

Crackin' Tunes and Smokin' Beats: The Drug Top Ten
By: Stewart Dalley

How do you go about picking the top ten drug songs? Well I'll tell you, first of all you burst open the petty cash box at the office, then locate the relevant products and compare them with the tunes they've been written about, so as to see which ones best explain the overall picture. Although, just why the Editorial team insisted on getting in a troop of Girl Guides to help with the task, I'll never know. The difference between these tracks compared to anti-drugs tunes is that they are actually great songs. You know if I was (contrary to popular belief about Touch Towers) a drug addict, these tunes wouldn't have me running to my local rehab centre, in fact they are more likely to jack me up to think my lifestyle was somewhat risky and therefore kinda cool. Crack pipes at the ready.....and we're off.

James Brown 'Public Enemy # 1' - Polygram Records 1972

When the Godfather wrote this tune he could never have foreseen the moment he'd eventually end up serving time for beating his wife across the head with an iron bar and causing a cross-state police chase, all the while high on PCP. The 'public enemy' in this tune is heroin, which James warns of the effects of in a sort of rap style. And we know when James is at his preaching best there are bound to be a few conversions. Nearly thirty years on, this tune is as relevant as it was when the Godfather of Angel Dust preached about its ills – funny then that he ended up using his wife's head for baseball practice.

Choice Line: "Took gold from the rich and make them poor. Take a young foolish maiden and made her a whore."

Grandmaster & Melle Mel 'White Lines' - Sugarhill Records 1983

Having spent a total of 43 weeks in the charts, in its original version, 'White Lines' is by far 'the best of breed' winner. And with a beat that still kicks some eighteen years later it's also a rap classic. Unlike James Brown though, Melle Mel was already knee deep in drugs when he recorded this track. In a recent interview I conducted with him he stated in defence of the charge of 'hip hop hypocrisy' that "I was at the in-between stage when I didn't realise I was a junkie". As a cokehead he was well placed to write the definitive cocaine track and boy did he.

Choice Line: "Either up your nose or in through your vein, ain't nothin' to gain except killin' yer brain."

2 Live Crew 'In the Dust' - Warner Bros 1991

This group was never known for their conscious lyrics – ask anyone about them and they'll more than likely recount a tale of arrest for screaming "suck my dick" on stage once too often – but on this track all that bullshit was swept aside. The tune is a close-up look at the realities faced by the black population of America, with a little help from Scarface. On the soundtrack to 'New Jack City' this tune said everything the movie did, condensed down to four minutes. In short, it said that the black man is forced to be the dealer because of the country's inherent racism, but that the real dealers are the so-called respectable businessmen.

Choice Lines: "Baby's screaming wondering where's the mama. She OD'ed and got rushed to trauma."

D'Angelo 'Brown Sugar' - Cooltempo 1995

The Rolling Stones famously wrote a track by the same name many moons ago about heroin, due to its colouring. And whilst this track sounds innocent enough the 'brown sugar' he's waxing lyrical about here isn't some Nubian Princess but the sweet smelling brown stuff commonly known as weed. Apart from the name of the two tunes another link between them is that both parties obviously had used the drug they were going on about – I mean have you seen the state of Keith Richards? D'Angelo takes on describing how he fist met the love of his life and how good she's been to him, much in the same way as you'd find Maxwell serenading his woman.

Choice Line: "See we be makin' love constantly that's why my eyes are a shade of blood burgundy."

Eminem 'Kids (Drugs Are Bad)' - Aftermath/Interscope 2000

What's this Eminem telling a class full of kids that drugs are bad? Surely there's some mistake. Maybe it's a way of escaping the hammering he gets from worried parents, as they queue up to blame him for their kid's experimentations with drugs. The song unfolds as Mr Shady takes up the role of substitute teacher to teach them how to poison squirrels. But before he gets to that he takes time out to take them through the many splendours of drugs in a Mr Mackey of South Park style. Topics such as shrivelled penises, rape, peer pressure, spine fluid draining, magic mushrooms and the fact that it grows from cow shit all make for an enlightening lesson for the little ones.

Choice Line: "My penis is the size of peanut, have you seen it?"

Notorious Big 'Ten Crack Commandments' - Bad Boy 1997

A reputed drugs dealer giving the low-down on how to run a drugs business is exactly the kind of thing that's gonna get a rapper into a spot of bother. Given all the films that have been made on the subject it's a bitter pill to swallow. Still, the man himself never gave a fuck so why should we? So those commandments: 1) Never let anyone know how much money you got. 2) Never let them know your next move. 3) Never trust anybody. 4) Never get high on your own supply. 5) Never sell crack where you live. 6) Never give credit. 7) Never mix your family and your business. 8) Never keep any drugs on you. 9) Never mix with the police. 10) Never buy more than you can sell.

