

This Is

# CANNABIS



NICK BROWNLEE

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This is  
**CANNABIS**

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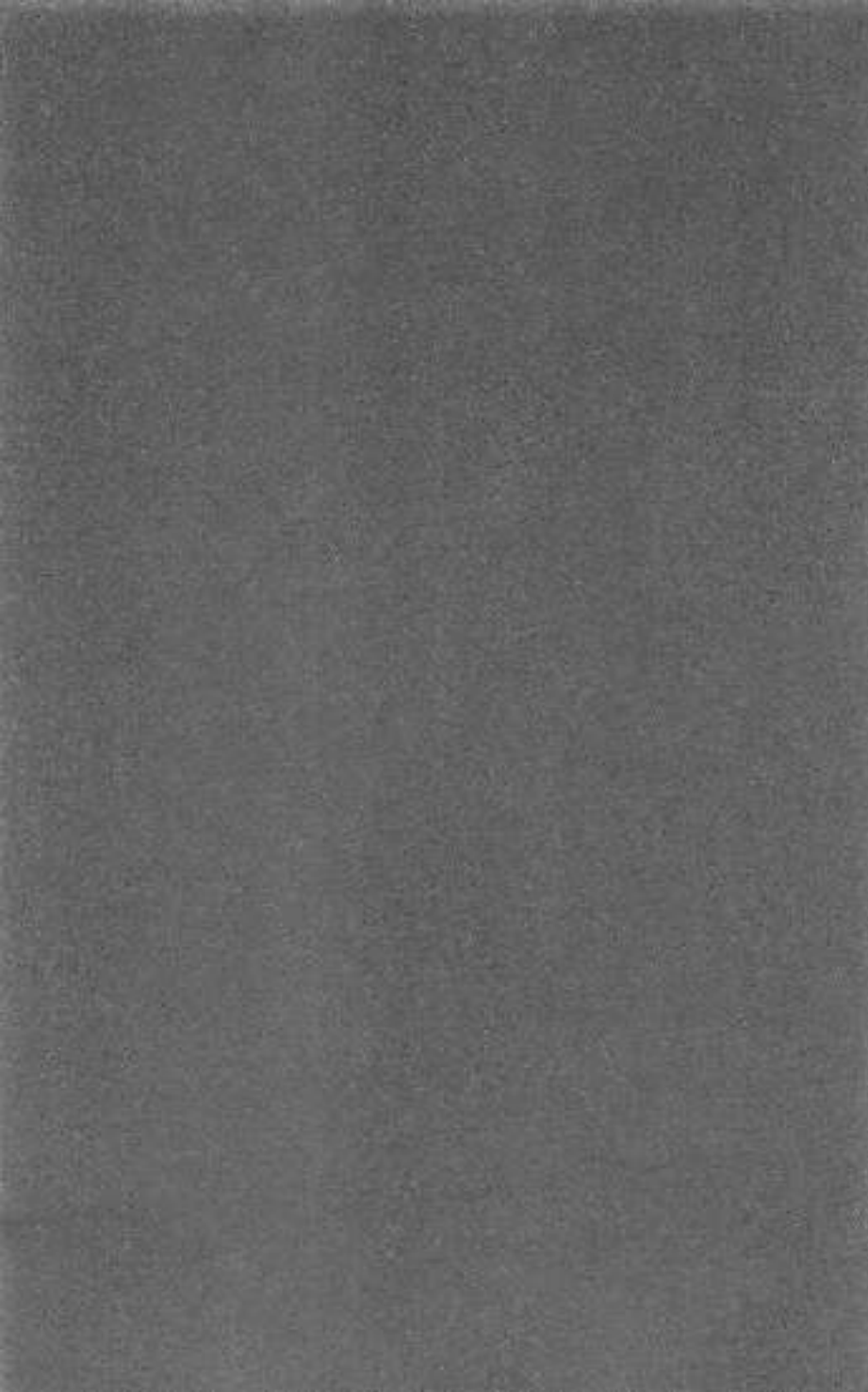
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## INTRODUCTION

The music seemed to creep up through the heavy carpet, to ooze from the walls to form a like glow/leaves... it was just such music as a boatful of fairies sailing about in the clear water of the fountain might have made, or that with which an angel mother would sing to a babe to sleep, it seemed to enter every fibre of the body and satisfy a music hunger that had never before been satisfied. It gently lulled my weary pipe and was about to lapse again into a reverie that had become deliciously dull, a perfect rest and comfort when my companion, leaning toward me said: "See this, you are fast approaching 'Jazz' section, is there not a sense of perfect rest and of a quiet happiness produced by it?"

