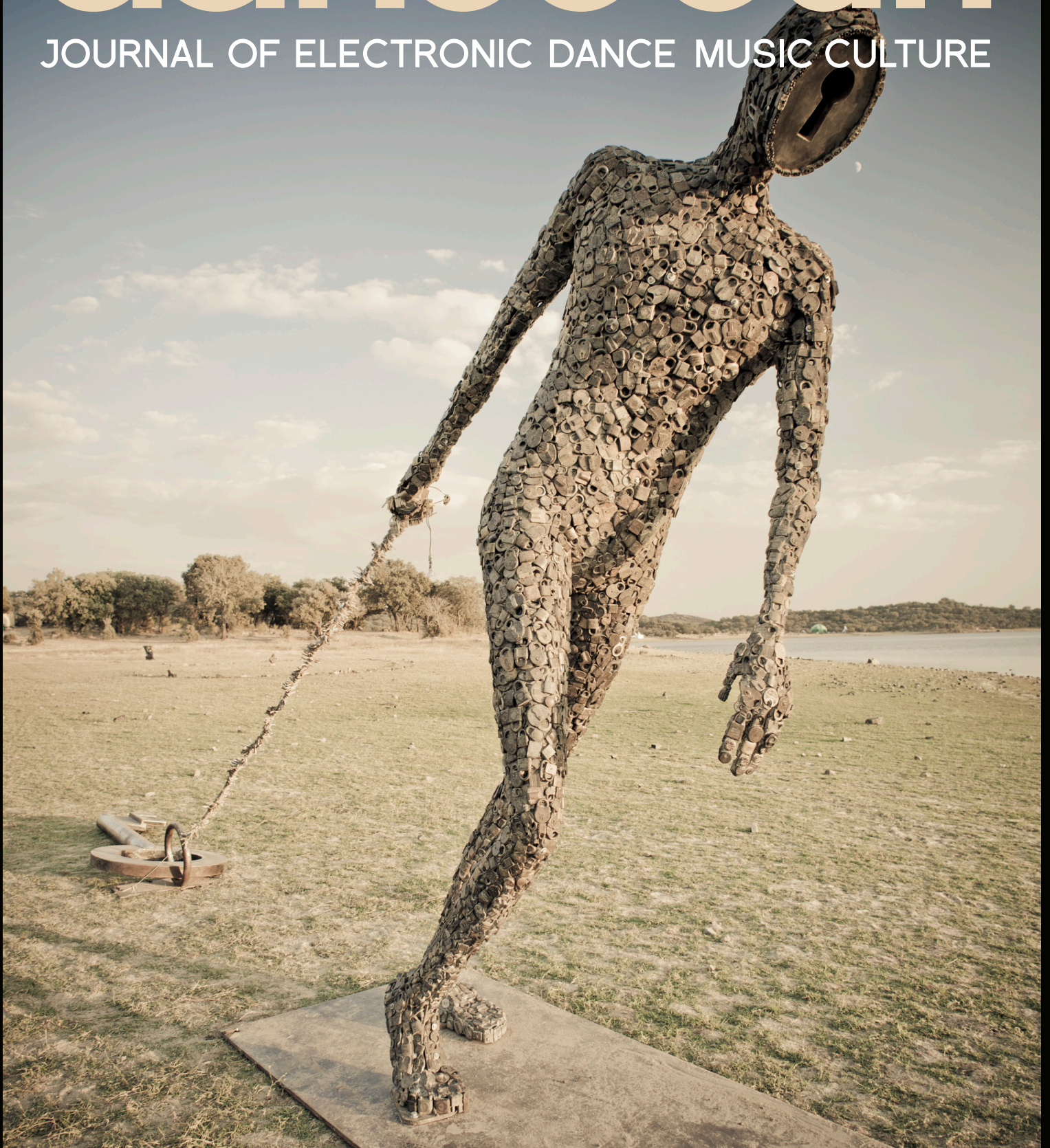


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Welcome to this special issue of *Dancecult*. In the original call, I fielded comments from one scene spokesperson whose concerns about the fate of psytrance—published in the 2008 edition of *Psychedelic Traveller* (Sam 2008)—were partly responsive to the impact of the late 2000s global financial crisis. Apprehensiveness about the future of an EDM movement is not unexpected when its heritage stretches over more than four decades and with a more immediate cultural investment of some 20 years. Yet, as a short document on complex anxieties, the commentary revealed agitation toward the pace, growth and character of the cultural economy of psychedelic trance, concerns long preoccupying scene insiders. While it was stated that “the exodus of artists and dancers is clearly visible” within psytrance, the listing of parties at the web-portal <<http://www.chaishop.com>> was nevertheless reported to expand from 1207 in 1999 to 6731 in 2008. And while expressing concern over the “dilution” of the psychedelic scene and the concurrent bankruptcy of labels, event organisations and cultural media, a “third generation” of psytrance enthusiasts was reported to have appeared. Indeed, as evidenced by the recent anthology *Goa: 20 Years of Psychedelic Trance* (Rom and Querner 2011), which documents the development of psytrance in national scenes from Germany to Brazil and transnational events from Portugal to Australia, and in the popularity of web-portals and netlabel aggregators like <<http://www.ektoplazm.com>>, which is promoted as “the world’s largest distributor of free (and legal) psytrance music”, psychedelic trance music and culture has flourished globally.

