

# DANCE CULTURE IN THE TIME OF CORONA

EDITED BY DAVE PAYLING AND GRAHAM ST JOHN



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# dancecult

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## DANCECULT

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# DANCE CULTURE IN THE TIME OF CORONA

— EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION —

Produced during the Great Confinement of 2020, this issue of *Dancecult* features a special From the Floor edition (Dance Culture in the Time of Corona) alongside regular feature articles. The world navigates a pandemic in full rage. Inside the networked and mediated immediacy of global-scale surreality, dance music cultures and industries are adversely impacted. Passing into an extended moment of global uncertainty, our distributed event-centred communities show little sign of returning to “normal”. Documenting their author’s thoughts and experiences during the first few months of the COVID-19 crisis, when the first wave of infections and lockdowns spread across the planet, the articles in From the Floor 2020 echo this uncertainty.

The introduction of measures to reduce and prevent travel and contact has decreased opportunities for people to socialise and halted larger gatherings leading to major international festivals, concerts, club nights, carnivals and conferences being cancelled or transformed to virtual gatherings. This is particularly disruptive for our community which relies on these events for connection and transformation (see Toomistu and Heikkilä this issue). Venues and musicians have also been hit financially, leaving many clubs on the brink of closure (Hancock and Gray 2020), musicians seeking ways to supplement their income (see McGuinness this issue) and party people without the charged feelings of solidarity (Vandenberg, Berghman and Schaap 2020).

Undeterred and with limited options, DJs and producers have made efforts to continue their work. This has led to an upsurge in the adoption of streaming technologies, with smaller pop-up events run by individuals and large scale planned events promoted by established companies and organisations (see Assiter this issue). The DiY ethos inherent to the scene, re-emerges. Piecing together the required equipment, finding space and promoting online events virtually has become an urgent necessity (see Warren this issue). These efforts have provided options for real-time connections and feedback between artists and their audience, and ravers can instant message and chat with each other, conjuring some degree of the vibe that occurs so naturally in person. This collective effervescence has been recreated using emojis and instant messages to livestream chats and potentially more effectively through immersion in the virtual worlds available on some platforms (see Simao and Guerra this issue). Doors have therefore been opened for many to develop and continue these strategies into the future.

These efforts have helped fill the void, but they exclude those without the necessary technologies or bandwidth and are insufficient in creating the visceral experience felt in the crowd and lifted by the energy emanating from the speaker stacks of a good sound system. A few “real” events have continued for those willing to take the risk, sometimes expected and others less predictable. Coronavirus couldn’t prevent large gatherings and sound systems

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at the recent protests in Minneapolis (see Symmes this issue). Many others have sought the release valve of free parties and other unlicensed raves (Lhooq 2020). While openly promoted initially, as news outlets condemned their occurrence, and authorities responded with the threat of significant fines, events were pushed further underground.

As the content of *From the Floor 2020* illustrates, the EDMC research community responded with enthusiasm and at short notice to the call on this theme at this critical time. We expect our next editions to feature further content addressing the pandemic's impact across EDMCs and research, and encourage further submissions (to both our Feature article and *From the Floor* sections). In addition to regular feature articles, we trust readers will enjoy the following *From the Floor* content:

- Ben Assiter (UK), No Screenshots on the Dance Floor.
- Camille LeBlanc Liederman (Lithuania), A Post-Post-Soviet Scene Post-Quarantine.
- Chris McGuinness (US), India's Electronic Music Scene Under Lockdown: the First Three Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Emília Simão and Paula Guerra (Portugal), Virtual Dance Floors: Shall We Dance or Fly?
- Samantha Warren (UK), Good Vibes Friday: Reflections on Livestreaming During the Lockdown.
- Tommy Symmes (US), Sound Systems at the George Floyd Protests in Minneapolis During the Summer of 2020.
- Terje Toomistu (Estonia) and Jukka-Pekka Heikkilä (Finland), Transformation Through Connection? Story Sharing Cubes at Burning Man Events

While the “other side” remains opaque inside our unevenly distributed global meltdown, as the material presented in this issue of *Dancecult* illustrates, optimism and community remain vital across electronic dance and music cultures.

Until we meet again on the dance floor. . .

Dave Payling (From the Floor Section Director)

Graham St John (Executive Editor)

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