



Marie-Josée Houle
Our Lady Of Broken Souls
Independent

The accordion is a wonderful instrument. Besides the lush and powerful sounds it can create, it is the last remaining instrument of the outsider and untouched by commercialism. I've always been enamored by the accordion and the artists that play them, from **Walter Ostanek** to **Linda McRae** and 'Weird' **Al Yankovic** to **David P Smith**. Now I can add **Marie-Josée Houle** to this list.

Born in Quebec, Houle started playing the accordion at five years of age. Not because her parents loved the instrument but because it was the cheapest thing they could find in Alberta where she grew up. By the time she got through university in Edmonton she had also learned to play the piano, electric bass and saxophone while recording and playing shows with post-modern musak band **The Elevators** and all-girl punk band **Pangina**. Since moving to Ottawa, she has been busy making ugly socks (uglysocks.com), hitting the stage and recording with the likes of **Casey Comeau & the Centretown Wilderness Club**, and producing music for independent filmmakers and local theatre companies.

Now well established in the nation's capital, Houle has released her solo debut *Our Lady of Broken Souls*. The album fuses French cabaret and Québécois folk styles with indie-pop sensibility. Opening with "Three Red Beads" there is an immediate connection with the wonderful blend of Houle's vocal and accordion skills. The album then moves on to "Marie m'appelle", sung in French. I have little to no idea what it is about but it moves me none the less. All of Houle's songs have a feel that would be welcome in my kitchen at the next family gathering, or shared intimately with a lover in the tavern of my mind that is still smoky and occasionally contains the outbursts of some raving lunatic philosopher type.

There will be a day when I host the largest gathering of the new wave of artists embracing the accordion. When that day comes I can only hope that Marie-Josée Houle will be available to take the stage alongside all my other favourite accordionists like **Wendy McNeill**, **Anna Bon Bon** and **Geoff Berner**.

By Rob Pingle
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