John A. M. Johnson, *Chicago* (1924), p. 111. (Quote 309)

The sprawled body of a young girl lay crushed on the sidewalk after a plunge from the fifth story of a Chicago apartment house. Everyone called it suicide, but actually it was murder. The killer was a mad dog known to Americans as marijuana and to history as the opium. Its family used in the form of rolled cigarettes, comparatively new to the United States and as dangerous as a coiled rattlesnake. How many murders, suicides, robberies, criminal assaults and deaths of maniacal insanity it causes each year, especially among the young, can only be conjectured... No one knows, when he places a marijuana cigarette to his lips, whether he will become a joyous reveler in musical heaven, a mad insensate, a calm philosopher, or a murderer.

John M. J. Johnson, *Chicago* (1924), p. 111. (Quote 310)



The cannabis debate is very straightforward. You're either an establishment square who wants it outlawed as a menace to society, or a hippie deadbeat who wants it legalized in order to promote love and peace. Trouble is, the argument has never been as simple as that. Where once it was a highly useful source of fibre, food and medicine, at the beginning of the 21st-century perceptions and preconceptions about cannabis and its use have never been more blurred.

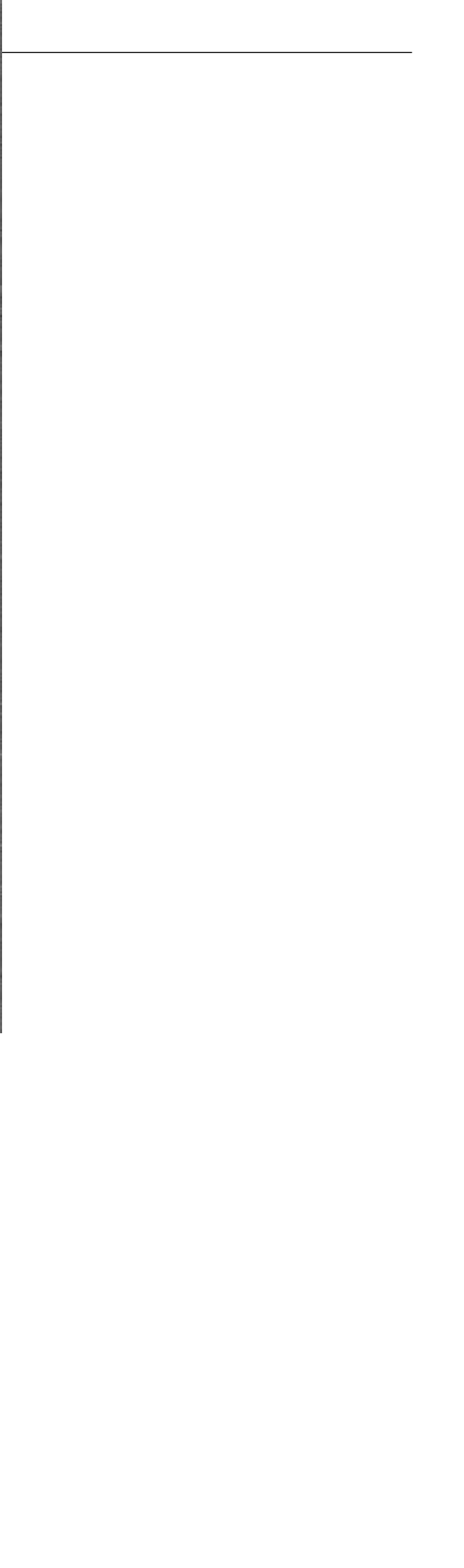
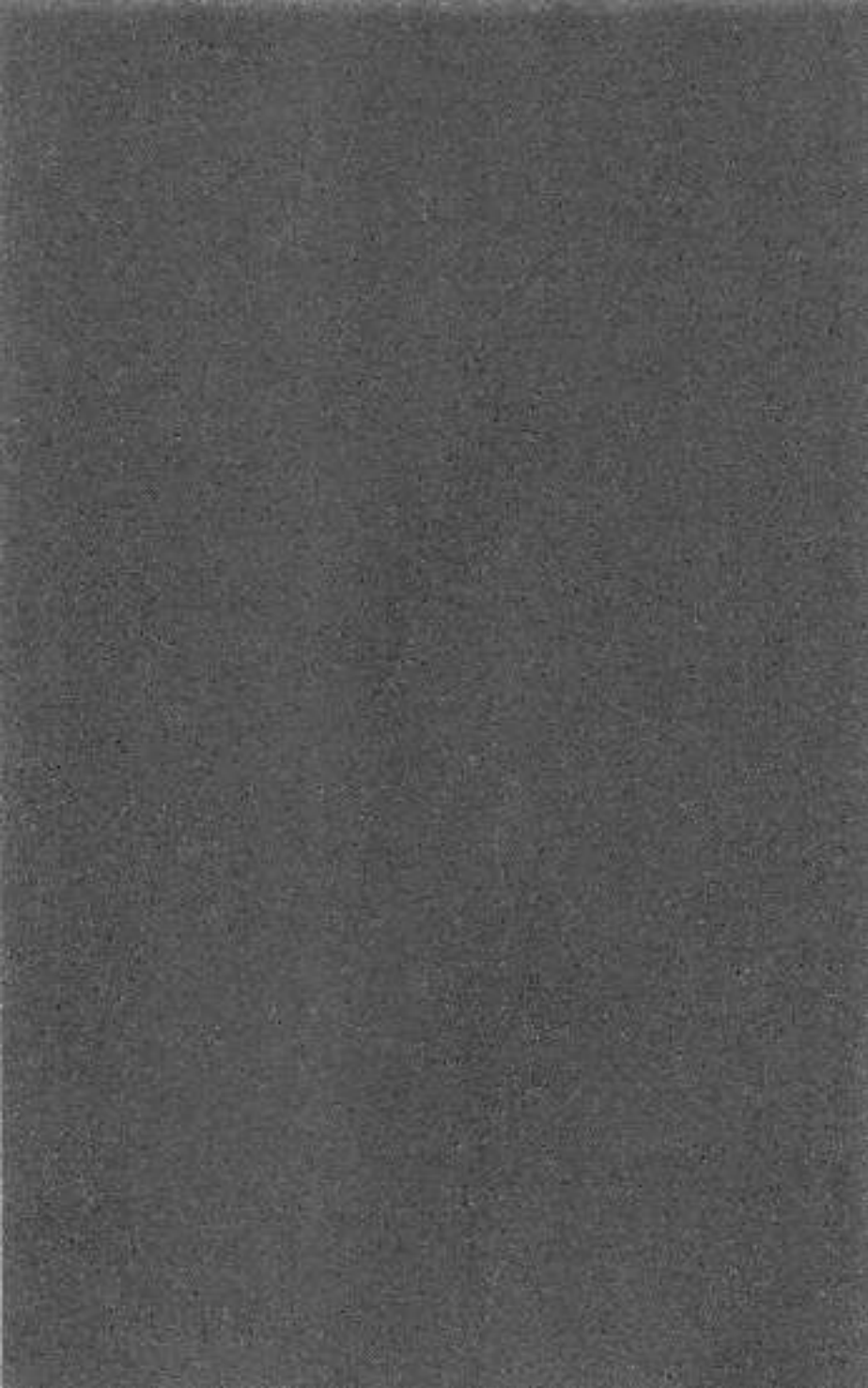
Leading police officers are prepared to turn a blind eye to users caught in possession but other, usually high-ranking officers want it stamped out. Doctors and scientists spend millions investigating its medicinal value yet for every positive piece of research, there is a negative. Hundreds of thousands of tourists take weekend trips to Amsterdam in order to sit in cafes and smoke copious amounts of dope free from molestation, yet they risk prosecution for taking less than 30g (1oz) back through their own country's customs. And, after years of denial, top politicians admit to smoking cannabis in their youth, but most bizarrely of all, an American President admits smoking a joint but not inhaling.

