

DRUGS AND INSPIRATION

People use drugs for different reasons. Because it's social, recreational, fashionable, relaxing, inspiring, etc. When I was young, I used to admire the professional musicians. I really wanted to be like them, but they had that whole "hip" attitude; they even talked differently. They wouldn't even talk to me. It was always, "Hey kid, get outta here." But I persisted for a long time until finally they said, "Okay, wanna smoke?" So I smoked my first joint when I was fifteen. It was not that I wanted to use drugs. I just wanted to be like them. Actually, the first time I smoked I didn't feel anything, but then they started telling me, "You feel like **this**." So they put that whole vibe on me, and then, after a few times, I felt something that I thought was great.

When I came to New York, I started trying other drugs. I was doing that because I thought I was getting myself together to play the music. A lot of other musicians were doing these things, and even most of the audience was on something. So I felt that in order to communicate with them, I had to be as high as they were. But then I found that people who knew that I was getting high wouldn't hire me because they were afraid that I was not dependable.

I have a very uncomfortable feeling when I think back to how I would be uptight and sweaty, even before I would start to play. I used to do a little bit of this and that, and then I would go on stage and play like a maniac for the first fifteen minutes. But after that I would start to feel wasted and tired. Instead of being really inspired about the music, I would be thinking about when I was going to do a little more of this or that. What a feeling!

After I stopped, I found out that a lot of the reasons I was getting high were not true. For instance, I thought I had to get high to be inspired. But I find that I can still do all the things I could do before. The difference is, now I feel much more aware of the music, the musicians I am playing with, and even of myself. I communicate with the other musicians much better now. Before, I didn't realize it, but it was sort of like an ego trip. I just used to close my eyes, and it was like, "I'm having fun, and I don't care about you guys." I wasn't really thinking that, but it was sort of that attitude. There were times I would start going off by myself, but fortunately, I knew how to listen, and so I would come back to the reality of the music. Now I feel much more aware of the music, and I feel that I'm constantly communicating with the other musicians. Plus, I am much more aware of the audience — how they are feeling about the music and what kind of emotion I'm getting from them.

Another thing I have noticed is that now, when I rehearse something, I remember it. I used to forget a lot. I would go to rehearsal and just **play** songs instead of **learn** them. Then, at night, when I would try to play the songs with the band, I would remember almost nothing. The other musicians would say, "Hey, how come you are not learning the songs?" I would say, "Well man, I like to **play** them; I don't like to learn them." So I would use that kind of excuse: "I'm hip. I don't learn. I just play." But in reality, I **couldn't** learn.

Since then, I have worked with some other musicians who couldn't learn. They have to play their own arrangements of things. If you try to give them an idea, they won't remember it. They only remember an idea if it is their own. I was in a band once where we could only play a few actual songs; the rest of it had to be free music. They did all right with that, but they put everything else down because they couldn't do it. There are certain musicians who I think are great, but I wouldn't hire them because they are not reliable. And it is because of the drugs. Now I realize why people wouldn't hire me when I was taking drugs.

Sometimes it is difficult if you are around other people who are using drugs, but you do not want to use them. When I am in a situation like that, instead of saying, "I don't do this," or "I don't do that," I just say, "No man, I'm fine. I'm feeling good." When you say something like that, you make a statement. You are saying that you are okay, and so you don't have to go into any other kind of trip. But you have to be positive about it. If you are worried about it, or unsure about it, they will see it in your eyes. They just want you to feel good. No one is trying to turn you into a drug addict. They think they are feeling great, and so they want you to feel great too. But if you let them know that you are feeling good, without making a big thing out of it, they will leave you alone. In most cases, they will not insist, but they will not want to get rid of you either.

The main thing is: **You have to believe in yourself.** If you think you have to take drugs to believe in yourself, then you are living in a lie. There are two worlds — the real world and the make believe one. So make your own choice.
