



April 2023

Andrea Menard Anskoonamakew lii Shansoon

Velvet & Hawk (34 mins)



Singing the Michif language



It's not often that music recorded a few weeks ago evokes a vivid atmosphere of many centuries

past. Andrea Menard's latest project (which translates as 'Giveaway Songs') might have the word 'song' in its title, but what we are engaging with here are hymns. When the pandemic hit, Menard went inward. Propelled by a desire to reconnect with the language of her ancestors, the Métis people of central Canada (one of the three Indigenous peoples of the country; the two others being First Nations and Inuit), the singer composed and recorded 12 giveaway songs as a way to preserve the Michif language. A giveaway song is a gift in the form of a song given to a person or community that continues to share and gift it.

The Métis were a travelling people and the Michif language is a 'travelling' language. Most Métis were multilingual and part of a long tradition of mixing both their First Nations and European ancestors' musical and cultural styles. Imagine a sea shanty slowly metamorphosing into a river song with canoe paddles as a rhythmic base and you get an idea of the distances, geographies and souls that inhabit these songs. *'These prayer songs and community songs are a giveaway. A giveaway is a powerful statement of trust,'* says Menard. Her powerful voice instantly conjures up images of nature's powers as well as a humbling respect as she sings in a boreal Creole that's been despised for too long.

MARC FOURNIER

TRACK TO TRY *Ramant lii Riviere*