



## AUSTRIA'S MUSIC UNDERGROUND IS READY TO BREAK THROUGH

Under Austria's tourist-oriented facade lies a most vibrant and blossoming music scene. The "music country Austria" is currently experiencing a musical reformation with a music underground pulsating under the surface and ready to break through. Slowly the tips of this plant are coming to the fore: Just recently 60,000 visitors came to the "Popfest Wien" to celebrate an exclusively Austrian music lineup for four days. The big music industry hotspot at Hamburg's Reeperbahn Festival has never before staged so many Austrian artists to showcase their talents. And what's more: The most important European showcase festival "Eurosonic" proclaimed Austria as the "focus country" for its next edition in 2014.

According to the clichés, Austria is a country with many mountains, where everyone skis in winter and wears dirndls in summer, where the culinary cuisine established names such as "schnitzel" and where the nostalgic glorification of the monarchy is the order of the day.

Current music, however, is not necessarily one of the first things that comes to mind for this list, even though Austria has always been considered as the **prototypical music country**. After all, Mozart, Haydn, Strauss and Mahler once lived and worked here, and still form, together with the Philharmonic New Year's Concert, countless operas and classical music festivals, the country's columns of a deeply rooted musical tradition. Just as the tourist shops' memorabilia of the imperial era, these names still have an impact on the Austrian image to this day – this however should not stand in the way of taking a closer look at the exciting present ongoings.

Austria is increasingly transforming into a **versatile, contemporary music landscape**. However, you will look in vain for mainstream superstars. Digging deeper into the scenes, you will find the most remarkable artists – similar to the related fields of literature (Elfriede Jelinek, awarded with the Nobel Prize in 2004) or film (Oscars for director Michael Haneke and actor Christoph Waltz).

### **Classical roots and unnoticed role models**

As much as the current events distance themselves from classical music tradition, it is surprising that many of today's protagonists between indie pop and electronica come from a first-class traditional music education background and now "misuse" it for their own ideas. Obvious historical references from Schoenberg to Zawinul are thereby rarely the "role models", though their brilliant and innovative visions have still somehow left their mark.

The last truly noticeable **hype in Vienna** was during the **90s**, when Kruder & Dorfmeister suddenly impacted the metropolis with a **new urban sound**. Simultaneously in their environment, the "typical" categorized genre downtempo evolved and gave a whole group of artists and labels a lot of international attention. Although the wave ebbed away again around 2000, many figures of that time are still deeply rooted in the scene. Patrick Pulsinger, Christian Fennesz or the Sofa Surfers are still very active as artists, producers, collaborators or festival curators today, and often take on a kind of connector or mentoring role for following generations.

### **An evolution finds its spot**

In the past 15 years the former red light street in Vienna's Gürtel has evolved into a popular **bar and club street**: Located in the **former railway arches** you can find a myriad of now legendary venues of the local music scene (rhiz, Chelsea, B72), which above all offers countless gig opportunities – a circumstance you could only dare to dream of in the mid-90s.

Back then, the predominant lack of concert venues got the creative juices of dedicated music lovers flowing: The "Flex", one of Vienna's most famous night clubs, settled down in a disused subway shaft (following their footsteps is the "Grelle Forelle" as one of the latest meeting joints for electronic music friends). The "fluc" located itself in a former road underpass. The "Pratersauna" revitalized an earlier sauna in Vienna's largest park and converted it into a unique club with an outdoor pool.

The development of this extremely **colorful club scene** generated a new wave and inspired a whole new generation of organizers, DJs and musicians. Ranging from techno to singer/songwriting, there is hardly a genre that does not have at least one well known genre-ambassador and does not offer a series of music events. These series go by the names of "Teenbeat Club" (garage rock/indie), "Icke Micke" (techno/house) or "Love&Hate" (dubstep/breaks) – and have been serving as a platform and meeting point for many years.

