

## Why do popstars fade away?

Why is it that so many of your favourite singers and bands start out with songs that really strike a chord with you but end up recording stuff that is unbelievably bland?

The really powerful songs are often those that express the life of an individual for whom social reality is a problem. The individual reacts either by wanting to give something a good kicking or by withdrawing. From these different sources we get, on the one hand, aggressive rock music with lots of angry guitar playing and drum thrashing, while, on the other hand, we also have quieter songs that express the frailty of the individual lost, alone and perplexed in the urban labyrinth.

The singers and bands that can give such a perfect musical form to feelings like these generally lose their magical touch for one or more of the following reasons:

**1. Drugs.** Contrary to popular belief drugs aren't a great source of inspiration to the artist. Users are more likely to slip into a routine of spending all their time watching daytime television in rooms with the curtains drawn. Those who don't just dabble in drugs but develop a full-blown addiction lose their creativity as they become more and more obsessed with trying to keep the artificial high going. In the moments of lucidity between popping pills, snorting coke or shooting up they feel so crap there is no possibility of a creative burst of songwriting. Since the members of a band need to be working together on the same finely tuned wavelength, if any of them are getting lost in their private hallucinatory worlds the music is bound to suffer.

**2. Losing touch with your roots.** The best pop music is rooted in the hopes and fears and frustrations of ordinary guys on the street. Before the band makes it really big their songs still speak of things the rest of us can identify with. Once they make it, the original drive to be sincere can lead to them writing songs about expensive hotels, limousines, groupies, and all the trappings of stardom - songs that only other popstars can identify with, and that consequently mean absolutely nothing to the rest of us.

**3. Finding God.** In the most powerful pop songs the individual is out on a limb, relationships are fragile and the only thing that really matters is the here and now. It's essentially an insecure world and, as such, it is godless. Popstars who soothe their private angst by finding God or Allah or Buddah or whatever no longer see the world in the way it has to be seen to write powerful pop. The edge, the friction, the tension is lost and so the music becomes bland.

**4. Falling in love and settling down.** A careful look at the history of pop reveals that this is the most common cause of popstars losing their touch. Pop music is based on dissatisfaction, whether it be with love, life or the state of the world - pop is an expression of need, want and desire - so it follows logically that as soon as a popstar gets what s/he wants, inspiration flies out of the window. A popstar loaded with money in a villa with a pool and the love of their life by their side have nothing worth singing about. Their musical repertoire narrows down to lullabies for their newborn babies.