This book does not aim to preach the benefits or the deficits of cannabis, instead, it aims to provide an authoritative guide to its history, laws and culture as they stand in the world in the new millennium, as well as its effects on health and the booming commercial business side of producing cannabis.

Over 4,700 years since its first recorded use, modern society's relationship with the cannabis sativa plant, and more importantly its active ingredient delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol, has never been more complex.

In fact, it does your head in, man.





'Everybody smokes dope. The policy is just monstrous, completely out of touch with reality. Have I smoked? Certainly, of course. Very seldom, now, but I would unhesitatingly have some - and why not? It's lovely. All young people do, too. How dare the Tories (British Conservative Party) interfere? Two-thirds of violent crimes are associated with alcohol. What percentage is involved with pot? Absolutely none. It doesn't make for violence; in fact, you become quite boring. It's outrageous (that it isn't freely available)' - Lewis Robert, *Dr. Johnson*

If there is one thing that means more to pot-heads than the pot itself, it is the rich culture that surrounds cannabis and those who partake of it. Perhaps because of its ancient mystical and spiritual roots, because of the psychotherapeutic effects of the drug and because it is illegal, even the very act of smoking a joint has deep symbolism. Cannabis has evolved its own language, humour, etiquette, art, literature and music. Its culture is jealously guarded by those who are a part of it and derided, misunderstood - possibly even feared - by those who don't.

