, an opioid, in his blood. Fentanyl is an extremely addictive drug, as well as Xanax. His death has not been determined, but he had referenced drugs and suicide in many of his songs. Lots of other artists reference drugs in their music as well. Lil Pump, Drake, and Snoop Dogg all have sung about drugs in their top songs. Snoop Dogg talked about how marijuana got him “laid back” while Lil Pump says “I’m on the Xan and my B***h on that coke.” Both of these artists are well known, and often listened to. The lyrics Lil Peep sung about were mainly lean, weed, Xanax, Percocet, and cocaine, all of which, he says, he had been around. Drug references in music are becoming more popular every year. Cocaine is sometimes referred to as a

brick, lean is referred to as purple, for its violet color, and Xanax is referred to as just X. Lil Peep said he writes about the drugs he is around and he experiences. Most artists also write about their experiences with drugs, like cocaine, lean (a mix of Sprite and codeine, a type of prescribed cough medicine). In a 2005 study by Brian A. Primrack, a EdM and MD, 279 popular songs were surveyed to find the percentage of songs with drug references in them. "Of the 279 songs, 93 (33.3%) portrayed substance use," the study says. Primrack then concluded that adolescents are exposed to 84 illicit substance references daily. These 279 songs weren't just rap and hip-hop, they were the most popular songs out of *any* genre (jazz, chill, reggae, rap, etc.). In the songs "Rockstar" (Post Malone), "Mask Off" (Future), and "Gucci Gang" (Lil Pump), there are 48 drug references in them (31 are in

"Mask Off", 9 are in "Gucci Gang", 8 are in "Rockstar"). Most of them are referencing "Molly" (Ecstasy) and Percocet (opioid painkiller) as well as cocaine. These songs are three of the most searched songs on Google. In only three songs, artists sung 48 references about drugs. These artists use these references to gain respect in the rap business. Lots of artists brag about taking a drug to gain respect and to seem cool. Lil Peep, before he died, bragged of taking six pills of Xanax. Overall, artists reference drugs *a lot*, especially in rap and hip-hop songs.
