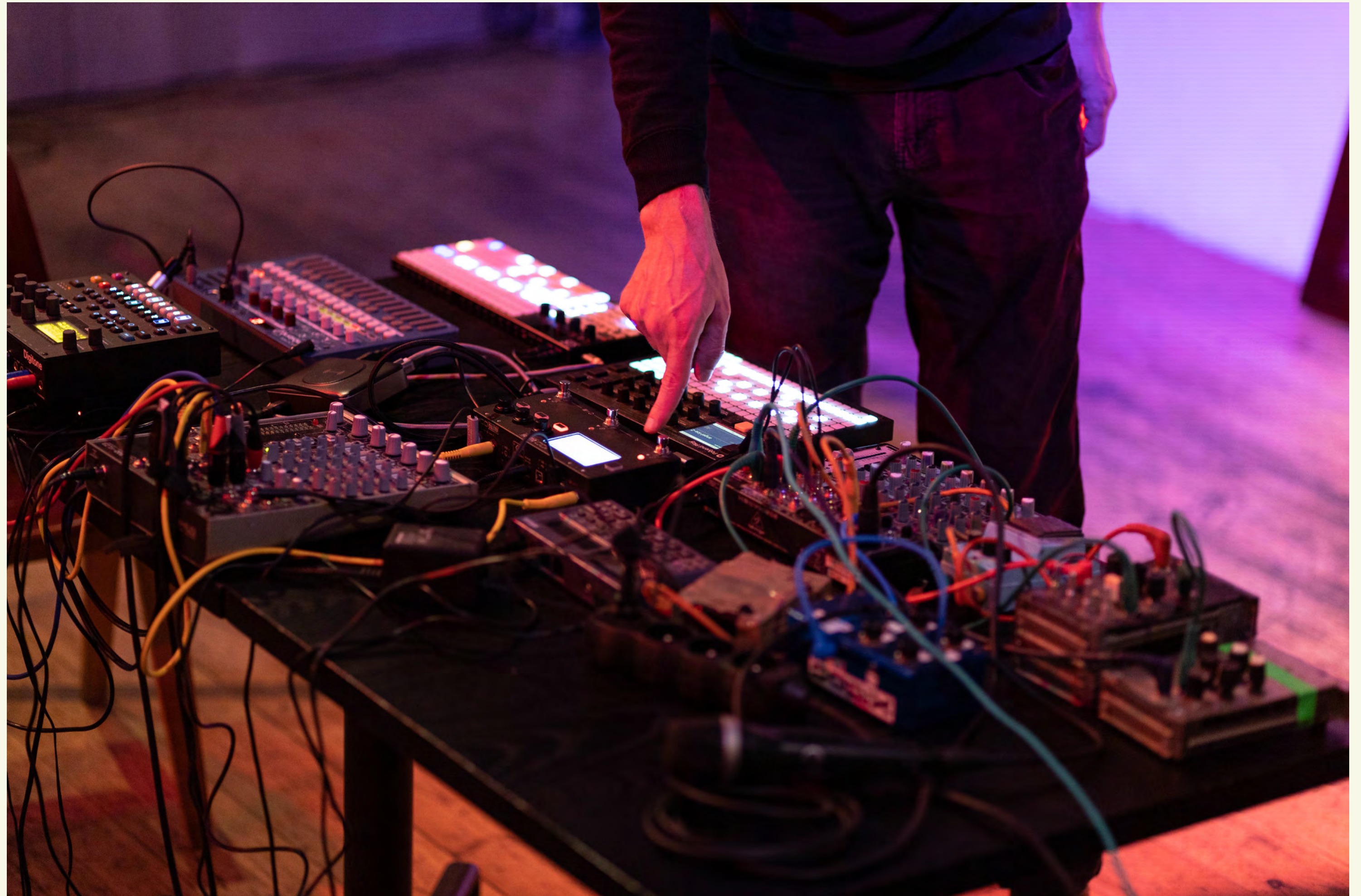


Glitch Tonic: Building an Active Artistic Community

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INTRODUCTION

The monthly Glitch Tonic workshop and meetup series at A4 – Space for Contemporary Culture in Bratislava – was launched in September 2024 to address a specific gap in the local experimental music scene. While festivals and concerts offer presentation opportunities for finished works, there is a lack of opportunities for musicians to open up their processes to the public, share tools, and exchange knowledge in an informal setting. Over ten evenings, the publicly accessible Glitch Tonic events created a space for non-formal collaborative learning and sharing, with the aim to develop a community of practitioners who are, at the

same time, also specialised audiences. Each workshop session invited, on average, three local, regional or foreign artists to demonstrate their creative practices – from modular synth patching and live coding, to prepared piano, VR, and other audiovisual experiments – in front of peers and curious visitors. In total, 29 musicians, composers, and artists presented their creative approaches in a conversational format, with general discussion and Question & Answer sessions as integral parts. Many who first attended as audience members later return as presenters themselves, supporting a culture of exchange and mutual learning.



