

A raw, frenetic debut from singer Ada Lea

By **Chris Triunfo** Globe correspondent, July 17, 2019, 5:16 p.m.



Alexandra Levy's voice seems serene and sultry, made for bedroom pop. But listen more closely and you'll hear a singer who has harnessed a full range of expression, reminiscent of [Phoebe Bridgers](#) and [Sharon Van Etten](#). And like Bridgers and Van Etten, Levy refuses to constrain herself to the borders of indie rock. On the Montreal-based artist's debut album, "[what we say in private](#)," despair, heartbreak, recovery, and resilience only scratch the surface of what Levy, who performs as Ada Lea, has to offer on these 10 new tracks.

With graceful lyricism and intense instrumental juxtaposition, Levy manages to surprise listeners only two tracks in. A soft acoustic guitar and a minimal drum loop accompany Levy's voice on "wild heart," where she sings, "My pain is a curtain we draw at times." But after just a minute Levy's voice grows faint and the instruments slowly get more frantic. By the end of the song, she's created a cacophony — a frantic electric guitar shreds through Levy's despair-filled vocal, and the drums create a background of never-ending noise, soft in its sound and agitated in its execution.

Besides her musical training, Levy is also an [experimental visual artist](#), and it is obvious that she has drawn from that craft to create one of the most striking records of the year. Just as the instrumentation on this record seems to be at war with itself, so too is the rest of the album. At the end of "wild heart," Levy sings that she is "...

hungry for experience.” That’s just what this album is. It’s a showcase of Levy allowing herself to feel as many emotions as she can, no matter how they manifest.

Ada Lea performs at the Cloud Club, Boston, on Aug. 4.



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