'One's condition on marijuana is always existential,' explains the novelist Norman Mailer. 'One can feel the importance of each moment and how it is changing one. One feels one's being, one becomes aware of the enormous apparatus of nothingness - the hum of a hi-fi set, the emptiness of a pointless interruption, one becomes aware of the war between each of us, how the nothingness in each of us seeks to attack the being of others, how our being in turn is attacked by the nothingness in others.'

To those who use cannabis, Mailer's description of the experience of smoking it probably makes eminent sense. To those that don't, it no doubt sounds like the typical esoteric ramblings of a dope fiend. 'Marijuana inflames the erotic impulses and leads to revolting sex crimes,' claimed the British paper *The Daily Mirror* in 1924, a verdict that still makes more sense than Norman Mailer to a great number of people around the world.

To others, it is not cannabis but the surrounding culture that is hard to take. 'I smoked cannabis a few times with my mates and it was okay,' recalls Colin Byrne, a 29-year-old teacher from Belfast, Ireland. 'But I couldn't get away with all the bollocks that went with it. All the etiquette, all the terminology, everything. It was like my mates, who were just jobs from the backstreets of Belfast, thought they were San Francisco hippies. "Pass the doobie, man," and "Hey, this is great shit." It was pathetic, really. I just wanted to give them a good shake and tell them to stop being a bunch of posers.'

Colin Byrne's experience is neatly summed up by the *New Columbia Encyclopaedia* when it suggests: 'Much of the prevailing public apprehension about marijuana may stem from the drug's effect of inducing introspection and bodily passivity, which are antipathetic to a culture that values aggressiveness, achievement and activity.'

The culture of cannabis is, essentially, the manifestation of this 'introspection and bodily passivity'. The clichéd image of a typical pot smoker is of a slacker who lies around all day listening to The Grateful Dead, gladly evading work and anything that might contribute to a useful existence. It is this image more than any other that has stoked the fire of generations of anti-cannabis campaigners. In America, in particular, the cannabis culture has been perceived as an anti-American culture - and, more to the point, the culture of blacks, Indians and Mexicans.

Yet this image is a relatively modern concept. Cannabis has been consumed in various forms for almost 5,000 years - and for most of that time it was prized as a pick-me-up. 'I began to gather the leaves of this plant and to eat them,' wrote the 13th-century Persian monk Heydar, 'and they have produced in me the gaiety that you witness.'

Even as recently as 1895, a correspondent from the *New York Herald* was breathlessly reporting that, 'During the full moon, the Nosairiyeh

tribesmen of northern Syria hold a ceremony that involves the consumption of enormous amounts of hashish. The ceremony begins with the ritual sacrifice of a sheep, after which a large earthenware bowl filled with liquid honey-hash is passed around. A bundle of cannabis leaves are attached to the base of the bowl. After drinking this concoction, the eyes of the Nossiriyeh brighten, their pulse quickens, and a restlessness takes possession of their body as they start to dance.<sup>7</sup>

This account tallies almost exactly with the observations of the Greek historian Herodotus from 2,500 years earlier, when he came across Scythian tribesmen getting high on cannabis fumes: 'They make a booth by fixing in the ground three sticks inclined toward one another, and stretching around them woollen pelts, which they arrange so as to fit as close as possible; inside the booth a dish is placed upon the ground into which they put a number of red hot stones and then add some Hemp seed... Immediately it smokes and gives out such a vapour as no Grecian vapour bath can exceed; the Scyths, delighted, shout for joy.'

But it is the widely different modern cannabis culture that is most interesting, because it represents the extraordinary effect of this most ancient drug on societies that pride themselves on their pragmatism and sophistication.

#### ARE YOU GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO? – HASH AND THE HIPPIES

If there is one era that sums up the glory years of modern cannabis culture, it is the late 1960s in America. Freed from the austerity of the post-war years, and unwilling to subscribe to the Norman Rockwell idyll of their parents' generation, young Americans discovered a voice of their own through music, sex, travel and dissent – all of it borne along on a cloud of marijuana smoke.

