

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

I have been part of the conscious movement for over a decade, attending dance circles, retreats, and workshops across the UK. When I first heard about Ecstatic Dance UK, I was drawn to its promise of a safe, sober space for free movement and authentic connection. The events felt liberating at first, a place where you could let go without judgment. But over time, I started noticing patterns that made me uneasy. This Ecstatic Dance UK review is not about the music or the dancing itself, it is about the organisational culture that underpins it, and the informal power structures that can make or break a community.

The conscious movement has grown rapidly in the UK, and with growth come growing pains. Many of these spaces operate on a shoestring, run by passionate facilitators who genuinely believe in the healing power of dance. But good intentions do not automatically create safe environments. What I have seen in several dance circles is a reluctance to formalise accountability. There is an unspoken assumption that because everyone is "conscious," problems like boundary crossing or favouritism will somehow resolve themselves. They do not.

Informal power and the problem of leadership structures

One of the sharpest observations I can offer in this [Ecstatic Dance UK review](#) is how informal power operates in these spaces. There is rarely a clear hierarchy. No CEO, no board, no formal job descriptions. Yet certain individuals hold enormous influence because they have been around the longest, or they own the venue, or they trained the main facilitators. This informal power is hard to challenge precisely because it is not written down. When someone with that kind of influence oversteps, there is no grievance procedure that feels safe to use.

I have witnessed incidents where a long-standing organiser dismissed a participant's concern about a consent practice issue, framing it as "the person being too sensitive." That is a classic move in spaces that lack an ethics framework. Without a clear leadership structure, accountability becomes personal. You either confront someone you might see every week, or you stay silent and hope it does not happen again. Neither option is good for community dynamics.

Facilitator training and the gap in ethics

Most facilitator training in the conscious movement focuses on movement, music, and holding space. These are important skills, but they rarely include robust training on power dynamics, white privilege, or conflict resolution. I have attended workshops where the facilitator was

skilled at guiding a dance journey but completely unprepared when a disagreement broke out between participants. In one case, a facilitator used spiritual bypass, telling everyone to "breathe through it", instead of addressing the actual harm that had been reported. That avoidance erodes trust and makes the space feel unsafe for anyone who has experienced trauma.

What is needed is a shift toward transformative justice, where harm is acknowledged and repaired rather than smoothed over. Some groups are starting to adopt community agreements that explicitly name power dynamics and outline steps for peer accountability. But these agreements are only as strong as the organisational culture that enforces them. If the same people who wrote the agreement are the ones who break it, and there is no outside oversight, the document becomes meaningless.

Safer space policies: promises vs practice

Many Ecstatic Dance UK events have safer space policies posted on their websites or read aloud at the start of a session. They mention consent, respect, and non-violence. But a policy is not the same as practice. I have seen these policies ignored when the person violating them is a well-liked regular or a lead facilitator. The double standard is palpable. Newcomers, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, often bear the brunt of this inconsistency.

One evening, a participant reported that another dancer had repeatedly touched them without asking during a guided contact improvisation exercise. The facilitator acknowledged the report but did not follow up. There was no conversation with the person who had been reported, no check-in with the person who made the complaint, and no mention of it in the closing circle. The message was clear: the comfort of the group overrides the safety of an individual. That is a failure of leadership, and it is far too common in these spaces.

A few organisers are beginning to experiment with more formal systems. Some now have a designated wellbeing person at every event, someone who is not the facilitator and who can receive complaints confidentially. Others have started offering ethics training for their core team. These are steps in the right direction, but they remain rare. Most events still rely on the goodwill and intuition of whoever happens to be running the session that night.

What accountability looks like in practice

Accountability in a community context is not about blame or punishment. It is about recognising when harm has occurred and taking steps to prevent it from happening again. In a dance circle, that might mean the facilitator checking in privately with both parties after a conflict, or the organising team reviewing their safer space policies regularly with input from

participants. It could also mean having a clear, published grievance procedure that anyone can access, with multiple ways to raise a concern, not just face-to-face with the facilitator.

I have seen a few groups adopt a peer accountability model where a rotating panel of community members reviews reports of harm and makes recommendations to the organising team. This spreads the responsibility and reduces the burden on any one person. It also makes the informal power visible, because the process itself is transparent. But these models require time, commitment, and a willingness to be uncomfortable. Not every group is ready for that.



Community dynamics and the role of white privilege

Any honest Ecstatic Dance UK review must address the racial dynamics at play. The conscious movement in the UK is predominantly white. That is not inherently a problem, but it becomes one when white privilege goes unexamined. I have seen Black and brown participants express feeling like outsiders in spaces that claim to be inclusive. Their concerns about cultural appropriation or exclusion are sometimes met with defensiveness or silence. That silence is a form of informal power, it protects the comfort of the majority at the expense of the minority.

A few years ago, a well-respected facilitator made a comment during a sharing circle that dismissed a participant's experience of racism as "holding onto negativity." That is spiritual bypass dressed up as wisdom. It shuts down the conversation and reinforces the idea that accountability is optional. The facilitator was never challenged by the organisers, and the participant stopped attending. That is a loss for everyone, because the community missed a chance to learn and grow.

Some groups are now holding separate spaces for people of colour, or offering workshops on race and the conscious movement. These are positive developments, but they should not let the wider community off the hook. Real change requires the whole group to engage with issues of power and privilege, not just the people who are directly affected.

Moving forward: what a better model looks like

I do not want this review to sound like I think Ecstatic Dance UK is beyond repair. I still believe in the potential of these spaces. Free-form dance, when held well, can be deeply healing. But the healing is compromised when the container is weak. A strong container requires clear leadership structures, documented and enforced safer space policies, real consent practices, and a commitment to transformative justice.

For those who are thinking of attending an Ecstatic Dance event, I would encourage you to ask a few questions before you go. Does the event have a published ethics framework? Is there a designated person you can speak to if something goes wrong? How do the organisers handle reports of harm? If they cannot answer these questions clearly, that is a red flag. You are not asking for perfection, you are asking for a genuine attempt at accountability.

For organisers, the path forward involves a willingness to give up some informal power. That can feel threatening, especially if you have built a community around your own charisma. But the health of the group depends on structures that outlast any individual. Facilitator training should include modules on power dynamics and conflict resolution. Grievance procedures should be simple, accessible, and reviewed regularly. Community agreements should be living documents, updated with input from the whole community.

I have seen what happens when these elements are in place. The dance circles feel safer. People are more willing to be vulnerable. Conflicts get resolved rather than swept under the rug. The energy in the room shifts from guarded to open. That is the promise of the conscious movement, and it is achievable. But it requires work, honesty, and a willingness to look at the uncomfortable parts of our own practice.

This Ecstatic Dance UK review is one person's perspective, shaped by years of attending and facilitating these events. I offer it in the spirit of care, not criticism. The conscious movement has given me so much, connection, creativity, a sense of belonging. I want it to be better for everyone, especially those who have been hurt by the very spaces that promised to hold them. Accountability is not the opposite of love. It is love in action.