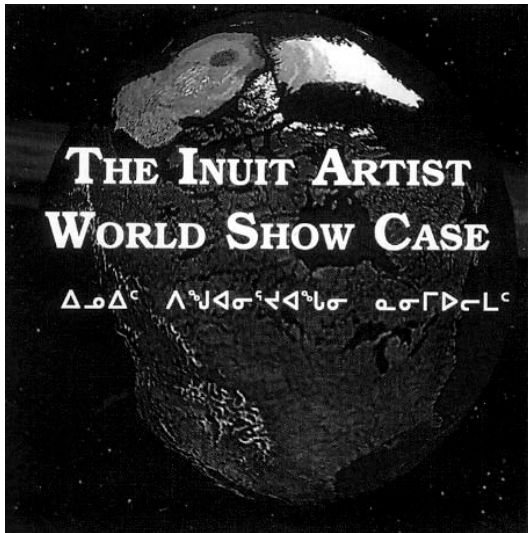


Some Inuit Music on CD

I was curious to know what traditional Inuit music could be found reasonably easily on CD, and, after a brief search, these four items are what I came up with. I presume this is only the tip of the iceberg, and I'd be glad to hear from readers about other recordings of which they are aware. Indeed, I'd be very happy to review any and all of them in future issues of the magazine.

Various Artists. *The Inuit Artist World Show Case*. Inukshuk Records IPCD-12895. Inukshuk Productions, Building # 10, P.O. Box 286, Inukjuak, Nunavik, QC, J0M 1M0. [http://www.inukshukproductions.ca; e-mail: info@inukshukproductions.ca]

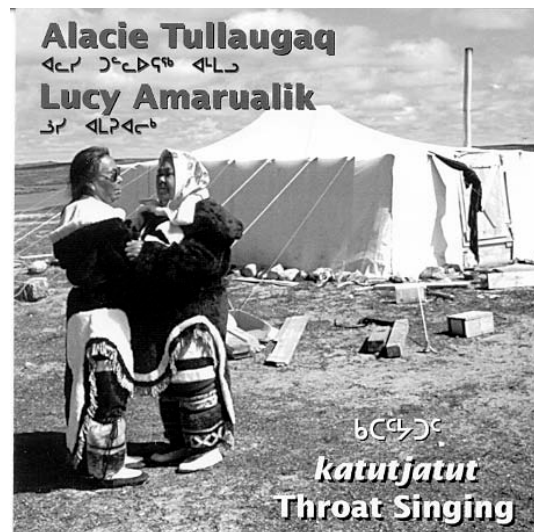


Of the four CDs, this has the greatest variety of material, ranging from traditional to contemporary, the latter strongly influenced by country & western and pop music. The recordings were made live at an international festival held in August 1994 that brought together Inuit artists from Alaska, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Greenland. Listening to this CD may well be the best way of quickly getting a sense of the different kinds of music that are being played and sung in the Canadian Arctic. On the other hand, some of the performances may not be of much interest to those looking primarily for traditional music, who are better served by the other three CDs under review. There is some traditional music on this disc. Neillie Echalook and Patsauq Iqaluk are throat singers from Inukjuak, Nunavik, and they perform eight short pieces, which sound as though they are imitations of local fauna (I wish the CD sleeve had included translations of the

song titles, but there are none). Members of the Pond Inlet Drama Group sing three songs unaccompanied, and Chuna McIntyre and Marie Meade perform a song titled "Man in the Moon" about the spirits of dead ancestors looking down from the heavens at night. But that's about it for the traditional component. The rest is an odd mixture of Western pop/rock with lyrics in aboriginal languages. I was not enthusiastic about Inuit country & western: one of the items appears to be a version of "Okie from Muskogee" (at least, it has the same tune), and there are a few other tracks I will pass over in silence. But I enjoyed some of the other contemporary stylings: Inuit folk-pop fusion might be an appropriate term for them.

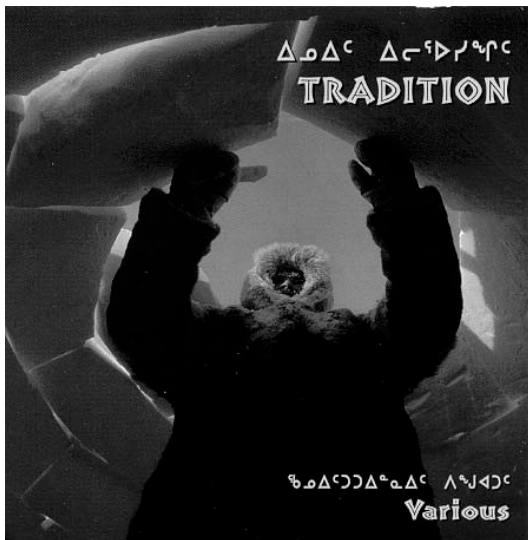
The highlight of the disc for me was Johnny Ovaut from Quaqtaq, Nunavik, performing a song titled "Our Lives", although the lyrics were not in English. Although the sleeve notes attribute the tune as well as the lyrics to Ovaut, I'm sure it's a traditional Anglo-Celtic tune, but, for the life of me, I can't place it. Anyway, it is a beautiful, haunting melody, and Ovaut sings it tastefully, despite the banal synthesizer accompaniment. I also liked Charlie Adams' "Inutuusunga", which has something of the feel of Québécois folk music, and Charlie Tumik's instrumental "Fidel Knee Reel". In short, the album is varied and uneven in content, but it does what it sets out to do, namely, provide an interesting sampler of over a dozen Inuit musicians from (mainly) Nunavut and Nunavik.