In many ways, cannabis was the obvious accessory for rebellion. Throughout the 20th century, it had been vilified by the authorities as a substance that was the ruin of America's youth. Harry J Anslinger, the government official who was at the forefront of the anti-cannabis movement (see pp50-4), had been almost rabid in his attacks on the evil weed, engendering an irrational paranoia of the drug throughout the land. By

the 1960s, however, Anslinger's propaganda had run its course and there was a new mood spreading through the USA. Young men were being drafted to fight in Vietnam and were returning in body bags. Those who survived returned to find that their country regarded them as failures. A new generation was growing up disowned, disillusioned and with no compunction to live up to the clean-living all-American ideal that had betrayed them.

More importantly, almost all the draft who went to Vietnam lived through the daily horrors they faced by smoking marijuana. Those who returned introduced it to other young people and its use quickly became widespread. By the late 1960s, a whole counter-culture had emerged whose desire was to drop out of society and the drug of choice was cannabis. The 'hippie' movement had begun.

In the US, the centre of cannabis culture was found in San Francisco. It was there, in the Longshoremans Hall, that the psychedelic era kicked off in 1966 when a group of hippies staged what they called the Trips Festival. In nearby Golden Gate Park in 1967, an area of the park called the Polo Field played host to a massive outdoor concert/love-in called the Human Be-In. Special guests included Jefferson Airplane and beat poet Allen Ginsberg. In Haight Street, the epicentre of the hippie movement, and on adjacent Ashbury Street, the pot-smoking hordes hung out in head shops - specialist outlets selling hippie paraphernalia - lit incense candles, meditated and bartered for Hindu artwork. One of the main attractions was the Psychedelic Shop, which sold all sorts of hippie items - including dollar bills with Grateful Dead singer Jerry Garcia in the middle. The City Lights Bookstore, founded by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, boasted the cream of hippie intelligentsia. In its basement Allen Ginsberg first recited his poem, 'Howl' - this event supposedly kicked off the whole beat movement and it is chronicled in Jack Kerouac's seminal hippie novel *On The Road*. Fillmore Auditorium became the 'primal venue', where hippie guru Bill Graham hosted such top acts as The Doors and The Byrds.

Meanwhile characters like Ken Kesey were hitting the headlines with their distinctly unorthodox lifestyles. Kesey, author of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, was a former soldier who, in the early 1960s, was the subject of LSD experiments by the CIA. His mind scrambled by his experience,

Kesey dropped out of mainstream society, founded a gang called the Merry Pranksters and began touring America in a bus named 'Further', smoking dope and distributing LSD to the nation at a non-stop road party he called the 'acid test'.

The pinnacle of the hippie revolution in the USA, and in many people's opinion the ultimate example of cannabis culture at work, was the Woodstock festival of August 1969. The festival attracted more than 450,000 young people to a pasture in Sullivan County, 160km (100 miles) from Manhattan. For four days the site became a counter-cultural epicentre where drugs were consumed freely and sex was enjoyed virtually non-stop. The festival closed the New York State Thruway and created one of the nation's worst traffic jams. It also inspired a slew of local and state laws to ensure that nothing like it would ever happen again. The festival, which ultimately cost more than \$2.4 million (£1.7 million), was sponsored by four wealthy young preppies called John Roberts, Joel Rosenman, Artie Kornfeld and Michael Lang. Roberts, the 26-year-old heir to a drugstore and toothpaste manufacturing fortune who also had a multi-million dollar trust fund in his name, supplied the money. He also had a University of Pennsylvania degree and a lieutenant's commission in the US Army but was fascinated by the hippie culture that was growing up among his generation. By early April, the promoters were carefully cultivating the Woodstock image in the underground press, in publications like the *Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone* magazine. The group settled on the concrete slogan of 'Three Days Of Peace And Music', calculating that 'peace' would link the popular anti-war sentiment to the rock concert and attract more punters. They also wanted to avoid any violence and figured that a slogan with 'peace' in it would help keep order. The big breakthrough came with the signing of the top psychedelic band of the day, Jefferson Airplane, for the incredible sum of \$12,000 (£8,200) (the Airplane usually took gigs for \$5,000 (£3,400) to \$6,000 (£4,100)). Creedence Clearwater Revival signed for \$11,500 (£7,800). The Who then agreed to play for \$12,500 (£8,600). The rest of the acts started to fall in line. In all, \$180,000 (£124,000) was spent on talent. 'I made a decision that we needed three major acts, and I told them I didn't care what it cost,' Lang said. 'If they had been asking \$5,000 (£3,500), I'd say, "Pay



'em \$10,000 (£7,000).' So we paid the deposits, signed the contracts, and that was it: instant credibility.' Woodstock was an enormous success and the defining cultural moment of the 1960s. It also sent a shudder down the spine of middle America, who saw pictures of young people off their heads and looking and behaving for all the world like savages.

