

Listening Sessions: Seeing Through Flames

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Throughout Autumn 2022, Nottingham Contemporary's Live Programmes presented *Seeing Through Flames*, a series of auditory assemblages that turned listening into a collective channel of exchange. These sessions opened out the ideas and themes of our research strand, *Emergency & Emergence*, and surveyed different possibilities of forming solidarity through sound and music.

United by themes of adaptability and remediation, it convened diverse practitioners who investigated speculative timelines in order to provoke and think about alternative ways of being in the world. By looking at the politics of sonic intimacies and collective imagination, these study-as-listening sessions explored the potential for the poetic and vibrational undoing of the knowledge that underpins concepts of the dominant modes of being and oppression that those create to make ourselves and our planet anew

Below are selected recordings from the *Seeing Through Flames* listening sessions:



<http://admin.thecontemporaryjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Edward-George-listening-session-27-09-22.mp3>

This session looked into dub and its association with both communal reverie and spiritual transformation. Led by Edward George, it dwelled on the influences, dimensions, and spaces of dub by combining critical theory, social history, and live dub mixing. It brought forth the ideas of emptiness and silence, being and presence, space, and repetition and how these ideas intersect with themes, especially in reggae, of Diaspora, and 'race', history and memory, longing and loss.

[Click here to download the transcript.](#)

Palestinian Sound Archive by Mo'min Swaitat



<http://admin.thecontemporaryjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/momin-swaitat-listening-session-4-10-2022.mp3>

This session brought forward the history of Palestinian music through deep listening and storytelling and interlinks radical historical and social movements of and through music. An archive of rare tapes and vinyl from Palestine and beyond, spanning field recordings of weddings to revolutionary tracks and synth-heavy 80s funk, as well as original acoustic and jazz albums, were played by Mo'min as he elucidates on how these recordings and/or albums have been made.

[Click here to download the transcript.](#)

Hollows and Resonances by David Toop



<http://admin.thecontemporaryjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/David-Toop-Listening-session-1-22-2022.mp3>

Hollows, spheres, caves and chambers are the resonant, amplifying spaces out of which sound emerges and intimate listening takes place. Resonance amplifies and enhances but it also acts as both metaphor and an agent of empathy, intimacy and fellowship. David Toop's participatory workshop explored the possibilities of using materials, objects and acoustic spheres in the pursuit of communities described by Peter Sloterdijk as "sonospheric

communards."

[Click here to download the transcript.](#)

Love Saves the Day by Tim Lawrence



<http://admin.thecontemporaryjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Tim-Lawrence-LSD-LOVE-SAVES-THE-DAY-22-11-22.mp3>

This informal session explored the sonic and social legacy of David Mancuso's Loft, the influential invitation-only, audiophile community party that came into being on Valentine's Day 1970, sometimes referred to as the Love Saves the Day party. Led by Tim Lawrence, the session explored the influence of David and his figuring of the Loft as a uniquely utopian space driven by music, dance, stereo sound and, for those who wanted to partake, a tab of acid. From the beginning of 1970 onwards, David made a decisive contribution to the establishment of a new form of music making or musicianship that embodied the countercultural period in a far more advanced way than many other musical genres such as acid rock and progressive rock. Why was it so important for David to reproduce sound accurately? How did the experience of listening adapt to this situation and how did it affect the modes of behaviour? Why does the Loft continue to resonate today? What are we holding on to and why?

[Click here to download the transcript.](#)

In 2023, *Seeing Through Flames* continues to survey different possibilities of forming solidarity through sonic epistemologies and thinks “of dubbing” as a process of witnessing, in the wake of “the original”, and of filling in historical gaps through space of sound and acoustic experimentation. Rather than seeing history as settled and static, dub moves beyond and in between what is confined to history, preserved or abandoned.

By lending an emphatic ear to relational tempos, acoustics, beats and frequencies of historical formations and sonic world-making, this season’s *Seeing Through Flames* brings together a pluriverse of interdependent speculations that confronts the production and writing of history to underscore a condition of possibility for solidarity, beyond ‘the event’ in history, beyond cultural specificity and its locality.

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[<https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/emergency-emergence/seeing-through-flames-listening-sessions>].