Alacie Tullaugaq & Lucy Amarualik. *Katutjatut - Throat Singing*. Inukshuk Records IPCD-0798. [other details as above]



This album is entirely devoted to fourteen examples of traditional Inuit throat singing by two of the most respected tradition bearers in Povungnituk, Nunavik. No problem about authenticity here: this is the real thing. What is a pity is that the sleeve notes tell the listener nothing about the individual items. Some of the songs evidently imitate or evoke Arctic wildlife, but it would have been nice to have been given translations of the titles and some guidance about the subject matter of the performances.

Various Artists. *Tradition*. Inukshuk Records IPCD-0201. [other details as above]

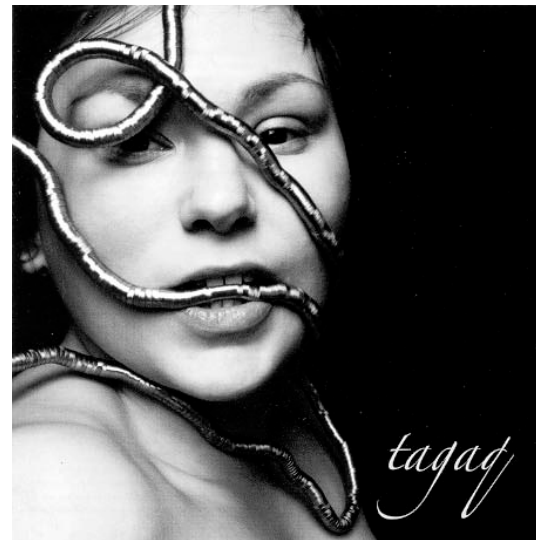


This CD features seven different sets of performers, although pride of place goes to throat singers Alacie Tullaugaq and Lucy Amarualik, who, performing together, account for seven of the nineteen tracks. It is a compilation album, borrowing tracks from five Inukshuk Records issues, including “The Inuit Artist World Show Case” and the “Katutjatut” throat-singing CD reviewed above. So although it provides a good cross-section of Inuit traditional music, you may find that you end up with most or all of the tracks duplicated on other CDs. That, I guess, is a risk one takes whenever one buys a survey disc of this type. In a way it’s a catch-22: if you dislike the music you will have wasted your money on something you didn’t want but if you like the CD you will have eventually wasted your money because sooner or later you’ll have almost all the tracks on other discs. On the other hand, you might be glad to have eight examples of throat singing in your collection but not be so enraptured with the genre that you want to buy an entire CD devoted

to it. In which case, this sampler CD will have admirably served its purpose.

I especially enjoyed the two tracks by Montreal musician Laina Tullaugak. She has a strong and beautiful voice, the songs have distinctive melodies, and the accompaniment by flute and drums works well. I will definitely want to search out her album *Piaraapivut*, also on Inukshuk Records.

The four tracks that have been taken from the 1994 Festival seem to have brighter, clearer sound on this issue. They are “The Man in the Moon” by Chuna McIntyre & Marie Meade, and the three short songs by the Pond Inlet Drama Group. McIntyre & Meade are also represented by a jew’s-harp instrumental and a lengthy dialogue piece, part spoken and part song, about which the CD sleeve regrettably gives no information. There is a lengthy unaccompanied aya-ya titled “Layer of Snow” by an elderly man named Titus Seeteenak. One of the eight throat-singing items, “Dog Chewing Leming”, is by the duo of Lucy Kownak and Emily Alerk, who also perform a powerful aya-ya called “Dog Team”, one of the best tracks on the CD. Recommended.



Tagaq. *Sinaa*. Lege Gordailua SS-137/05. [www.tanyataqaq.com; no other address on packaging]

This recording shows one of a younger generation of Inuit musicians taking up and adapting the tradition of throat singing. A mix of original compositions and traditional songs, powerfully performed and well recorded. The album recently won the traditional music category at the Aboriginal Music Awards.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta