

From mxd.dk: Meet Laura Snapes, curator of MXD's Superball at Spot Festival 2017



Laura Snapes is a British culture critic for media like The Guardian, Observer, Financial Times, Pitchfork, NPR, MTV and Uncut, and MXD has invited her this year to curate our day stage at SPOT 2017, "MXD's Superball", taking place at Radar Saturday, May 6th between 12-3pm.

Laura will be selecting 3 bands of this year's Spot line-up to play this extra show, where MXD will also be hosting its yearly networking platform with the international industry delegation, alongside some drinks and food, festival style.

Get to know a bit more about Laura below:

Hi Laura, thanks so much for being part of Spot Festival this year and for taking the time to listen to all bands to curate the MXD stage on Saturday, we are extremely excited to have you on board and to have a listen to the acts you have picked from this year's line up. A few questions for you so Spot attendees can get to know you a bit:

Music is all around us, but if you had to point out a specific moment which in your

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memory drove you to actually sit down and want to write about it what would it be?

I don't remember the specific moment, but I used to love listening to pop stars being interviewed on the radio. Around age 11 or 12, it struck me that that was an actual job, whether on the radio or in magazines - being "an interviewer", as I thought it was called then - and one that I wanted to do.

Some of us have been swept away by a few artists that re-shaped our ears in how we listen from there on to music, like a brain reset or gateway to a further understanding of compositions, poetry and their specific combination. Have you experienced this and if so, can you tell us a bit about it and the artist(s)?

I was thinking about this recently. I really love Americana music, and I think that probably stems back to The Cardigans' 2003 album, Long Gone Before Daylight. I always loved that band, but I remember being 14 and feeling thunderstruck by this style of music that I'd never really heard before. Funny that I got into Americana via a group of Swedes! Listening to Aphex Twin in my late teens got me into ambient and dance music; I think Tegan and Sara's album Heartthrob made me appreciate pop again for the first time since my early teens.

You are currently a freelance journalist working for some of the top media both in Europe and the US focused on music and culture. Can you give us a 3-5 line rundown on how it started from your first job to where you are today?

Started working at NME in 2010 as assistant reviews editor; got headhunted by Pitchfork to be an associate editor in 2012; went back to NME as features editor in 2013; left NME to go freelance (and become a Pitchfork contributing editor) in 2015. Now I am purely freelance!

We have encountered the "Scandinavian sound" reference a lot, alongside words like melancholy, pain and sparse. In your own words, can you define your own understanding of what that much talked about Scandinavian sound is? (is it really something of relevance, or just a box?)

Melancholy really isn't my experience of Scandinavian music. I think, when it comes to pop, that there's a sharpness and use of treble that's really distinctive. And my all-time favourite Scandi artist is Jens Lekman, who balances sharp wit and whimsical arrangements in a way that can't be beat.

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While on the subject, when you do receive a Scandinavian album/EP on your desk/email, do you feel you have a small preconception of whats to come out of your speakers? And if so, is this a good or a bad thing in your eyes?

I don't really, and that's a good thing.

Labels and managers are very busy for months creating different assets for artists, their releases and their tours. When you are about to write on an act or artist, do you feel their assets (like biography, fotos, cover art, videos, etc.) or even their record label choice have any influence on how you later on listen to their music?

When there's too much music to listen to and cover, image definitely plays a part in getting you to listen to something. In a sea of promos full of unknown names, it's a recognisable record label or cool photo that will catch your eye. Once I've chosen to write about something, an artist's aesthetic, if it's carefully done, will usually factor into the overall message that they're trying to convey with their music, so yes, I think it all matters, even if it's subconscious.

Success in the arts is a rather controversial and variable theme, and artistic success doesn't always come along with commercial success for musicians. From your experience on the tastemaker and journalistic side of things, how much does either one really influence the journalistic community when writing about new music from established or upcoming artists? And by contrast, how much should journalism help dictate these two very different success measures?

I think journalism has become less influential in breaking new artists over the last five years or so. Streaming and radio are much more influential than any one writer can be. Around 2010, 2011, there was really a culture of "first!" online - i.e. the first place to cover an artist could claim to have broken them, there was an element of kudos to that, and other places would immediately scramble to copy them so they remained ahead of the curve. But that's no longer the case, thankfully (also possibly due to the case of Lana Del Rey, who appeared like an organic success but actually turned out to have a big label machine behind her), and new music coverage doesn't have as much cache at the moment. Which is sad when there's no good places to write about new acts - but especially online, publications are competing for ad revenue, so they have to fill their pages with recognisable acts.

Journalism has changed for the last two decades due to technology and the

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changing nature of our communication. What do you think are the place and the responsibility of the culture journalist of today?

To be curious and searching, and still look for new, forward-thinking acts even if there's not always the space to cover them. To present and criticise artists fairly, examining them for what they are rather than what they're not.

A personal one; do you think women listen to music, or see a painting or a film, with a different sensitivity that men do? And if so, do you think this has a positive impact in the way women do cultural journalism?

I think everyone listens to music differently, I don't see it as a gender thing. But I do think that the best music critics in the world right now are young women, so...!

I have to ask, top 5 Danish (or Scandinavian) acts in your book?

Jens Lekman

Robyn

Iceage

Jenny Hval

ABBA

For more background and links to Laura's work, you can read more [here](#)