But if the authorities regarded such activities with horror, they were powerless to stop them spreading. San Francisco and then Woodstock became a Mecca for young people from around the world, who were all too

eager to return home with the good news. In Britain, cannabis made little impact on society until the 1960s. It was a country where alcohol was king, and where the only concern was stopping young people from drinking too much. If cannabis was used, it was

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43 per cent of British voters believed cannabis should be legalized completely for personal use. Among the 25-34 age group, the pro-cannabis lobby rose to 50 per cent.

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usually by beatniks in London jazz clubs and by members of the West Indian community that had arrived in the country in the 1950s. But soon the authorities had a new problem on its hands. Influenced by bands like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, who had become fully paid-up members of the hippie revolution, young people turned eagerly to cannabis. A full-page advert calling for the legalization of the drug was placed in *The Times*, the broadsheet of the establishment. Kids openly smoked dope in Hyde Park during a Rolling Stones concert.

'Everyone was trying it, but to be honest there wasn't a nationwide cannabis revolution,' recalls gallery owner John Lyons, 58, who was one of the thousands present at Hyde Park and who also took place in a pro-legalization march in 1969. 'To be honest I only remember the excitement lasting a few months. After that, it was mainly the die-hards who openly smoked it. I think the rest of us got bored with it.'

Nevertheless, the nation wrung its hands and only began to breathe easier when, in 1971, the government acted by reinforcing cannabis laws in the Misuse of Drugs Act. But by then, London and San Francisco were no longer the places to score and smoke dope if you were a true cannabis connoisseur. People were packing their kaffans and love beads and heading

east, to where the karma was ambient and the dope plentiful and strong. So the Hippie Trail was born.

The Hippie Trail evolved out of Europe's beatnik scene, which was always very nomadic. For just a few notes, it had become possible to bunk down in cheap accommodation in ambient, cheap and dope-plentiful cities within Spain, Greece, Turkey and Morocco. By 1967 the scene had pushed beyond Istanbul to India, Nepal, and places further east. They called the journey 'the road to Katmandu'.

First stop was Tangiers, where boats and planes unloaded their cargo of wide-eyed pot-heads eager to follow in the footsteps of such earlier hashish explorers as Paul Bowles, Gertrude Stein and William Burroughs. From Morocco they headed to Istanbul - one of the major hash markets - then through the fertile plains of Iran and Afghanistan and finally to Nirvana in Goa and Katmandu. To a generation brought up in an atmosphere of repression, this was a whole new world just waiting to be explored. There were few laws governing the use and sale of hash. It was openly sold in coffee shops and bazaars. In Katmandu alone, for example, there were more than 30 hash shops where the dope came in all sorts of shapes and colours.

Of all the venues on the Hippie Trail, however, Istanbul was the fulcrum, the last gateway to all points east for the thousands of wide-eyed hippies who thronged there in the 1960s. Here, for the first time, was the east in all its mystic glory: mosques, bazaars, horns, the non-stop hustle from hawkers and touts, and, of course, the pervading stench of the cheap, plentiful and indigenous hash. And, best of all, the laws were relaxed to the point of non-existence compared to the draconian anti-drugs legislation of Europe and the USA. While it was not advisable to be caught smuggling, and it was officially illegal to be caught in possession of dope, there was an abundance of illicit back-room smoking dens, where it was possible to get stoned in peace.

Istanbul was also incredibly cheap. One of the most popular venues for young hippies to stay was 'the Tent', which was a corrugated iron and canvas shelter on the roof of the Gulhane Hotel in the centre of town. There, it was possible to pack down for next to nothing on the comfortable

straw floor and indulge in all manner of social smoking with the other 'guests' who had washed up on the tide of western visitors. The dope was cheap too - thick slabs of Turkish hash for the same price as they would have paid for a miserly 5g (1/4oz) in the west.

Cities like Istanbul were also important news centres for travellers on the Hippie Trail - particularly when it came to exchanging information about where not to go. One no-go area was the Afghan-Iranian border. During the Shah's reign, if a traveller was caught with over a kilo (2 1/4lb) of hash, they would be tried by the Iranian Army Council and then shot. There were also stories about unfortunates apprehended in Tashkent doing hard labour in Soviet prison camps, or people who ended up being sent to Greek or Bulgarian prisons and were never seen again.

Yet, for all its dangers, the Hippie Trail was immensely popular. But it was incredibly short-lived. Ironically, it was the very availability of hashish that would spell the end for the Hippie Trail.

