



WAVES VIENNA 2026

New Festival Leadership and Joint Strategic Development

Waves Vienna is also introducing a new organisational structure for its 16th edition: Giovanna Fartacek joins the management team and will take responsibility for the festival division of Waves Vienna. Founder Sarah Thomas Heher will continue to oversee the Waves Vienna Conference as well as its international projects and partnerships. Together, the two directors will drive the strategic development of Waves Vienna and further strengthen its position as a festival, professional conference and international platform for new music.

16th Edition: 107 Acts, Guest of Honor UK and a New Conference Venue

From 1 to 3 October 2026, the 16th edition of Waves Vienna will once again bring together artists, music professionals and audiences from across Europe and beyond. A total of 107 acts are featured in the festival programme. Concerts will take place at numerous venues along Vienna's Gürtel, once again making the festival a key destination for discovering new and emerging music.

This year's Guest of Honor is the United Kingdom. Alongside the many British acts appearing in the festival programme, the UK focus will also run throughout the Conference, highlighting exchange between the British, Austrian and wider European music scenes.

In 2026, the Waves Vienna Conference moves to the Albert Hall, giving it a new central home. One of the main thematic focuses will be sync—the intersection of music with film, television, games, advertising and other audiovisual media. The Conference will also explore current developments in music export, international mobility, new business models, technology, media and the future structures of the European music ecosystem.

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Kick-off with a Block Party in Spittelau

Waves Vienna will kick off the festival weekend with a Block Party on Wednesday, 30 September, starting at 7 pm. The event will take place on the square in front of the Spittelau waste incineration plant. With this new opening event, Waves Vienna is engaging even more closely with the city and its audiences, setting the mood on the eve of three days of festival and conference activities. The Block Party line-up will be announced shortly.

New Young Professionals Programme

The afternoon of 30 September will also mark the launch of a new Young Professionals Programme, organised by Waves Vienna together with mica – music austria. The programme is aimed at young and aspiring music professionals and will accompany participants throughout the entire Conference. A variety of formats—from workshops and talks to panels and networking opportunities—will provide knowledge, facilitate new connections and help participants take their first steps into the professional music industry.

International Partnerships and Stronger European Connections

International exchange remains one of the central pillars of Waves Vienna. In 2026, the festival will once again present numerous showcase and collaboration formats together with international partners. In addition to this year's Guest of Honor, the United Kingdom, partnerships are in place with Germany, Hungary, France, Switzerland, Ukraine, Latvia and other countries.

At the same time, Waves Vienna has significantly expanded its own international presence. The festival is represented on the board of the Federation of Music Conferences and participates in the European initiatives Keychange, ESNS Exchange and UPBEAT. Waves Vienna is also a partner in Incubator, a new Erasmus+ project developing new formats for emerging professionals, exchange and professional development together with international partners. In doing so, Waves Vienna is increasingly contributing its many years of experience to the development of shared European structures.



UK Residency with Oskar Haag

Another component of Waves Vienna's international activities in 2026 was its inaugural UK Residency with Austrian artist Oskar Haag. The residency took him to the United Kingdom in May, creating space for artistic exchange, new connections and collaborations between artists and music professionals from the Austrian and British music scenes. The experiences and outcomes of the project will be reflected upon and developed further at the Waves Vienna Conference together with the artists and partners involved.

XA – Export Award 2026

The XA – Export Award will once again be presented as part of Waves Vienna in 2026. Initiated by Waves Vienna in 2017, the award is organised together with mica – music austria, Austrian Music Export, the Austro Mechana SKE Fund and Radio FM4. Its aim is to support Austrian artists who have already established a foundation in Austria as they take the next step towards an international career.

During Waves Vienna, an international jury of festival promoters, label representatives, bookers and journalists will attend the performances of the six nominated acts before selecting the most compelling performance. The winning act will receive €4,000 in prize money, provided by SKE AustroMechana, as well as support from Austrian Music Export, FM4 and Waves Vienna during the following year. Additional touring support of €5,000 will be provided by the Austrian Ministry of Culture.

The nominees for the XA – Export Award 2026 are:

Aki Traar
Ava Fina
Cute Aggression
Ivery
Peach Tinted
Tamara Flores



Rausgegangen Becomes a Main Partner of Waves Vienna

In 2026, Waves Vienna also welcomes Rausgegangen as a new Main Partner. The German event and cultural discovery platform is launching in Vienna for the first time through its partnership with Waves Vienna, marking another step in its expansion beyond Germany.

Waves Vienna 2026 at a Glance

Waves Vienna takes place from 1 to 3 October 2026, bringing together an international showcase festival and music conference for the 16th time. With 107 acts, the United Kingdom as its Guest of Honor, a new Conference venue at the Albert Hall, numerous international partnerships and a strong focus on exchange, emerging talent and internationalisation, Waves Vienna positions itself as a platform for new music—and for the people and structures shaping its future.