

THE NEW BOSSES 2026: ANDREA BLAHOVÁ | HEARTNOIZE PROMOTION/POHODA FESTIVAL



Blahová is a Slovak live music production manager based in Prague, active across the Czech and Slovak alternative circuit

By Lisa Henderson | 30 July 2026

Andrea Blahová is a Slovak live music production manager based in Prague, active across the Czech and Slovak alternative circuit. Since 2023, she has worked with Heartnoize Promotion, an independent promoters' collective, on advancing and technical production for concert series including Heartnoize, glitter.hit and Šelest, becoming a shareholder in June 2026.

In 2023, she started as artist hospitality manager at Pohoda Festival, where she coordinates a 30-member backstage team and translates riders into reality on site. Since 2022, she has taken on production, hospitality and stage management roles at different festivals including Grape Festival, Rock for People, Alternativa festival and Žižkovská noc.

What has been your career highlight so far?

It's honestly hard to single out one highlight. Landing the artist hospitality manager role at Pohoda Festival has been a major milestone in my life and a real teenage dream come true. It still feels surreal to be preparing backstages for such iconic names as Iggy Pop, The Cure, Caroline Polachek, Fontaines D.C., plus a lot of newer breaking acts. Being nominated for New Kid on the Block 2024 at the European Festival Awards on top of that was an unexpected and very motivating bonus.

Some of my favourite moments, though, keep happening on a smaller scale with Heartnoize, especially the intimate shows we do in unusual spaces on the edges of Prague – like Claire Rousay at the 1930s Winternitz Villa or Alan Sparhawk in the 1980s cultural centre Kulturní dům Krakov. It's always amazing to me to see these spaces turn into temporary venues with a completely unique atmosphere for the audience.

What's the most challenging aspect of your jobs?

The most challenging part is constantly switching between multiple roles and projects while trying to

manage my own time in a sustainable way. I work mostly in the independent scene, where funding is often fragile, so many of us take on several jobs across the year to stay financially stable.



That means I'm juggling advancing, on-site production, hospitality, and admin often for different teams at the same time. Each project (and sometimes each show) has its own dynamic, and things can change very quickly, so a lot of work happens ad hoc. Balancing all that while trying not to burn out is an ongoing task.

What advice would you give the next generation of the live music sector?

Don't compromise on your values, even if it feels easier in the short term. If you see harassment, exclusion, unethical practices, or unfair pay, say it out loud and back up the people around you who are affected, even when it means pushing back against people above you. The scene doesn't change if we pretend everything is fine.

And also, don't underestimate what one sincere email can do – reach out to festivals and promoters whose work you admire, even if it feels “too big” or out of reach. I ended up at Pohoda because I sent one email of two short paragraphs.

What would you like artists, fans, and other music industry professionals to learn about the music markets in Slovakia and Czechia?

I personally think it's important to talk openly about how the conditions for independent culture in Slovakia and Czechia have been changing, because these shifts directly shape what artists and organisers are able to do.

In Slovakia, developments around the Slovak Arts Council over the past few years – from mounting political pressure to shifting priorities and opaque grant procedures – have made long-term planning much harder for independent promoters and smaller festivals. The problem isn't only “less money”; it's the loss of stability: projects are suddenly dependent on a single grant cycle or political turn, which narrows the room for artistic and organisational risk.

In Czechia, funding struggles are increasingly becoming a reality as well. At the same time, a growing tension around public broadcasting and cultural institutions – debates over the role and financing of radio and television, and over the kinds of content they should prioritise – is becoming more closely intertwined with political power. When public media face pressure over what can or cannot be aired, and when programming or staffing decisions risk being influenced by parties in government, it raises real concerns about censorship and about who gets to shape the cultural narrative.

Which breaking acts in Slovakia and Czechia would you recommend that your peers around the world keep an eye on?

Pebble Seven is the project of Slovak singer-songwriter Daša Bulíková (based in Prague). Her debut album *Sheepsong Unlimited* blends elements of experimental pop, alternative R&B and ambient electronica. I personally see her songwriting as brutally intimate and honest, and the way she writes and delivers these songs really resonates with me.

Ida The Young is a Czech indie-folk band with alt-rock and electronic edges and, in my view, one of the key breaking acts in our region. Their work so far – including the EPs *Strange Shaped Flowers* and *Silver Thing* and the later album *Tell Me When You Pass The Sun* has been both critically praised and award-winning. For me, they're a band that deserves everything good coming their way. They recently supported Alan Sparhawk in Prague, and the shout-out they got from Alan felt like exactly the kind of recognition they should be getting more often.

What are your most fruitful avenues for discovering emerging talent?

To be honest, I don't spend my time systematically hunting for emerging artists. A lot of my discoveries come directly through our own bookings – it happens quite often that my colleague David confirms a project I've never heard of or one that only vaguely rings a bell, and once I start

advancing the show or see it live, it becomes a new favourite. I also pay attention to what smaller promoters and clubs are programming.



Across the year we visit showcase festivals like Rewire, MENT, The Great Escape or Unsound, where we check out smaller stages and talk to agents about new names on their rosters. On top of that, I sometimes dip into outlets and radios such as Pitchfork, NTS and KEXP live sessions.

Do you have a mentor or someone you can rely on to bounce ideas off?

I don't have a formal mentor in the traditional sense, but there are a few people whose input I rely on a lot. With my colleague David Čajčík, we sometimes joke about the "mentor" label – in reality, he's someone who has placed a great deal of trust in me, given me space to take on significant responsibility, and built a working relationship where we both challenge each other and test ideas rather than it being a one-way dynamic.

I also draw a lot of inspiration from Paula Poštolková and Barbora Bodnárová. The way they consistently deliver under heavy responsibility and manage substantial workloads is something I truly respect and aspire to.

Throughout the coming weeks, IQ will publish a profile from the 19th class of New Bosses each day, highlighting a slate of the most promising 30-and-unders in the international live music business. The list is featured in [IQ 146](#), which is now available to read online and in print for subscribers.

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Villazón is a talent buyer based in Bogotá, Colombia, specialising in international touring, artist development and audience growth



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