Increased demand led to inflated prices and large-scale smuggling, particularly from Nepal into India and abroad. Estimates in the mid-1970s claimed that more hashish was exported than consumed in Nepal. Inevitably, pressure on the Nepalese government to act soon came from the United Nations and the United States and, in 1972, they began to systematically shut down the hash houses. A year later, all hashish dealers' licences were revoked and the last of the hash hops were closed. The Hippie Trail had fizzled out for good - and with it the free and easy cannabis culture of the 1960s.

#### **I DIDN'T INHALE - THE 1960s GENERATION GETS COY**

Surprisingly for a generation who pushed back the boundaries of cannabis consumption, many children of the 1960s are today reticent about admitting they ever smoked - or indeed inhaled. This is especially true of those 1960s kids who went on to become political figures, especially those in the current UK debate about legalization. Jack Straw, the former Home Secretary, was a longhaired radical at Leeds University but claims to have never touched the stuff. The same is true of his successor in the Home Office, David Blunkett. Of the current batch of British MPs, only

former Cabinet member Mo Mowlam has ever admitted smoking. Even the Labour MPs Claire Short, Tony Banks, and Paul Flynn, who have campaigned that the legalization of cannabis should be examined, flatly deny they have ever smoked marijuana themselves. Former US President Clinton famously admitted smoking a joint but not inhaling. And George W Bush, Clinton's successor, has denied using cocaine in the past 25 years but refuses to say anything about the years before that - suggesting that he too may have smoked marijuana but not inhaled... When pushed on the subject he admitted that he had 'made mistakes in the past' but would not engage in the 'politics of personal destruction' by talking further about the issue.

It has been left to old lags like Sir Paul McCartney and Sir Richard Branson to keep the 1960s flag flying. 'I think a liberal attitude is not a bad thing,' McCartney said. 'So I favour a decriminalization of it. If my kids ever ask me, "What about it?" I would say, "There is this bunch of drugs. This is probably the least harmful. There is a hit list. You can go up it to heroin but it's not easy, in fact impossible for some people". But I always say to them, "That's the facts of life, but if you ask my advice, don't do any."'

Richard Branson, the founder of British-based company Virgin, who signed a recent petition calling for the legalization of cannabis, said he would be prepared to sell the drug in his stores if it was legalized. He said his company would not want to get involved in selling ordinary cigarettes but he would not rule out promoting cannabis if the law allowed it because it is probably less harmful than tobacco. The millionaire businessman said that to encourage young people to smoke would be immoral. But although he was not advocating the sale of cannabis if it was legalized, he added: 'If a cigarette company started selling it at too high a price, I'm sure we'd be in there.'

## CANNABIS AND RELIGION

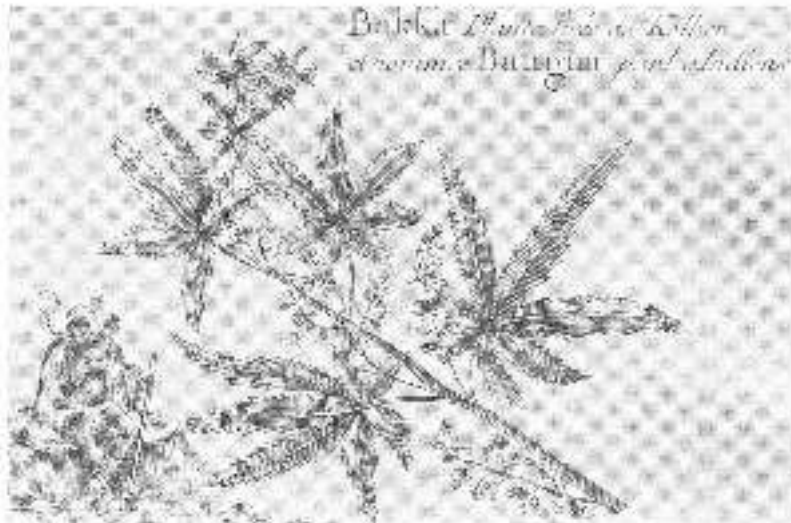
Marijuana is closely connected with the history and development of some of the oldest nations on Earth. It has played a significant role in the religions and cultures of Africa, the Middle East, India and China.