Proof of the diversity in practice are also **young festivals** that originally fed on niches, but due to their popularity have been able to break genre boundaries: The "sound:frame festival" is considered as one of the leading events for audiovisual art, "Run:VIE" is dedicated to the hip hop culture and urban life; even the "Poolinale", a festival specialized on music films, has been able to make a name for itself.

In order to rise above the norm, events are organized in institutions such as the Vienna's Giant Ferris Wheel ("Techno Gondola"), trams, vacant business premises ("Betonklub"), an open park in broad daylight ("Tanz durch den Tag"), or a silent disco with headphones on a random pavement ("Gehsteigdisko").

As different as these events may be, due to the size of the city, they often merge many of their audiences and create a smooth transition between the worlds of sound and audience. A kind of common denominator is the radio station FM4. Ever since the (public) station launched its 24 hour broadcast in 2000, it has taken a leading role in the socialization of a curious and innovation-hungry audience. This natural adaption to local developments counteracts with the contrary Austria's media concentration, which makes it almost impossible for artists to have mainstream success. FM4 broadcasts mostly in English and brings hip hop, metal or techno and house to an extended audience with their special programs.

## Melting Pot and Hub

It is neither new nor surprising that Vienna sees itself as a melting pot. The geographical location, the extraordinary quality of life and the increasing extinction of national borders – all this has made Vienna an increasingly popular point for national and international artists. In the city where nearly a quarter of the Austrian population lives, it is jokingly said that in Vienna you can meet everything except Viennese. Economically, the capital city is already known as a historic “hub” in the East – a circumstance which is also taken into account at the **showcase festival “Waves Vienna”**. Organized together with a conference, the club festival has explicitly and very successfully devoted itself to establishing **networks between East and West** (3rd-6th October 2013). Underlining the increasing interest in Austrian music is also the surprising success of a reappraisal of local pop history with a 400-page book (“Wien Pop“, published by Falter Verlag).

With all due respect to the boom in Vienna, there is also a lot of flourishing creativity in the alpine region outside the capital city. As opposed to traditional festivals, unusual ideas and locations are once again the name of the game – be it as a tourist spectacle in the middle of a winter sports area (Snowbombing Mayrhofen), in a crystal world (fm.riese), as a future, technology and research festival in the middle of the Danube (Ars Electronica/Klangwolke), purely acoustic (Acoustic Lakeside), in a pool (Poolbar Festival) or scattered across the UNESCO heritage city like the Spring Festival and Elevate Festival in Graz or the Stuck!Festival in Salzburg.

All these facets explain to some extent why **music from Austria** can be so **manifold and exciting**: **Disturbing**, like Soap&Skin, the internationally acclaimed singer and pianist. **Fascinating**, like Elektro Guzzi, who have set new standards with their highly precise performance style of techno with “analog instruments”. **Popular**, like Klangkarussell, whose simple but highly effective “Sonnentanz” recently dominated the music charts across Europe (including #1 in Holland). **Danceable**, like Parov Stelar, who literally gets packed halls and festivals to swing across the planet. **Intellectual**, like Ja, Panik, who have become feuilleton favorites with their quote-heavy, subtle albums. Innovative and **progressive**, like internationally linked sound creators Dorian Concept and Cid Rim. **Adventurous**, like Francis International Airport, who have bravely instilled the “indie” term with new sound worlds. **Whimsical**, like Attwenger, who have been able to celebrate numerous successes with their traditional accordion and dialect Dadaism for the past 20 years. **Sassy**, like Left Boy, who has cast aside the shadow of his father André Heller with his skewed pop embellishments.

