

The Lady Has a Point

Our Lady of Broken Souls ****

Marie-Josée Houle (Independent)

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By Fateema Sayani

When Marie-Josée Houle performed during the Michel Tremblay play *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou* at Cube Gallery, someone said, “Edith Piaf is in the house.”

Huh? Houle’s style is much more current. Perhaps the hollerer meant Siouxsie Sioux in The Creatures days with that drippingly sensuous punky singing, but repartees only allow for few words and mainstream references.

Houle’s stirring defiance is all her own on this debut that is equal parts red velvet, expensive booze, vamp and high drama made alive by a pile of instruments including the accordion, stand-up bass, fiddle, mando and that creamy, cabaret-torch voice.

This could be cheesy if writ too large, but Houle reins in the baroque parts, gives it a Québécois folk touch with the song *Marie m’appelle* and even adds a little kick with *Garden Raider*. “You’re so thick... thinking every flower’s yours to pick; yours to prick,” she sings, emphasizing the word prick as if she’s spitting. Grade-school French presumes songs such as *Cale ton verre* and *Blasé d’la vie* are equally pointed.

Marie-Josée Houle’s CD release show is at Le Petit Chicago in Gatineau April 4.