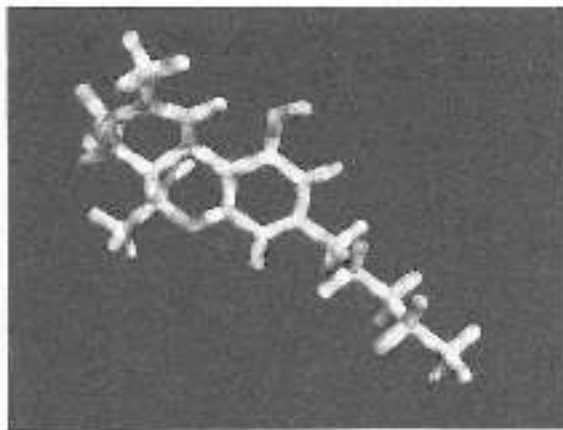
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Illustration of the hemp plant (Cannabis sativa) from a woodcut in Gerhart's Kräuterbuch, 1485.



Engraving of a male cannabis plant in Linnaeus, 1745. Cannabis sativa is called by Linnaeus *indica*, where narcotic varieties are known as *drusy*. The resin is produced by resin glands on the surface of the plant as a defence against predators and is most commonly tested in the flowering tips of unfertilized female plants. The male flowers, shown in this picture, are not hash-producing.



Molecular model of the active ingredient of cannabis, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), with the atoms shown as sticks.

The shamanistic traditions of Asia and the Near East have as one of their most important elements the attempt to find God; getting stoned on cannabis has helped worshippers on their way. And in the days before joints, the quickest and easiest way to inhale the smoke was through cannabis incense.

In the temples of the ancient world, the main sacrifice was the inhalation of incense. In the Judaic world, the vapours from burnt spices and aromatic gums were considered part of the pleasurable act of worship. Stone altars have been unearthed in Babylon and Palestine, which were used for burning incense made of aromatic wood and spices - in many or most cases, a psychoactive drug was being inhaled. In the islands of the Mediterranean 2,500 years ago and in Africa hundreds of years ago, for example, marijuana leaves and flowers were often thrown upon bonfires and the smoke inhaled.

Today, cannabis continues to be the mainstay of the Rastafarian religion, which is discussed in detail later (see pp66-70). But the Rastafarians are not alone. One of the most controversial cannabis-based religions in recent years has been the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church, a religion run by white Americans who claim its roots are in black Jamaica. The Coptics insist that marijuana, which they call by its Jamaican name, ganja, is their sacrament; as valid and as necessary to them as wine is to Catholics during communion. To many, including law enforcement officials, they are frauds - a group of rich dope heads who have been allowed to laugh at the law and get away with it.

Coptic services take place three times a day, but the Coptics partake of cannabis all day. One of their main centres is in Miami, where in the late 1970s they hit the headlines when they bought a house for \$270,000 (£185,000), paid for in cash, which they promptly turned into a luxury commune with about 40 members. Trouble soon brewed when it emerged that Coptic women, and even the Coptic children, were encouraged to smoke marijuana. While it was the constant chanting and the smell of marijuana that upset close neighbours, it was scenes of Coptic children smoking marijuana on local television that brought protests from the city as a whole. Then, in November 1978, news broke of the mass deaths of the People's Temple cult in Jonestown, Guyana, and many Miami residents

were shocked into wondering if they might not have a potential Jonestown on their doorstep.

In 1979, CBS news reporter Dan Rather interviewed one of their leaders, a former Catholic from Boston named Thomas Reilly, who preferred to be known as Brother Louv. Rather asked Brother Louv why the Coptics believed cannabis was sacred to their religion:

**BROTHER LOUV:** Well, let's start from the beginning, page one of the Bible, Genesis, Book 1, Verse 29: 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the Earth...' Now, is there any dispute that marijuana is a green herb bearing seed that grows all over the Earth?

**RATHER:** All right, let's...let's address ourselves to the truth. Is the basic message, 'You should smoke ganja?'

**BROTHER LOUV:** The basic message is, 'You should stop your sin.' When you and I are neighbours and I have the security that you are a man who keeps the commandments of God, then I know you're not going to rob me, you're not going to murder me, you're not going to covet me. So that's the only security that people can have is to stop their sinful ways, stop becoming homosexuals when they know what the Scripture says about homosexuality; they know what wisdom shows you about destroying your own seed of life. They should stop their abortion. They should stop their birth control. They should stop their oral sex, their hand sex, and any way that they're destroying their own life and their own seed life. They should stop those things immediately. And they should have known to be smoking ganja from a long time. For how is it that I know to?

#### **FROM BONGS TO HOT KNIVES – CANNABIS PARAPHERNALIA**

To the casual observer, dope heads appear to spend most of their time on another planet. And indeed most do. But there is more than one way to skin up a joint - and when we consider the various methods of intake that cannabis users have invented, we can only applaud their ingenuity.



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