From Interrupted Traditions to DIY Futures

We were motivated to start A4's Glitch Tonic series under conditions of both historical continuity and discontinuity in experimental musical practice. On the one hand, the workshops resonate with the avant-garde legacies of Slovak electronic and electroacoustic music, most notably the work of the Experimental Studio of Slovak Radio established in the 1960s. The studio partook in a larger Central European trend at the time to treat sound research as a quasi-scientific, compositional practice, often within academic and institutional contexts. But this tradition was disrupted: political pressures, infrastructural constraints, and shifting cultural economies allowed only partial continuity, further shaken by generational and societal changes. What exists now is thus not a direct inheritance but a sort of latent memory. Today's musicians operate under radically different conditions – in bedrooms, collective studios, and DIY spaces rather than state-funded studios, and with the mobility afforded by low-cost hardware, open-source software, and globalised networks.

The shift from the institutional studio to the independent “home studio” fundamentally changes the role of the experimental musician. Where the Experimental Studio cultivated the figure of the “composer” as a solitary expert, the scene today thrives more often with collective, live, and performative practices. In this context, Glitch Tonic stresses the embodied character of production: rather than finished works played back from tape, events are streamed to an audience in real time with live improvisations, patches, and workflows. This focus underscores the social dimension of creativity inherent to music: not music as an object but as a situated practice of exchange.

Glitch Tonic strongly emphasises the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos that has underpinned countercultural movements from punk to contemporary experimental electronica. DIY culture is not simply a matter of resourcefulness or self-reliance but of specific values: autonomy, resistance to commodification,

and the valorisation of local, situated knowledge types. As Brian Tucker (2012: 211) contends, DIY spaces enable “popular knowledges” – particular, embodied knowledge forms frequently barred from institutional discourse yet at the heart of cultural liveliness. The workshops and meetups thus aim to become such a space: rather than importing universalist pedagogies from academies or conservatories, its goal is to create an environment in which practitioners can teach one another with their own materials and methods. This resonates with Nasim Niknafs' (2018) ideal of “punk pedagogy”, in which music education is anarchist, anti-hierarchical, and mutual aid based. Participants are simultaneously teachers and students, embodying what Vlad Glăveanu (2020) describes as the distributed and relational nature of creativity.

With reference to sociocultural theories of creativity and learning, Glitch Tonic illustrates how creativity is always socially, materially, and psychologically co-constructed (Glăveanu, 2020; Sawyer, 2012). Education does not come in the form of the abstract lesson, but as exposure to the creative ecologies of other artists: their software, hardware, modular setups, coding languages, and idiosyncratic improvisational practices. One participant commented that “collaborative live coding opened up completely new possibilities,” and said that they “now use Ableton more for live performance.” Such remarks demonstrate that being exposed to alternative methods can rewire one's own practice, bearing witness to the fact that learning in experimental music is frequently accomplished through embodied demonstration, discussion, and inspiration, rather than with a prescriptive curriculum.

Glitch Tonic also has an implicit political dimension. By operating outside of mainstream music culture and bypassing traditional conservatory establishments, it enacts a subtle resistance: against commodification, stultified infrastructures, and outmoded pedagogies. The project promotes creation as a

critical practice: challenging conventions, stretching the possibilities of sound, and reasserting the value of creative freedom in a context too often determined by commercial rationales and by institutional inertia. In this sense, it is equal to general discourses of cultural resistance and anti-capitalist aesthetics, where experimental art practice is used as a lab to imagine alternatives. In providing audiences not only with finished products but also with a window onto creative processes, the series emphasises the agency of active cultural participation as a driver of resilience. This pilot project reaffirmed that audience development is not always a matter of numbers but of agency: individuals depart with tools, competences, and orientations that allow them to navigate societal instability, whether in the cultural sector, in life, or in the ecological and political spheres that define our era.

