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A Heads Up with Lutz John

With Covid-19 lockdowns worldwide and health authorities urging people to self-isolate and practice social distancing on a massive scale as part of an enormous effort to #FlattenTheCurve of this global pandemic ... we are reaching out to industry friends, colleagues, associates, partners, etc., and asking them to share their #StayAtHome and #QuarantineAndChill activities with us during this extraordinary time.

Freelance lighting and stage designer Lutz would have been touring with "Einstürzende Neubauten" in Thessaloniki (as of 07.07.2020). His main focus for the last several years has been concert lighting and projects with live bands as a stage, lighting and production designer. His passion lies in the scenography to give projects a fully harmonious form and content, a process that Stuttgart architects ATELIER BRÜCKNER called "form following content" which he finds very fitting. He's currently engaged working on an exhibition in Hamburg.

Robe: Where are you right now?

Lutz: At home in Hannover.

Robe: How are things emerging from the lockdown in your region / country?

Lutz: Hannover is very green, that's why many people spend their time in the parks and city forests. There's a drive-in stage where a few people honk their horns to watch bands on FM ... I've heard that the city of Hannover is now supporting art and cultural projects with money from the culture budget, which couldn't be used until now because of the lockdown. I think this is a good approach.

Robe: How did you spend your time during lockdown?

Lutz: I have had the great luck to live in a relatively large apartment in the middle of the city. The house has a large garden – and it's doing really well this year.

In the beginning, I worked on projects to give me the feeling that the industry will definitely start again soon. And then ... there was a big black hole that sucked all the energy out of me in terms of creativity. I couldn't even draw or paint anymore. I was at a loss with myself.

It went from a hundred to zero and I wondered what I was actually doing here. It was good that the garden was there. It helped me a lot to sort myself out.

Robe: What are your biggest concerns / considerations as lockdowns ease worldwide?

Lutz: I think we have been very lucky in Germany so far.

For me, it is a sheer horror to see how some people behave so thoughtlessly. It worries me. Especially when you look at the USA, Great Britain and other countries. Of course, I understand that a virus is still very abstract for us, and it has so far affected relatively few people.

But the above-mentioned countries also show that things can be done quite differently, worse.

Robe: Do you have any thoughts / predictions about how and when live events and the industry will re-start?

Lutz: No more production will go on the road this year. I think sometime in 2021 it can start again.

Luckily for designers the production process starts earlier. Therefore, I will work on something in my studio already this year.

Robe: Going forward, how do you think live events and the entertainment technology industry will change in a post-Covid 19 world before there is a vaccine widely available?

Lutz: They will be much smaller than the big shows.

One problem is that when it starts again, we will have been putting off shows for almost 12 months, all of which were conceived based on pre-pandemic concepts. Bands who completely cancelled their tours will certainly be more flexible to do something new.

Robe: How sustainable do you think these changes will be?

Lutz: I think that our industry has been very overheated in recent years. Both in terms of new lamp systems, but also in terms of production sizes.

Every year there were a crazy number of new fixtures, another light from company A and another one from company B.

In addition, the productions became bigger and bigger, no matter whether they were concerts or trade fairs. My impression is that this does not always go along with quality.

That will certainly change. Artists will certainly become more careful and instead of 10 trucks, they will only drive off with 4. I could imagine that. Of course, this is also a sign that there is a demand to go to concerts. That is of course very good.

Fortunately, there will always be concerts.

Robe: Has anyone / anything particularly inspired you since this crisis started?

Lutz: I think all the people who use the time now to change something, to make something for themselves or others, are great. My buddy Lars already got me out of a downer once or twice.

Robe: Own question / answer / message of solidarity or something you'd like to say?

Lutz: Don't look too much at social media. Read books, go out and enjoy life in spite of everything... keeping your distance and wearing a mask.

