

An Honest Ecstatic Dance UK Review: Accountability and Power in the Conscious Movement

I have been part of the conscious movement for over a decade. I have danced in warehouses, church halls, and converted barns, always chasing that moment of collective release. When I first heard about Ecstatic Dance UK, I was hopeful. A national network of dance circles, committed to safer space policies and community agreements. It sounded like the real thing. This Ecstatic Dance UK review comes from someone who wanted it to work, but who also knows that good intentions are not enough to build a healthy organisational culture.

What Ecstatic Dance UK Sets Out to Do

The premise is simple. Gather people, agree on a few principles, and let the music carry the group into a shared, sober, expressive dance. No alcohol, no drugs, just bodies moving in a container of mutual respect. The organisation publishes community agreements and safer space policies. They talk about consent practices and conflict resolution. On paper, it looks thorough. But the gap between policy and practice is where things get complicated.

Informal Power and the Problem of Leadership Structures

In any volunteer-led community, power does not disappear. It migrates. The people who show up most, who speak in meetings, who the facilitators trust, end up holding informal power. Ecstatic Dance UK is no different. There are leadership structures on paper, but the daily reality is a web of relationships, favours, and unspoken hierarchies. I have seen newer dancers defer to long-timers, not because they had any official authority, but because the group had no formal process for making decisions. That is a recipe for confusion.

When something goes wrong, when someone crosses a line or a facilitator makes a questionable call, who do you tell? The grievance procedures exist, but they are not well known. I have asked around. Many dancers do not even know where to find them. And if you do file a complaint, the informal power structure means the person you are complaining about might be the same person who decides how your complaint is handled. That is not accountability. That is a system waiting to break.

Spiritual Bypass and the Ethics Framework

One of the most troubling patterns I have observed is spiritual bypass. When a conflict arises, someone inevitably says something like, "Let the dance heal it" or "We are all one family." That

sounds lovely, but it shuts down real conversation. It avoids the hard work of conflict resolution. The organisation's ethics framework mentions transformative justice and peer accountability, but in practice, these ideas are rarely applied. I have seen grievances dismissed because "the group energy was too sensitive" or because raising the issue "would break the vibe."

This is where white privilege also comes in. The conscious movement, Ecstatic Dance UK included, attracts a predominantly white, middle-class demographic. That means the norms of politeness and avoidance of direct confrontation are often culturally reinforced. People of colour who bring up issues of inclusion or safety are sometimes told they are "bringing too much heaviness into the space." That is not just a failure of community dynamics. It is a failure of leadership to understand how power dynamics intersect with identity.

Facilitator Training and Consent Practices

The quality of facilitator training varies wildly. Some facilitators are deeply skilled. They hold space well, watch for non-verbal cues, and enforce community agreements with grace. Others seem to have learned on the job. They rely on personal charisma rather than a solid understanding of consent practices or group facilitation. I have been in dance circles where the facilitator was so focused on the music that they missed someone clearly distressed in the corner. That should not happen.

Consent practices are another area where the gap between policy and reality is wide. The safer space policies say that touching another dancer requires clear, ongoing consent. But in the heat of a dance, when people are sweaty and euphoric, boundaries blur. I have had my hand grabbed, my waist held, and my space invaded by strangers who thought the music gave them permission. When I raised it with a facilitator, I was told "to go with the flow." That is not good enough. A policy that is not enforced is just a piece of paper.

The poster has a light beige background. In the top right corner, there is a large red semi-circle and a thick black diagonal line extending from the bottom right towards the center. In the top left, a small red rectangle contains the word 'THINK' in white. The main title 'ECSTATIC DANCE UK' is in large, bold, black capital letters. Below it, the subtitle 'PERFORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY, INFORMAL POWER AND THE COST OF SPEAKING UP' is in smaller, bold, black capital letters, with 'THE COST OF SPEAKING UP' in red. A thin black horizontal line is positioned below the subtitle. At the bottom left, the website 'FILIPEBASTOS.COM' is written in small, black, capital letters.

THINK

ECSTATIC DANCE UK

PERFORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY, INFORMAL
POWER AND **THE COST OF SPEAKING UP**

FILIPEBASTOS.COM

Community Dynamics and Organisational Culture

The community dynamics within Ecstatic Dance UK are both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. People come because they want connection. They want to feel part of something authentic. And for many, they do. I have had beautiful, wordless exchanges on the dance floor. I have felt the kind of belonging that is rare in modern life. But that same intimacy can curdle when there is no clear way to address harm.

I remember one incident where a regular dancer kept approaching newcomers and hugging them without asking. Several people felt uncomfortable. When someone finally spoke up at a community meeting, the response was defensive. The dancer in question said they were “just being loving.” The facilitator did not redirect the conversation to the community agreements. Instead, they let it slide. The message was clear: personal charisma and good intentions excuse a lot. That is not a culture of accountability.

This [Ecstatic Dance UK review](#) is not a dismissal of the whole project. I know many people who have found genuine healing through these circles. But good intentions do not protect against the distortions of informal power. If the organisation wants to survive and grow, it needs to invest in real leadership structures that are transparent and accountable. It needs to train facilitators not just in music and movement, but in conflict resolution and consent practices. And it needs to build an organisational culture where speaking up is safe, not a career-limiting move within a small community.

What Real Accountability Could Look Like

I have seen other communities do this better. Groups that use transformative justice circles, where the harmed person and the person who caused harm can come together with trained mediators. Groups that publish annual reports on how many complaints were filed and how they were resolved. Groups that rotate leadership so that no single person holds too much informal power. That kind of peer accountability is hard work, but it is the only way to build trust.

Ecstatic Dance UK could learn from those examples. They have the foundation. The community agreements are a start. The safer space policies exist. But without enforcement, without ongoing training, and without a real commitment to addressing power dynamics, those documents are just decoration. The organisation needs to decide if it wants to be a feel-good space or a genuinely safe space. Those are not the same thing.

Final Thoughts

I keep dancing. I keep going back to the circles. Partly because the movement itself is powerful, and partly because I want to see if the organisation can change. This Ecstatic Dance UK review is a call to do better, not a goodbye. I believe in the potential of the conscious movement. But potential without action is just a wish. The next step for Ecstatic Dance UK is to turn its policies into lived practice, to build real accountability into its leadership structures, and to create an organisational culture where every dancer, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, can feel that they truly belong.