In this way, the Glitch Tonic event series finds itself at the intersection of innovation and tradition, art and pedagogy, performance, and politics. It highlights how DIY, grassroots initiatives in experimental music can be catalysts for audience activation, collective imagination, and readiness for change, and thus vital contributors to a cultural ecosystem that must be adaptive in a time of climate crisis, digital acceleration, and social precarity.

Evaluation and Impact

In the post-event surveys, we gathered 21 responses that give a nuanced picture of their reach and impact. Participants were predominantly in the 31–45 age range (11 out of 21), with 6 respondents aged 19–30, three between 46–50, and one over 50. This shows that while the core group consisted of mid-career practitioners, younger musicians were also present, pointing to potential generational renewal. Roles were split evenly between visitors, presenters, and those who were both, underlining that Glitch Tonic blurred the traditional performer-audience divide. Attendance patterns reveal a balance between

newcomers and returnees: 9 came only once, but the majority attended 2–4 times, and one participant was present almost every session (8–10).

Nearly all participants reported learning or being inspired by something concrete in the programme. Some pointed to practical techniques (“using Ableton more for live performance,” “polyphony tricks, chopping layers”), others to broader artistic inspiration (“collab live coding showed me completely new possibilities,” “it made me listen differently and experiment with concepts”), and many valued exposure to alternative artistic mindsets (“It’s always valuable to see another approach to music, new perspectives, new horizons”). Standout presentations included Katov syn(th)’s modulators, prepared piano with interactive electronics by Darina Žurková, Tittingur’s uncompromising software performance setup, and the more provocative “porn transformed into music” live coding project by Bolka.

Beyond technical takeaways, the Glitch Tonic series had a remarkable impact on individual motivation and creativity. For some, it was the reassurance that “what I do can have an audience,” for others it was a rare opportunity to “just experiment again, something I hadn’t done since university.” Participants noted that seeing other artists’ processes and hearing their backstories made them more open to risk-taking: “I saw different approaches and mindsets, and I’m now more open to experiment and produce.” One respondent summed it up simply: “The presentations were very inspiring and above all motivating.” Such testimonies show that the series helps to sustain and re-energise artistic motivation in ways that extend beyond the sessions themselves.

Glitch Tonic facilitated both informal encounters and the sense of belonging to a larger community. One participant highlighted meeting artist Alica Volf at her presentation – an encounter that not only broadened their network but

later led to an invitation for her to perform at Rezoné concerts, focusing on spatial audio. Others reflected on the potential of the series to build a stronger ecosystem: “Often we don’t even know about each other as authors. With proper support, a fairly cohesive community of artists could be created. Even if names are repeated, it would be interesting to observe the shifts in their work.” This illustrates how Glitch Tonic serves as a platform for visibility and mutual recognition, while also hinting at opportunities for more structured collaboration.

Although only 6 of 21 respondents reported gaining new contacts or forming collaborations, the symbolic and social value of the gatherings is evident. Many expressed that “just the fact that we met is a foundation – I consider music inherently social.” Others emphasised that similar formats had been missing in Slovakia and that Glitch Tonic helped to fill this gap. At the same time, some participants voiced concerns about the intergenerational imbalance in the community: “The experimental music community in Bratislava is connected to a breathing machine in artificial sleep since I see less interest from younger generations.” This suggests that while the series was successful in mobilising a core group of practitioners, more deliberate strategies are needed to attract and support younger audiences and creators.

Importantly, every single respondent said they wanted the series to continue. Suggestions for the future are concrete and consistent: adding hands-on workshops alongside presentations, improving promotion and documentation (such as publishing short video excerpts online), and strengthening the facilitation of networking to make collaboration easier. Several participants also called for more engagement of younger and less experienced musicians in order to broaden the demographic base of events and ensure continuity.



INTERVIEW WITH THE ORGANISERS

What inspired the creation of Glitch Tonic? Was there a specific gap or need in the local experimental music and sound art scene that you wanted to address?

