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INTERVIEW. TANIS, MULTITALENTED ARTIST

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Born to French and Singaporean parents, Tanis has always basked in a multicultural universe, which has given her a taste for both art and tolerance. Photographer, musician, and singer, we meet this young prodigy with a big heart.

How did you discover music?

I started playing piano from the age of five. My teacher at the time wanted me to learn through emotions rather than from partitions. It was at that moment that I fell in love with music. I played piano, sang, I practiced a whole lot and by the time I was 14, and living in Beijing I fell in love with film score. I remember winning a competition to compose the theme for a Disney Asia film about a child and his panda. Since then I've become a musician and singer.

You're a photographer too right?

I am as well, yes! (*laughs*) While we were living in China I wanted to learn about Chinese minorities and so I grabbed my little Canon camera and set off to discover a community living in the mountains. I published a little book of the photographs I'd taken, which I then sold to raise money for an orphanage in Beijing.



You've travelled a lot and currently live in New York. Why did you choose this town over others?

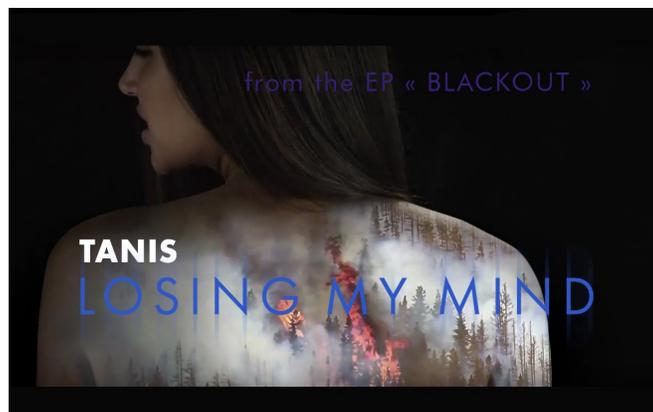
In New York I feel at home. I was born in Paris; I've lived in the Bahamas, Switzerland, Beijing and England but for some reason I never felt like I completely belonged. For one thing I never really stayed in one area long enough to really acclimatise to the culture and complicating things further, my ancestry ranges from Italy to China, by way of France and Ireland. So once I arrived in New York I immediately felt at ease as it's an incredibly diverse city. There is no singular culture in New York, there's dozens, it's a magnificent melting pot and that's what I like about it.

Did all this travelling inform your first album?

It definitely impacted the sound of my music. There's a very European acoustic style which I like working into my songs and this certainly comes from the music that my dad and I would listen to during my childhood. I was equally influenced by the electro music prevalent in America and England all the while adding in Asian styled instruments from time to time. I love the ethnic sound they bring.

You sing in French and English in *Blackout*, was there any desire to include other languages?

Not for this album, no. There are some very rhythmic languages like Italian or English and then there are others that are more difficult. I do speak mandarin but I was incapable of writing a song in that language and so I didn't want to force myself, as the 6 songs on my album are really the ones I wanted to focus on.



On your album there's a song, "Losing My Mind" that is a bit special. What can you tell us about it?

I wrote that song after something happened in the Beijing orphanage I mentioned earlier. A child had been brought in with a serious heart problem, he needed a tissue graft, but unfortunately he died before I could do anything. That really affected me deeply and as I returned to travelling around the world, it stayed with me; in a way it really woke me up. I came to realise that I'd always lived a very sheltered life, as had those around me. It was for this reason that I wanted to write "Losing My Mind". I wanted to explain that it was time to wake up and become aware of what was really happening in the world.

What other causes do you support?

I have worked a lot with the Blue Sky Healing Home orphanage. But at the same time I'm equally supportive of Project Aware, which is fighting to preserve marine ecosystems and wildlife. I've done a fair amount of diving since passing my license as a dive instructor in the Bahamas and so the environment is something I believe is very important! In the Bahamas everything is so stunning and the marine life is so incredible, which makes it all the more important to protect.

And what of your future artistic endeavours?

Currently I'm working with The Gypsies, who are sons and grandsons of the Gipsy Kings. At the same time I'm working with a producer in New York on my album. It's one I produced, wrote and composed myself and so I'm happy to have the experience of working with a group as it will undoubtedly help me learn as I go further.