



MUSIC Texas

# 'Silent discos' let you dance the night away with the comfort of headphones

By Asa Merritt



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This year's Austin City Limits (ACL) music festival has plenty to be excited about: Chance the Rapper, The XX and Solange are all hitting the main stages. It has an expanded Texas-themed food court that is serving fried food and BBQ all weekend. Plus, visual artists will be creating large scale works on-site. But you have to add "dance in a silent disco" to your list of must-dos at ACL 2017.

Silent disco dance party, opening night, ACL 2017

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Silent discos have been around for fifteen years, but are increasing in popularity. The way it works is when you enter the dance space you receive a pair of glowing headphones. LED lights on the phones emit neon red, blue, or green, colors which correspond to what "station" you're listening to.

What we call it is the shower mentality. They just don't care. It's like singing in the shower. They put their headphones on and just let themselves go.

William Petz, founder of Quiet Events

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At this particular dance party, thrown by Quiet Events, different DJs were spinning hip-hop, 80s & 90s throwbacks, and pop/EDM. If a song comes on you don't like, no problem, you just switch stations. Sometimes, DJs get competitive and compete for the ears of the crowd.

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Dancers say that what makes silent discos special is the unique intimacy they provide. That it's easier to let go when the music is streaming directly into your ears. These discos also give dancers the opportunity to sing and be free.

Silent discos will be happening each of the six nights of the ACL music festival.

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Asa Merritt is a multimedia journalist based in Austin, TX. He studied various storytelling disciplines at Columbia University and CUNY Graduate School of Journalism.