Slávo Krekovič (SK): At the beginning, there was an idea of a community meetup format to share practical creative procedures for practitioners in the field of sound experimentation, which would also seek and create an audience interested in this type of work. This need responded to several other needs that arose over the years organising concerts and workshops at A4. Firstly there was a gap in formal education in the experimental music sphere (whether we are talking about conservatories or universities in Slovakia), then an absence of space for informal exchanges of experience in an otherwise very individualised segment despite having a lot of diverse and idiosyncratic approaches to practical music creation, and finally there was a need for a kind of platform to address the social aspect and develop a community. We could not yet estimate the success of the outcomes, which is why we decided to conceive them through a pilot study with the aim of testing the new format and the potential development of an active community for creators and those interested in sound and other media innovations. We were inspired by presentation evenings such as international dorkbot events and meetups regularly held in some cities by enthusiasts of various programming languages or sound technologies, such as modular synthesisers. We also followed up on our own Gucha presentation series from many years ago, which focused on artists working in the more broadly defined environment of New Media Art. However, A4’s focus on musical experimentation has been a long-term endeavour since 2004, producing several educational activities (music programming courses, live coding, basics of modular synthesis, etc.) – so there was already a good foundation in this discipline.

Aleksandra Gudkova (AG): It is important for this event to remain open, informal, and free from rigid structure, because otherwise it would lose its purpose of providing a different environment from institutional education. We wanted not only to enrich the community, but also to provide a space for students who do not have the opportunity to learn experimental methods in schools or institutions, due to conservatism and a focus on standard practices and repeated patterns rather than individuality and experimentation. For me, as a former student of classical composition, such meetings were not only an enrichment of knowledge – although the variety and uniqueness of each artist’s creative process provide a broad perspective on possible approaches – but also a chance to join the community.

Why was the combination of artist talks, setup demonstrations, and open discussion chosen as the main structure? Was there a thematic curation or was it more spontaneous?

AG: The structure of the monthly Glitch Tonic meetups was a combination of artist talks, setup demonstrations, and open discussions, although these parts were often mixed rather than kept in order. Usually, the structure changed depending on the artist. Some were more interactive with the audience, while others were more shy – it varied. Speaking of inviting artists, we tried to invite as many local artists as we could, but not everyone agreed to talk or had the time and willingness to come. Regardless, many still came and were excited to be part of these community meetups.

The presentations had a non-formal and cozy atmosphere, which helped build a closer connection between the artists and participants, and in turn supported their educational aspect. It is easier to be an active participant when there is no pressure and no obligation to take part. On the artists’ side, such an atmosphere can help them feel more comfortable in a role or environment that may not be very familiar.

SK: Curating was more focused on diversity in terms of genre, instruments, and gender than on thematic areas. First, we made a list of people who are already active in the experimental scene and have something to show. We were particularly interested in the aspect of personal “setups” used in concert playing. It turned out that the creative techniques and tools of these artists are really very diverse: from hardware to software or from programming and live coding through homemade instrument manufacturing to “tweaking” and “détournement” of commercially available devices. We had several dozen creators on the list – a number that was surprisingly high. We prioritised addressing female creators, but we soon encountered certain limitations; for example, many active artists from our list live abroad. When inspiring foreign guests appeared elsewhere in Bratislava, we took advantage of the opportunity and invited them to present their approaches at A4. In terms of structure, we wanted to keep it as informal as possible, so short presentations alternated with audience discussion and practical demonstrations of the gear or techniques when possible.

What audiences come to these workshops – are they mostly active artists, students, hobbyists, or people simply curious about sound art? Have you noticed collaborations or new projects emerging as a result of these gatherings?

AG: The participants varied from time to time. Some people came regularly, while others came just once. Most of them were engaged in either arts or culture, but their interests were wide-ranging. Some artists also became regular attendees after their presentations, which complemented the idea of building a community. New connections were made within the meetups, which in some cases led to collaborations and new projects.

SK: We wanted to keep focusing on the experimental music aspect, but at the same time we wanted – in addition

to arousing interest among the wider public – to invite speakers from various backgrounds, such as “official” music composition, DIY culture, noise, and also overlaps with club music. One of the leitmotifs was therefore also the goal of connecting different scenes and building inter-sectoral (and perhaps inter-generational) connections. However, the common denominator was always the mindset of experimenting with sound, perception, performative possibilities, creative search, and testing new means of expression. Although we also encouraged participants to share work-in-progress, this happened only in a few cases. They were mostly sharing their current live setups or finished track arrangements.

Do you see this series as part of a larger trend, in Eastern/Central Europe, of community-based experimental music initiatives? How do you balance showcasing technical knowledge with encouraging creative risk-taking?