The list could go on and on and urges Sisi, the Alps and Mozartkugels far into the background. Besides, the present has far more exciting stories to tell.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Music Genres in Austria

Scene portraits on musicaustria.at (in German) | [www.musicaustria.at/node/18578](http://www.musicaustria.at/node/18578)

### Artists

Soap&Skin | [www.soapandskin.com](http://www.soapandskin.com)

Elektro Guzzi | [www.elektroguzzi.net](http://www.elektroguzzi.net)

Klangkarussell | [www.klangkarussell.com](http://www.klangkarussell.com)

Parov Stelar | [www.parovstelar.com](http://www.parovstelar.com)

Ja, Panik | [ja-panik.com](http://ja-panik.com)

Dorian Concept | [www.facebook.com/dorianconcept](http://www.facebook.com/dorianconcept)

Cid Rim | [www.facebook.com/cidrim](http://www.facebook.com/cidrim)

Francis International Airport | [francisinternationalairport.com](http://francisinternationalairport.com)

Attwenger | [attwenger.at](http://attwenger.at)

Left Boy | [leftboy.com](http://leftboy.com)

Patrick Pulsinger | [www.feedback-studio.com](http://www.feedback-studio.com)

Christian Fennesz | [www.fennesz.com](http://www.fennesz.com)

Sofa Surfers | [www.sofasurfers.info](http://www.sofasurfers.info)

### **Festivals in Austria**

Acoustic Lakeside, Sonnegger See, Sittersdorf, Kärnten | [www.acousticlakeside.com](http://www.acousticlakeside.com) ars.electronica, Linz, Oberösterreich | [www.aec.at](http://www.aec.at)  
elevate, Graz, Steiermark | [2013.elevate.at](http://2013.elevate.at)  
fm.riese, Wattens, Tirol | [www.kristallwelten.com/fmriese](http://www.kristallwelten.com/fmriese)  
Klangwolke, Linz, Oberösterreich | [www.klangwolke.at](http://www.klangwolke.at)  
Poolbar Festival, Feldkirch, Vorarlberg | [poolbar.at](http://poolbar.at)  
Poolinale. Music & Film Festival, Wien | [www.poolinale.at](http://www.poolinale.at)  
Popfest Wien | [popfest.at](http://popfest.at)  
Snowbombing, Mayrhofen, Tirol | [www.snowbombing.com](http://www.snowbombing.com)  
Sound:frame Festival, Wien | [www.soundframe.at](http://www.soundframe.at)  
springfestival, Graz, Steiermark | [www.springfestival.at](http://www.springfestival.at)  
Stuck!Festival, Salzburg | [www.facebook.com/STUCKFESTIVAL](http://www.facebook.com/STUCKFESTIVAL)  
Tanz durch den Tag, Wien | [www.tanzdurchdentag.com](http://www.tanzdurchdentag.com)  
Waves Vienna Festival & Conference, Wien | [wavesvienna.com](http://wavesvienna.com)

### **Clubs in Austria**

B72 | [b72.at](http://b72.at)  
Chelsea | [chelsea.co.at](http://chelsea.co.at)  
Flex | [flex.at](http://flex.at)  
Fluc | [fluc.at](http://fluc.at)  
Grelle Forelle | [www.grelleforelle.com](http://www.grelleforelle.com)  
Icke Micke | [www.ickemicke.at](http://www.ickemicke.at)  
Pratersauna | [www.pratersauna.tv](http://www.pratersauna.tv)  
rhiz | [rhiz.org](http://rhiz.org)  
Teenbeat Club | [www.teenbeatclub.at](http://www.teenbeatclub.at)  
Love&Hate | [loveandhate.is](http://loveandhate.is)

### **Media & Music Blogs**

FM4 | [fm4.orf.at](http://fm4.orf.at)  
They shoot music, don't they! Viennese music videoblog | <http://theyshootmusic.at>  
Wien Pop: <https://www.facebook.com/WienPop>  
Walzerkönig. Music from Austria | <http://walzerkoenig.tumblr.com>

### **Austria @ Eurosonic Noorderslag 2014**

<http://www.musicexport.at/austria-is-the-focus-country-of-eurosonic-noorderslag-2014>  
Playlist | <https://soundcloud.com/musicexportat>  
ESNS Press Releases & Images <http://festival.eurosonic-noorderslag.nl/en/about-us/press>

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