

THE WIRE 420 | FEBRUARY 2019

# WI RE

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McPhee**  
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A user's guide to

**TUAREG GUITAR**

**MICHAEL SNOW | STEVE GUNN**

**Brunhild Ferrari | Kate Bush | Rustin Man**

**Zaïmph | AEOC on ECM | Mute Records**

**+ 35 pages of reviews**

Joe McPhee | Tuareg guitar | Michael Snow | Steve Gunn

for the past 3000 years”, and you’re reminded how in such mighty roars he’s at his best, all claims to immortality suddenly plausible, a perfect match for the more cryptic and possibly dystopian visions of Cyrus Malachi. Individually awesome, collectively untouchable.

#### JID

##### *DiCaprio 2*

Dreamville DL

It’s an easy and often irresistible pleasure to get caught up in what a fantastic rapper JID is, the sheer joy audible in the infectious buoyancy of his flow. In short doses that’s enough. The appropriately titled “Slick Talk” and “151 Rum” feel like a spirited, spontaneous return to hip-hop fundamentals, big bass and colourful, fascinating logorrhea. Once the starpower dazzle fades, it’s not always obvious who he is, but the lack of easy answers makes him interesting enough for now. He’s straight edge enough to suck up to his boss J Cole with a song like “Off Da Zoinkys” but not so militant he won’t invite Method Man round and get lifted for “Hot Box”. On “Despacito Too” he laughs, “I can be what I want to be”, and it’s still as much question as answer.

#### Maxsta

##### *Maxstape 2*

Electric City DL

You have to feel for Maxsta’s timing, too young for the original grime generation and just a little too late for the big commercial push at the turn of the decade, he released three generic singles on RCA subsidiary Just Jam between 2012–13 just as Skepta was declaring that wave finished. Thankfully grime loves a prodigal, and on this form Maxsta deserves a generous hearing. “Helicoptaz” is brutally sharp like prime Ruff Sqwad, “Badmanism” switches explicit beats for agitated ambience in an imaginative shift that would do Trim proud. But it’s on the relatively straightforward reflection of “Off To Work” that he really shines, chasing something that might not exist and concluding, reasonably enough, “There’s a lot worse than trying to get rich”.

#### Meek Mill

##### *Championships*

MMG/Atlantic CD/DL

There’s a temptation to be cynical when faced with Meek Mill’s *Championships*, his first since becoming an inadvertent but genuinely righteous crusader for reform of the US criminal justice system. How would an artist hitherto best known as Rick Ross’s anonymous weedcarrier and for his bland paeans to all that is sinful in the American dream carry this new gravitas? Quite lightly, as it happens. Alongside the regulation top notch ignorant fluff of “Tic Tac Toe” with Kodak Black and “On Me” with Cardi B, there’s a brace of humble attempts to get his head round his situation, tracks like “Trauma”

and “Oodles O’ Noodles Babies”, brilliantly nuanced performances where Meek wavers on the edge between uncommon restraint and a violent simmer. Jay-Z showing up on “What’s Free” to boast about tax avoidance brings everything back into perspective.

#### P Nut & Carns Hill

##### *CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)*

Carns Hill DL

Like the ladies stage at the 2018 Wireless festival, *CBT* arrives as if an afterthought as the year winds down, subverting expectations with perhaps not quite as much ceremony as it deserves. Grown man drill from a woman who raps and sings like Tricky and Martina Topley-Bird were the same person, spraying granola on “Problem”, wrapping hard boasts of bad bitches into coy seductions with a few wistful melodies in “The Man”. An occasionally stunning but vital reminder that all the chat about UK drill to date is premature, that we’re only just starting to see where this generation might go.

#### Remtrex

##### *Bars From The Pen*

Fifth Ent Ltd DL

If he’s remembered for nothing else it would be a crying shame if history had no place to recall that Remtrex, under his birth name Demehl Thomas, became one of the first two inmates in the UK to be charged under the 1952 Prison Act with “making an unauthorised sound recording in prison”. Said and similarly dubiously criminal acts form the foundation on which *Bars From The Pen* is built, a schizophrenic set at times so penitent you hear the hours spent rehearsing for a parole board, at times defiant almost to oblivion. The introverted cuts are generally more convincing, the clarity and urgency of his philosophising on “How It Goes” and “Decisions Decisions” is the compulsive sound of impulsive reflection to the point of just a little too much clarity.