SK: There is a growing cluster of DIY and community-driven experimental music initiatives across Central and Eastern Europe. For instance, Synth Library Prague has become a centre for do-it-yourself education and access to sound synthesis, LOM space in Bratislava hosts workshops and gatherings revolving around field recording and home-brewed instruments, and OTTOsonics collective in Ottensheim focuses on activities around DIY spatial sound. Glitch Tonic responds to this broader trend by emphasising participatory learning and a form of punk pedagogy – anti-hierarchical, accessible, and collaborative – in response to the specific situation of Bratislava, where the experimental music scene is still vibrant but scattered, often without continuity, or proper educational and institutional support.

As far as the balance of technical proficiency and creative risk-taking goes, this varied from session to session: some speakers moved in the direction of demonstrating hardware setups or software processes, while others took

on conceptual challenges or mixed performance strategies. Diversity itself was the power – even when focusing more heavily on the technical side or more on concepts, participants always seemed to find it encouraging. This is a broader notion found in technological innovation: that experimentation in music innovation arises not only from instrument learning, but from risk-taking, work-in-progress sharing and brainstorming new possibilities collaboratively.

What did you personally take away from this particular session? Did the meetup change your perspective of your own artistic practice? What emotions did you leave with at the end of the night?

AG: I’m glad that it happened and that I was part of it. I was able to meet and listen to many artists, and perhaps through co-organising I contributed to the local scene and community. I also learned many new techniques and heard a lot of creative ideas. It was inspiring to see individuality and boldness in every artist and their methods.

SK: I consider it a successful cycle of events and in some ways, I think that we managed to overcome the individualism rooted in the local creative community. I don’t think we’ve ever shared experiences to such an extent in Bratislava and talked about how creators actually do it. I’m very happy that it went well – based on the responses from the final survey, the attendees would like the series to be continued.

Conclusion

As a pilot, the Glitch Tonic workshops demonstrated that small-scale, community-driven initiatives can make a disproportionate difference in fragile artistic ecosystems. It broadened horizons, shifted practices, gave visibility to local people, and reinforced the sense of a community that often feels scattered or vulnerable. For individuals, it re-ignited creative motivation, confirmed the value of experimentation, and offered inspiration for participants to take back into their

own work. For the community, it generated new contacts, seeded collaborations, and provided a rare social platform for visibility and recognition. By combining informal learning, diversity of content, and creating porous boundaries between stage and floor, Glitch Tonic establishes a model that is both replicable and scalable: an audience development tool that works precisely because it prioritises openness, exchange, and shared discovery.

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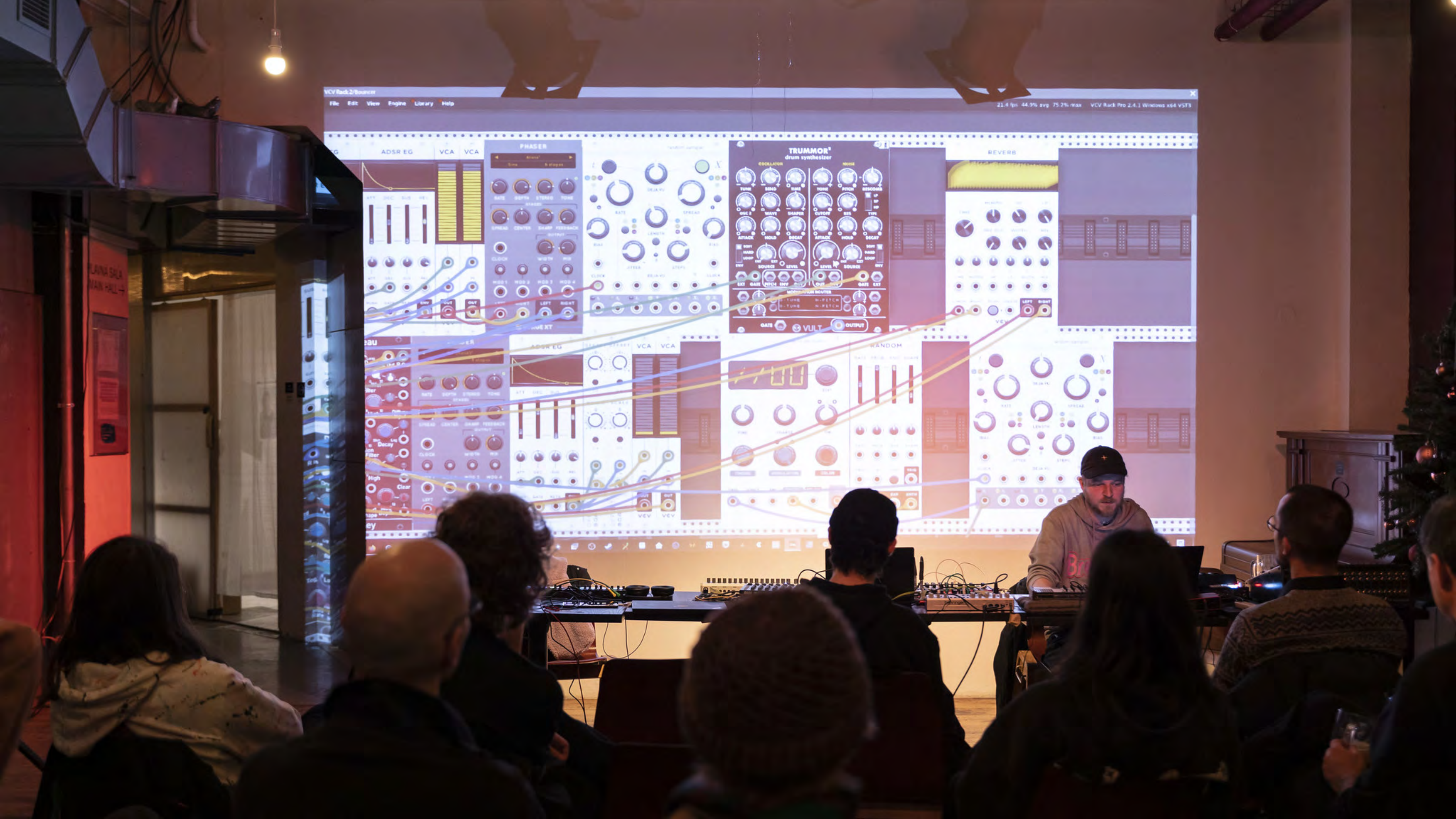
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Artists presenting at Glitch Tonic (September 2024 – June 2025)

