

Adventurous broadcasters in Poland, Hungary, Estonia and Finland unite on the Easterndaze platform to disrupt the Western focus of the global music network.  
By Miloš Hroch



Lahmacun Radio crew at Easterndaze x Berlin, 2021

“Although at least geographically, underground music scenes in Central or Eastern Europe are very close to each other, the awareness about each other is often lacking,” declares the Slovak music journalist Lucia Udvardyová, who has been trying to reverse the situation. That was the premise of the Easterndaze platform she established with Peter Gonda in 2010. Since then, Udvardyová has been travelling around Eastern European countries and reporting from the front lines.

In April 2021, she initiated a unique radio and social experiment at Easterndaze x Berlin, as part of the festival she has co-run in the city since 2016, where several independent community stations joined forces for a collaborative broadcast on Berlin’s Cashmere Radio.

Entitled Easterndaze On Air, this Community Radio Week stimulated a lively dialogue between representatives of the music underground from former Eastern Bloc countries. It brought together Radio Kapital from Poland, Lahmacun Radio from Hungary, and IDA Radio from Tallinn/Helsinki. All these stations are DIY – or more precisely do-it-together – and based on non-hierarchical principles.

Mixing diverse music with politics, they function as megaphones for local producers, promoters and bands. For Kapital, community radio is the voice of resistance, so you can tune into feminist punk singer Siksa’s spoken word programme *PIOSENKARKA*, or the self-titled show of Oramics, an emancipatory collective supporting unheard voices in electronic music. IDA switches between two cities and different moods, mainly digging into club tunes and techno. Lahmacun has the rawest edge with its daily blasts of hardcore punk, harsh noise and weird rock.

Hosts from different stations co-created the Easterndaze broadcasts, rotating each other’s shows via participating stations the whole week. “It

was an effort to connect regions that face similar problems and can learn from each other,” explains Udvardyová. The hot issues of the day are funding, radio know-how and the struggle against oppressive far-right governments.

During its week of programmes, Radio Kapital imagined community radio as a much needed safe space at a time when freedom of speech is limited and human rights are under threat in Poland. Lahmacun Radio contested the possibilities of radio storytelling, and instead of a showcase, they created a surreal dystopian radio play about today’s Budapest underground, where darkwave meets messy noise-punk. Some hosts played with radiophonic techniques or experimental electronics; others transposed the marching atmosphere of street protests to the broadcast.

“This is a new type of radio closely tight to the local scene. It’s a relatively low threshold and democratic medium that anyone can get into,” observes Udvardyová. “I was fascinated by radio as a format because you work with the sound.” In the late 2000s, Udvardyová presented a show on London’s Resonance FM introducing Prague’s sound art scene; she now hosts an Easterndaze show at the politically active Radio Cashmere in Berlin. She also worked at Czech Radio for many years. Compared with public service broadcasting, community radios are “free space to experiment, the crazier, the better”.

The Easterndaze week required months of regular coordination meetings. “By providing exchange and sharing air space, we tried to break down the idea that a radio stops when the frequency or website is changed,” explains Daniel Gottlieb from Cashmere Radio, which is run by more than a hundred volunteers broadcasting in multiple languages from all over the world. He considers the scale of the achievement: “The mere fact that several radios

opened themselves up to sharing each other’s streams was a great radio experiment. During the Community Radio Week, we have learned about a fuckload of amazing radio throughout Europe.”

The collaborative broadcast reflects new connections in music and sound that are starting to take shape across Eastern Europe. As global currents are changing, the alliance between Kapital, Lahmacun and IDA presents a notable roadmap of sounds and places to discover.

Nevertheless, independent and underground broadcasters from Central and Eastern European countries are still disadvantaged. “It is different when you’re from a territory which is a bit suppressed,” commented the representative of IDA, in a streamed discussion with members of Cashmere, Kapital and Lahmacun. Nomadic journalist Udvardyová puts it thus: “Survival is complicated, the cultural funding and infrastructure are incomparably smaller than in Western Europe. If you want to do things that are different from mainstream production, you often have to do them for free.”

In time, such alliances might help to shift focus in global underground music networks away from the Western Europe that dominates attention. This is why the people at Cashmere Radio, which is run chiefly “by non-Germans in Germany”, are trying to keep this radio alliance going. Discussions for the post-pandemic future are already taking place.

These include plans for a weekly exchange wherein radio stations live-stream each other. On site residencies and exchange programmes are also mooted. “I think this is a wake-up call about a general tendency to allow radio to be banal, [and] just another kind of platform to stream DJ sets. This isn’t sufficient anymore,” declares Gottlieb. “The way people have turned to radio for a kind of virtual touch confirms this.” □ [easterndaze.net](http://easterndaze.net)

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