

## Style Over Substances

[Jack Davies](#) explores the albums that best summarise key movements in the history of drugs

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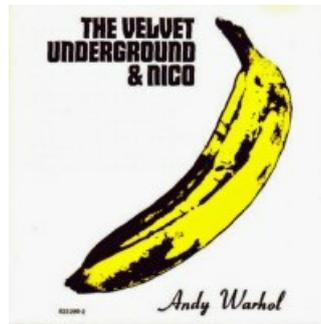
Source: Tom Hill/WireImage

Music and narcotics. The two are often thought to go hand-in-hand. It's true that your run of the mill cliché of a rockstar will often involve the consumption of copious amounts of cocaine, and your standard acid house DJ is probably thought to pop pills like they're Smarties.

But aside from these clichés, it's a simple fact that there have been a lot of albums made under the influence of some more than questionable substances. But what albums echo particular drugs? What can you listen to to give you an idea of what it'd be like to be in *Trainspotting*, or to be dancing at the *Haçienda* in the early 90s? With this in mind, let's take a trip down the hazy road of the most drug-infused albums ever released...

Disclaimer: Nouse Music would like to point out that the consumption of the following drugs is not advised and will almost certainly not transform you into a musical genius.

### **The Heroin Album: The Velvet Underground & Nico - *The Velvet Underground & Nico***



Source: Velvet Underground  
Discogs

In addition to the fact that there is actually a song on the album called 'Heroin', The Velvet Underground & Nico feels entirely immersed in the drug. The VU's frontman, Lou Reed, was a heroin addict for the majority of his life; this addiction once saw him shoot up on stage in Houston in 1974. Christ, the album is practically an homage to heroin – it seeps a grimy, lackadaisical mood. It is to this day still considered seminal in alternative music, and perhaps this is at least partially owed to the influence of that brown stuff.

### **The Weed Album: Bob Marley & The Wailers - *Rastaman Vibration***



Source: Bob Marley Official

Okay, so this was always going to go to Bob Marley. Reggae music tends to reek of green. But why Rastaman Vibration? This was the final album Marley recorded in his homeland of Jamaica, and within the Rastafarian religion, smoking marijuana is viewed as a way of getting closer to God. Being so in touch with his roots while making it meant that the album was highly entwined with the Rasta vibe. The music sounds like a weed-addled day on a Jamaican beach, and while being far from Bob Marley's best album, Rastaman Vibration gives you a snapshot of Jamaican drug culture.

### **The Cocaine Album: Oasis - *Be Here Now***



Source: Oasisnet

The Gallagher brothers are famed for their affinity with the notorious white powder, but nowhere is it clearer than on their third album, Be Here Now. The album came out in 1997 when Oasis were on the verge of becoming the biggest band on the planet, and the Mancunians were certainly enjoying the excesses of the rock and roll lifestyle, with Noel declaring during the recording of the album that drugs had become "like having a cup of tea in the morning". The record itself is far from their best work, but its

fast-paced, OTT songs still manage to encapsulate the exuberance, exhilaration and extremity associated with cocaine.

### **The Acid Album: Syd Barrett - *The Madcap Laughs***



Source: Steve Thomason

Psychedelia is a broad spectrum, but for his sheer commitment to the cause, this title has to go to Syd Barrett, Pink Floyd's founding frontman. Barrett was highly addicted to LSD throughout the 60s and 70s, and the result was *The Madcap Laughs*, released as his first solo album in 1970 following his exclusion from Pink Floyd for erratic behaviour. The album was recorded in five sessions over the course of eighteen months, and the disjointed feel passes into the album. It is genuinely disturbing music, and persistent, echoing guitars heard throughout add to its peculiarity.

### **The Honourable Mention: Primal Scream - *Screamadelica***



Source: Creation Records

No homage to trippy albums could be complete without mentioning Primal Scream's 1991 masterpiece, *Screamadelica*. The album, which won the inaugural Mercury Prize and had sold over 680,000 copies by 2011, is a masterful fusion of the best of acid house and psychedelic rock. Their illustrious career spans ten albums, almost all of which were well received. Ecstasy usually gets thrown about as its main influence, but there are so many layers to the record that you can't really epitomise it with just that. Lyrics like "We wanna get loaded, and we wanna have a good time" give the game away a touch. The album sounds like drugs: it's fast, it's slow, it's uplifting, it's mind-altering, and it's perhaps the most definitive product of an age-old relationship between music and narcotics.



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