

Hanna Tuulikki: Echo in the Dark





ECHO IN THE DARK

Live performance, 1 hour 30 mins, 2022

Commissioned by Hospitalfield, *Echo in the Dark* is a collaborative project directed by Hanna Tuulikki, weaving together music and live participatory performance to explore interconnections of raving and bat echolocation as a model for ecological coexistence.

Most bats have evolved to use echolocation, a complex navigation system made from emitting ultrasonic pulses, with each species calling at a different frequency. They then interpret the echoes of these sounds to build an intricate picture of their environment and prey. Too high for humans to hear, by using a heterodyne bat detector these signals can be converted into audible synthetic sound waves, allowing us to tune into their detailed clicks, buzzes, rhythms and warbles, which could easily be mistaken for samples of electronic dance music.

What might it feel like to dance to music created by these bat call rhythms? How might we think-with-bat to navigate various crises on the horizon? Can tuning into their hidden sounds help us access new ways of feeling and being that nurture our relationships with nonhumans? Can dance music and raving offer a space to come together to harness radical hope in the dark?

At the heart of *Echo in the Dark* is a set of electronic dance music tracks created in collaboration with music producer Tommy Perman, made entirely from bat echolocation calls blended with the human voice. The bat sounds, collected through a UK wide open call and by working locally with Tayside Bat Group, form a library of sounds which Tuulikki and Perman sampled to create 13 tracks, each focusing on a different species in the British Isles. The beats and melodies of the music were made by processing and manipulating these sonar samples, synthesising them with Tuulikki's distinct voice, to create an ephemeral human-bat hybrid world. The tracks also feature samples of bat-related popular culture, as well as spoken word from renowned philosopher Timothy Morton, whose experience of being part of a mass of dancing bodies inform their ideas about ecological awareness.



Drawing on fifty years of electronic music history, *Echo in the Dark* is conceived as a love letter to dance music, with an invitation to tune into the more-than-human frequencies of bats, to feel the beat and explore the space where species meet. In July 2022, a limited-edition lathe cut 7" and digital download was released with Scottish label Blackford Hill, featuring two tracks dedicated to bat species local to Hospitalfield – the *Daubenton's bat* and *Common pipistrelle* and *Soprano pipistrelle* – with an album release in the pipeline. As a live event, *Echo in the Dark* was first realised as a series of silent 'bat raves', premiering in September 2022 on the grounds of Hospitalfield in Arbroath, Scotland, and is being developed for touring in 2023.

In the bat raves, the music is experienced with studio quality closed ear headphones, and augmented by choreography, animation, lights and lasers. On arrival at sunset, audiences collect their headset-and-receiver housed in specially created rave-wear bumbags and, as dusk falls, they are greeted by a cast of costumed dancers, and led into a hidden sonic world beneath a tree canopy. Standing near a DJ booth, a figure holding a bat detector transmits the sounds of soprano pipistrelles as they flit across the sky, their live echolocation calls rippling through the music. On the ground, dancers dart in and out of audience, echoing the bats' flight before shifting their attention to the podiums that surround the space in a series of solo choreographies inspired by bat movements. A dance floor opens up beneath the canopy, and as dusk turns to night, lyrics invite the audience to move to the rhythm, participate in games of transformation from 'BAT' to 'HUMAN FORM', and find hope in the darkness. The trees, illuminated by vivid colours, shift between pink, orange, violet, green and blue. Animated acid bat faces and clouds of silhouettes dance in formation on the surrounding trees, pulsing in time with the music, while lasers beam through the air, forming shapes onto the leafy canopy. At the music's peak, UV light illuminates the dance floor, revealing bat outlines on the light-reactive rave wear, seemingly taking flight as the audience dance. The final track, a song lip-synced by the dancers, is a final invitation to hear the echo, take the memory and change the story.



"Echo in the Dark is not just a momentary experience that concludes once the music stops: it demonstrates a new way of being in the world. One of awareness, of optimism and learning to be ecological" – Blue Kirkhope, Caught by the River

"...it comes together, and it musters joy and camaraderie amongst the humans present. That's partly because, art-world analysis aside, these are great songs. There is no hint of pastiche or arms-length intellectualism in the set, with its peaks and troughs of energy, snatches of sing-along lyric, and the plaintive, echoed vocal trills." – Greg Thomas, The Quietus

"...moving, uplifting and memorable with a finale that's well worth the wait." – ★★★★★ Paul Dale, The List

"A philosopher duetting with bats on a dance track? That's seriously deep house." – Hettie Judah, The Guardian





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Performance history:

2022 Hospitalfield, Arbroath

Music release:

2022 *Echo in the Dark* lathe cut vinyl 7 inch and digital download,
Blackford Hill

Silent Bat Rave Credits:

Conceived and directed by Hanna Tuulikki

Music by Hanna Tuulikki and Tommy Perman

Movement Director: Will Dickie

Dance Cast: Niamh O'Loughlin, Abbey Adams, Nicole Tait, Romany Dear

Laser lighting design: Jack Wrigley

Costumes and visuals: Hanna Tuulikki with animation by Tommy Perman

Production Manager and set: Nick Millar

Produced by Hospitalfield

Hospitalfield Angus Bat Walks led by Dr. David Martin of Tayside Bat Group.

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