Choice Line: "Money don't mix, like two dicks and no bitch."

Redman 'How To Roll A Blunt' - Def Jam 1992

Anyone who has seen Redman kicking about will be well aware that he knows a thing or two about the weed. It's like every interview he does he's stoned out of his face. On the track he maintains concentration for enough time to impasse the knowledge on how to build the perfect joint. First get a bag of weed, get a cigar, break it, fill with weed and re-seal. "The results mmmmmm proper." Other aspects of weed smoking are also discussed such as the people who always wet the blunt and those that refuse to roll. Incidentally there is a nice use of Keni Burke's 'Rising to the Top' to give that other stoned reference.

Choice Line: "And if you're gonna lick it don't drown it with your spit. Shit. I don't know what dick, ass or puss you licked, quick."

Master P 'Ghetto D' - No Limits/Priority Records 1997

Based around a sample from Eric B & Rakim's 'Eric B is President', replacing 'make 'em clap to this' with 'make crack like this', this tune finds Master P bestowing upon the listener his wisdom of the crack world. Just whether he's ever dealt the shit is questionable given that anyone who's ever seen a Hollywood movie about gangs could probably have come up with these pearls of wisdom. Crack, or as P calls it 'the ghetto dope' can easily be made if you follow his foolproof recipe book (available in all good book stores). So how do you go about making crack from cocaine? Look for the whitest snow, mix one gram of baking soda to every seven grams of coke and shake it up 'til it starts to bubble up and gets hotter. Ready, Steady, Cook it ain't.

Choice Line: "Get some killers up in your team; keep one in the chamber for the jackers and the dope fiends."

Luniz 'I Got 5 On It' - Virgin 1995

As the title may suggest the Luniz are dealing with the age old issue of people who never buy their own shit but expect to get a draw on everyone else's blunts. The way Luniz have decided to tackle the issue is by charging all the "dick teasers, skeezers and weirdos" two dollars for a puff on their spliff. Other issues like the classic soggy end and drinking a forty ounce cause the weed in their system is getting lonely are also covered. So too is the name checking of other well-reputed dope headz, like Cypress Hill et al.

Choice Line: "I gotta take a wizz test to my PO. I know I'll fail 'cause I just smoked major weed bro."

Dead Prez 'Drugs Oppress People Everyday' - Loud Records 1998

Okay so we can judge by the title that we ain't gonna get no player lifestyle anthem here. Dead Prez instead take aim at the bigger picture that drugs offer. The Prez's take on the world drugs market is that the lower classes of society only got into dope selling to survive and that for them it's not a get rich quick scheme. The black man is the one holding the crack in his mouth not the rich businessmen. They cite statistics that show the only thing bigger than dope gangs are the prisons that house them. Also that it's the black man that's coping all the heavy time and the real moneymen are walking.

Choice Line: "The president lied because the White House is the crack house and Uncle Sam is the pusherman."

The Shamen 'Ebenezer Good' - Sony 1992

Now you try telling me that Sony Records didn't know what this clapped-in jawed bunch were gurning about when this track emerged from the 'Boss Drum' album. The video, the imagery surrounding the band and the following they attracted all screamed E at even the least clued up individual. Radio 1 is a renowned puritan state and for a song like this to slip through the net to attain top-ranking position in the charts is no mean feat. With the clever lyrical content of - "E's are good E's are good he's eberneezer good" its no wonder the establishment never caught onto the scam, right? When the tabloids eventually caught up with the story and blurted out that there was actually an E called Ebenezer, it only went on to enhance sales of both products. Lovely!!!

Choice Line: 'Caught you in the corner laughing by the bass bin.'

Also Recommended:

E-Zee Possee: 'Everything starts With an E'
London Posse: 'Pass The Rizla'
Shut up and Dance: 'Autobiography of a Crackhead'
Bones Thugs 'n' Harmony: 'Weed Song'
Barrington Levy: 'Collie Weed'
Buju Banton: 'Gimmie the weed'
Krs-One: 'Blunt song'
Panto Banton: 'Don't Sniff Coke'
The Pharcyde: 'Pack The Pipe'
Ruff Ryders: 'Dope Money'
Jay Z: 'Dope Man'
Dr Dre feat Snoop Dogg: 'Dope and Rap'
Ice T: 'Lethal Injection' Ice T
Jackie Wilson: 'Higher and Higher'
James Brown: 'Cold Sweat'