Despite this proliferation, and indeed consequent to it, psytrance is fiercely disputed. During the course of my own extensive transnational research on the psytrance movement, I have sweated it out inside a hothouse of disapprobation and triumphalism, with long-term participants maturing into keen critics and genre loyalists, becoming disputers of, and apologists for, style, fielding opinions on a variety of economic and aesthetic issues, and building expertise on technical and chemical matters, competence enabled by participation in web-forums and social media. Indeed, as I’ve transited in and out of various EDM circles, with disparate style publics sometimes congressing at the same events in globalised contexts where EDM festivals have diversified to accommodate a host of genres—some named, others as yet unlabeled—I have come to recognise that psychedelic trance is among the most closely scrutinised and hotly contested music styles and cultures. Psyculture is animated and builds self-definition through the boundary marking activities consistently performed by scene insiders and subgenre specialists, just as psytrance itself provides a boundary marker for the proponents of other EDM genres, or metagenres, like techno or dubstep.

Cosmopolitan, transnational and psychedelic, psytrance is a culture in a perpetual state of optimisation driven by aesthetic challenges, internal disparities and cultural campaigns facilitating continuing innovations in music and event-culture modified often through the voracious absorption of music styles. These optimising tendencies are evident in scenes the world-over where psychedelic trance has been locally translated and modified by enthusiastic pioneers, traveller-DJs and cultural brokers experienced in the diverse seasonal scene from which this movement derived. “Exodus” prevails within this movement, though perhaps not in the formulation set out by Sam. In fact, anxious assessments tend to reveal a dedication to the culture of psychedelic trance in which habitués have made considerable personal investment. Further, estimations echo the quest(ion)ing implicit to psyculture, born of exodus in the seasonal parties of Goa populated by self-exiled intrepids. A long series of complaints have been lodged by veterans of “paradise lost”, of the vanishing Golden Age of Goa, of the vibe said to have dissipated over the years. Eulogies have been written, the last track faded out, and the final party interred, time and again. Yet, despite economic downturns, austerity measures, distribution collapses and failures to “break even”, psytrance is marked by a vitality that continues to draw participants in their teens through fifties to an event-culture whose dance floors are among the most ethnationally diverse on the planet. To twist the meaning of the *Psychedelic Traveller* article title, psyculture is literally a culture of exodus. If exodus is a theme underpinning psyculture, from the emergence of Goa trance to the development of dark, progressive, and other genre-styles, then today’s developments worldwide cultivate the exile sensibility in its multifarious formulations.

Trance is notoriously difficult to think and write about. If “talking about music is like dancing about architecture” then writing about trance—i.e. unstructured modes of free-form dance—is even more perplexing. This stands among the reasons why some twelve projects with which I was originally approached for this collection did not eventuate. While much remains to be conveyed about psychedelic trance—its history, DJ-production culture, music aesthetics and industry, cultural economy, national translations and regional developments, scene repression, as well as the psychedelic character of the music and culture—authored by writers hailing from half a dozen countries, the articles published in this issue offer diverse entry points to the phenomenon of psytrance. My article, “Seasoned Exodus: The Exile Mosaic of Psyculture”, offers an account of the diverse seasonal exodus from which Goa trance and psytrance emerged. Joshua I. Schmidt follows up with “Full Penetration: The Integration of Psychedelic Electronic Dance Music and Culture into the Israeli Mainstream”, which examines disparate uses of psytrance among secular and religious youth in Israel where psytrance is a popular music. In “‘What Are We Doing Here?’ Nostalgic Desires for a Cosmopolitan Sensory Aesthetic in the Amsterdam-based Psytrance Scene”, Eva-Maria van Straaten critically examines the desire for a cosmopolitan sensory aesthetic perceived lost within the Amsterdam psytrance scene. And, in “Spaces of Play: The Spatial Dimensions of Underground Club Culture and Locating the Subjunctive”, Alice O’Grady examines play and performativity in the underground club spaces in the UK. Down in our From the Floor department, Dave Mothersole takes us back to Goa, 1986, Lisa Diotalevi

steps into the 2010 edition of Portugal's Boom Festival, and Chiara Baldini visits Aurora, a psytrance festival on the Greek island of Samothraki in 2011.

In part two of their Conversation begun in the previous edition of *Dancecult*, tobias c. van Veen and Bernardo Alexander Attias continue their exchange on the plications of controllerism for DJ performance in "Off the Record: Turntablism and Controllerism in the 21st Century."

Book and film reviews in this edition include Kyer Wiltshire and Erik Davis' *Tribal Revival: West Coast Festival Culture* (reviewed by tobias c. van Veen), Steven T. Jones' *The Tribes of Burning Man: How an Experimental City in the Desert is Shaping the New American Counterculture* (reviewed by Susan Luckman), Simon A. Morrison's *Discombobulated: Dispatches From The Wrong Side* (reviewed by Bina Bhardwa), and *Bassweight* (reviewed by Phil Kirby).

Finally, as this is the final edition (of five) founding Reviews Editor Karenza Moore has produced for *Dancecult*, I commend her for her first class performance in this role since 2009. We look forward to Ed Montano assuming the role of Reviews Editor in future editions (who at the same time steps down from his role as Production Assistant). Last but certainly not least, I also thank outgoing Production Director Gary Powell for his superb efforts over the last three editions.

GRAHAM ST JOHN

GUEST EDITOR, SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE EXODUS OF PSYTRANCE

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