#### Yxng Bane

##### *HBK*

Disturbing London DL

It’s hard to imagine a more perfect home for Yxng Bane than Tinie Tempah’s *Disturbing London*. The two operate from a similar space where underground seems as much purgatory as promised land, with a shared affinity for pop with whatever raw materials are to hand. In most other respects Bane is leagues ahead of where Tinie was at this stage, more assured over a whole range of modes, from the screwface of “Squeezeface” and “Trap” and “HBK Flow” to the vaseline romance of “Loving You”. Generational shifts help, where grime was diluted by mainstream aspirations the afro-trap-swing wave which Yxng Bane represents is fulfilled by them. It’s all natural, to the point where Bane sounds like he was born crooning the gentle melodic swirl and bounce of “On My Mind” and “Needed Time”. □

## Jazz & Improv by Stewart Smith

#### José Lencastre Nau Quartet

##### *Eudaimonia*

FMR CD/DL

Led by saxophonist José Lencastre, Nau Quartet feature João Lencastre on drums, Rodrigo Pinheiro on piano and Hernâni Faustino on double bass. The Lisbon group’s 2017 debut *Fragments Of Always* achieved a fine balance of impressionist improv and tightly coiled free jazz, and on *Eudaimonia* those elements coalesce into rich colours and bold shapes. Based around lowing tenor, arco bass harmonics and lucent piano, the first piece is gorgeously atmospheric. Forms slowly come into view, never fully revealing themselves. The music’s modernist architecture comes through on the second track, with Pinheiro’s morse code piano figures ushering in a jazz based improvisation of shimmering intensity. The pianist brings a classically informed elegance and harmonic expansiveness that works beautifully alongside Lencastre’s gutsy yet spacious drumming and the leader’s controlled alto fire.

#### Nick Malcolm

##### *Real Isn’t Real*

Green Eyes CD/DL

English trumpeter and composer Nick Malcolm returns with an ambitious album encompassing contemporary jazz, free improvisation, popular song and electronica. He’s joined by his regular quartet of pianist Alexander Hawkins, bassist Olie Brice and drummer Ric Yarborough, plus vocalists Emily Wright, Marie Lister, Josienne Clark and Lauren Kinsella. The album’s instrumental “Spirals” are interspersed with compositions tailored to each of the singers. “Spiral I – Assemble” is based around a reflective trumpet theme and a driving groove, setting up Wright’s gracefully airy art song “Floating Earth”. Malcolm’s trumpet conveys an English melancholy reminiscent of Robert Wyatt’s later work. The slinky nu-soul of “Silent Grace”, sung by Lister, finds room for vocoder and a bravura Hawkins solo, while the wistful jazz ballad “Real Isn’t Real” gets a gorgeous, exploratory reading by Kinsella.

#### Paul Khimasia Morgan & Daniel Spicer

##### *Sepertae*

Linear Obsessional DL/MC

The latest in the Linear Obsessional cassette series is a duo set from

two Brighton improvisors. *The Wire* contributor Daniel Spicer plays violin, bugle, bamboo sax and piano, while Paul Khimasia Morgan manipulates an acoustic guitar body with electronics. On the A side, a series of faltering piano trills fades into a long passage of scrapes, hums and electronic apparitions. The smallness of the sounds and the indeterminacy of their sources make for a beguiling experience. The closing minutes find Spicer in an abandoned ballroom, tentatively picking out a plaintive piano melody. The B side is quieter still, breathy cornet tones and creaking strings beneath the sea mist.

#### Paal Nilssen-Love

##### *New Brazilian Funk*

PNL CD/DL

##### *New Japanese Noise*

PNL CD/DL

At the 2018 Roskilde Festival in Denmark, Paal Nilssen-Love unleashed two new bands featuring Brazilian and Japanese players.

*New Brazilian Funk* features Felipe Zenicola of Rio post-punks Chinese Cookie Poets on bass, Méta Méta’s Kiko Dinucci on guitar, and Paulinho Bicolor on cuica. Nilssen-Love’s fellow Norwegian, the veteran free saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, completes the line-up. Nilssen-Love has worked extensively with Brazilian musicians, and this live recording takes his engagement with the country’s musical traditions into wilder, punkier territory. Zenicola’s bass grumbles and twangs like a demonic berimbau, while Bicolor’s frenzied cuica creates an ecstatic counterpoint to Gjerstad’s astrigent staccato whelps. A genuinely exciting and weirdly funky set.

*New Japanese Noise* opens with Nilssen-Love at his most pugilistic, diving into the maelstrom of electronics created by Pain Jerk’s Kohei Gomi and Incapacitants’ Toshiji Mikawa, while the great Akira Sakata rages on alto saxophone. Dinucci’s oddly graceful no wave guitar steers it into a weirder zone of alien electronics and stark percussion.

#### The Noise Eating Monsters

##### *Roaring*

MuteAnt Sounds DL

Alex Ward’s wiggly guitar excursions have always stood out from the contemporary jazz rock crowd by dint of their playful complexity and winning oddness. The second album from his power trio The Noise Eating Monsters certainly roars, but it’s distinguished by a rhythmic intricacy that entirely justifies their citing of Squarepusher as an influence. Drummer Alex Thomas has a nice line in insectoid clicks and tricky sub-divisions, alongside a love of old school metal canters, while baritone saxophonist Tim Hill peppers the deconstructed grooves with raspy blats and nagging riffs. Ward’s playing is scratchy and propulsive, with detours into mysterious chords reminiscent of *Chairs Missing*-era Wire,