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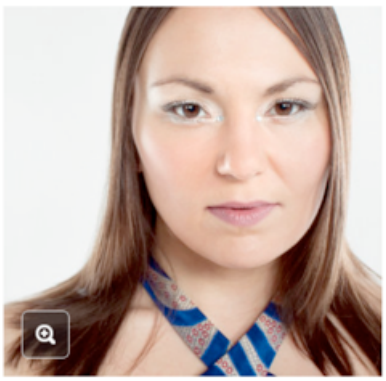
Inspiration: Some Find It Alone, Others in Collaboration

By NATE CHINEN JAN. 16, 2015



Tanya Tagaq's "Animism" won the Polaris Music Prize, a top honor in Canada. Ivan Otis

Tanya Tagaq

ANIMISM

It has taken awhile for the United States release of "Animism," Tanya Tagaq's breakout third album, but that's hardly any reason for restraint. Ms. Tagaq, a vocal polymath rooted first in the throat-singing of her Inuit heritage, caused a stir last year when "Animism" won the Polaris Music Prize, Canada's top music honor. Her performance at the ceremony — a medley of "Uja" and "Umingmak," which land side by side on the album — caused a separate but related stir, which was surely her intention. The album, which sounds no less artful and provocative for all of its acclaim, presents a series of tersely embodied concepts: "Howl." "Flight." "Fight." And while Ms. Tagaq best grabs attention with heaving ferocity, she can also sing with a delicate sweetness, often overdubbing the extremes. As for the political dimension of her art, it lurks in one track titled "Genetic Memory" and grows almost unbearably clear in another called "Fracking."