

Marissa Nadler with Thus Owls – Live at Bar Le Ritz PDB – November 30th, 2018 – Montreal, QC

Every now and then, you get lucky in Montreal. We can have some pretty harsh and cold winters, which always makes going to concerts between November and March a little risky. You never know if you're going to have to slug your way through - 30-degree weather on streets covered in 40CM of snow. But not tonight. On this slightly chilly, but clear night, it was the perfect evening to attend a show at one of my favorite smaller venues in the city, [Bar Le Ritz PDB](#). On the schedule tonight was a show I had been anticipating for a while – [Marissa Nadler](#) with special guests, Montreal's own [Thus Owls](#).

As my wife and I walked into the venue, Thus Owls were onstage sound-checking. They were a newer discovery for me. After they were announced as a special guest for Marissa Nadler, I went and listened to their latest record, [The Mountain That We Live Upon](#). I loved what I heard and was pretty excited to check out what they had to offer live.

Thus Owls is the brainchild of Erika and Simon Angel. Along with drummer Samuel Joey, the trio walked on stage at approximately ten minutes past 8:00 and played a set of newer and older songs. The older tracks were in fact, new for me, as I hadn't heard them before. Midway through the set, they played "Solar Eclipse" and "Ashore," two tracks from *The Mountain That We Live Upon*. Hearing and seeing them play their unique blend of avant-garde, dream-pop jazz is extraordinary. They might only be three people up on that stage, but they sounded like a full, seven-piece band. The combination of Erika's powerful voice, Simon's strange guitar compositions, and Samuel's eccentric and erratic drum patterns create something beautiful and unique. As much as I was excited to see Marissa Nadler, I would've been more than content to listen to Thus Owls for another hour.

As Marissa Nadler is setting up for her set, I find myself reminiscing about the time I saw her open for [Ghost](#) at MTELUS. As excellent as that show was, Marissa wasn't paid the attention she deserves by the crowd. Ever since then, I had hoped that she would return to Montreal as a headliner. When she released her newest record, [For My Crimes](#), I crossed my fingers and hoped that meant an eventual tour. When she announced that she would be returning to Montreal at one of my favorite venues, I was excited.

Marissa and her long-time collaborator, Milky Burgess, walk on the stage, and without any word or introduction, they begin the set with the title track and opening of her newest record, *For My Crimes*. Within seconds, she already has the entire crowd quiet and caught in the dark, swooning melodies that echo from both her voice and guitar. Throughout the set, she intertwines both old and new tracks, including songs like "Blue Vapor," "Was it a Dream," and "Dead City Emily." The crowd had a little laugh when Marissa announced one of her songs as

“my only hit, and it’s a demo.” The track she’s talking about here is “Leave the Light On,” which has over 22 million plays on Spotify.

It was the first night of the tour for Marissa and, as one might expect, they had a few hiccups. Marissa had to restart “Are You Really Gonna Move to the South” a couple of times, which is completely understandable. The opening chords are quite intricate. I am amazed at her ability to play and sing a song like that at the same time. Milky Burgess, who was playing lead guitar, was also playing bass with a pedalboard at the same time! His ability to do that simultaneously was insane. Naturally, even the best of guitarists or going to make a few mistakes and there were a couple of missed notes from time to time. Though at one point, Milky essentially said “fuck it” to the pedal and let Marissa tackle a song on her own without it.

Marissa ends her set with a Fleetwood Mac cover, “Save me a Place” and the song “Firecrackers” from one of my favorite albums, [July](#). It was a perfect ending to an incredible evening. Marissa’s voice and guitar can lift you up to the most imaginative places of your mind. Any “mistake” made throughout her set only served as a reminder that she was a human being that was connected to everyone in the room via her special music. The chemistry between Marissa and Milky was also a lot of fun to see. They play beautifully together and exchange glances of approval or “oops, we missed that beat,” but always laugh it off, along with the crowd. It was an absolute pleasure to see Marissa Nadler live, with a crowd that was utterly entranced by every note played and every word sung.

Written by Dominic Abate