Adela Mede, Aleksandra Gudkova, Alica Volf, Andrej Danóczi, Bolka, Boris Vitázek, Darina Žurková, DIMM, Dominik Suchý, Dominik Novák, Drakh, Erik Pánči, Fero Király, Gabriela Bezáková, Hlukár, Kodiki, Koleso nešťastia, Lukáš Medlen, Makkatu, Manka Lustigová, ON_DRWEJ, Ondrej Zajac, Pjoni, RBNX, Samčo, brat dážd’oviek, Samo Hvozdič, Slávo Krekovič, Tomo Michalčák, Urbanfailure





CONTEXT

This text is one of the pilot studies of *Re-Imagine Europe: New Perspectives for Action*. In these contributions we explore and reflect on artistic practices and experimental approaches in the cultural field that can engage and activate audiences and communities to address ecological, social, and political challenges. The pilot studies provide an overview of practices of cultural organisations that can serve as models, recipes, or tools for transformation for current and future generations of cultural workers and artists.

Re-Imagine Europe: New Perspectives for Action (2023–2027) is a four-year transnational co-creation and circulation project of fourteen interdisciplinary art organisations across Europe. The project aims to equip and empower young Europeans through artistic practices to better withstand societal challenges triggered by rapid climate change.

The Re-Imagine Europe partnership is a collaboration of: Paradiso^(NL), Sonic Acts^(NL), Elevate Festival^(AT), INA grm^(FR), A4^(SK), Borealis^(NO), KONTEJNER^(HR), BEK^(NO), RUPERT^(LT), Disruption Network Lab^(DE), Semibreve^(PT), Parco Arte Vivente^(IT), Kontrapunkt^(MK) and Radio Web MACBA^(ES).

BIOGRAPHY

Aleksandra Gudkova is a composer and sound artist based in Slovakia. She is active in the local music scene and interested in contemporary and experimental approaches, often combining acoustic and electronic elements.

Slávo Krekovič is a musician and sound artist, musicologist, music and media art curator, and cultural organiser. He studied Musicology and Sonology, is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of NEXT Festival of Advanced Music and A4 Space of Contemporary Culture in Bratislava. From 2013 to 2017, he was the Head of Multimedia study programme at the Faculty of Fine Arts (FaVU) at Brno University of Technology. As a creator of interactive sound installations, Krekovič performs with electronic and interactive musical instruments solo or in collaborations. His artistic interests encompass generativity, complexity, human-machine interaction, as well as gestural control and improvisation using custom software and various hardware devices.

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