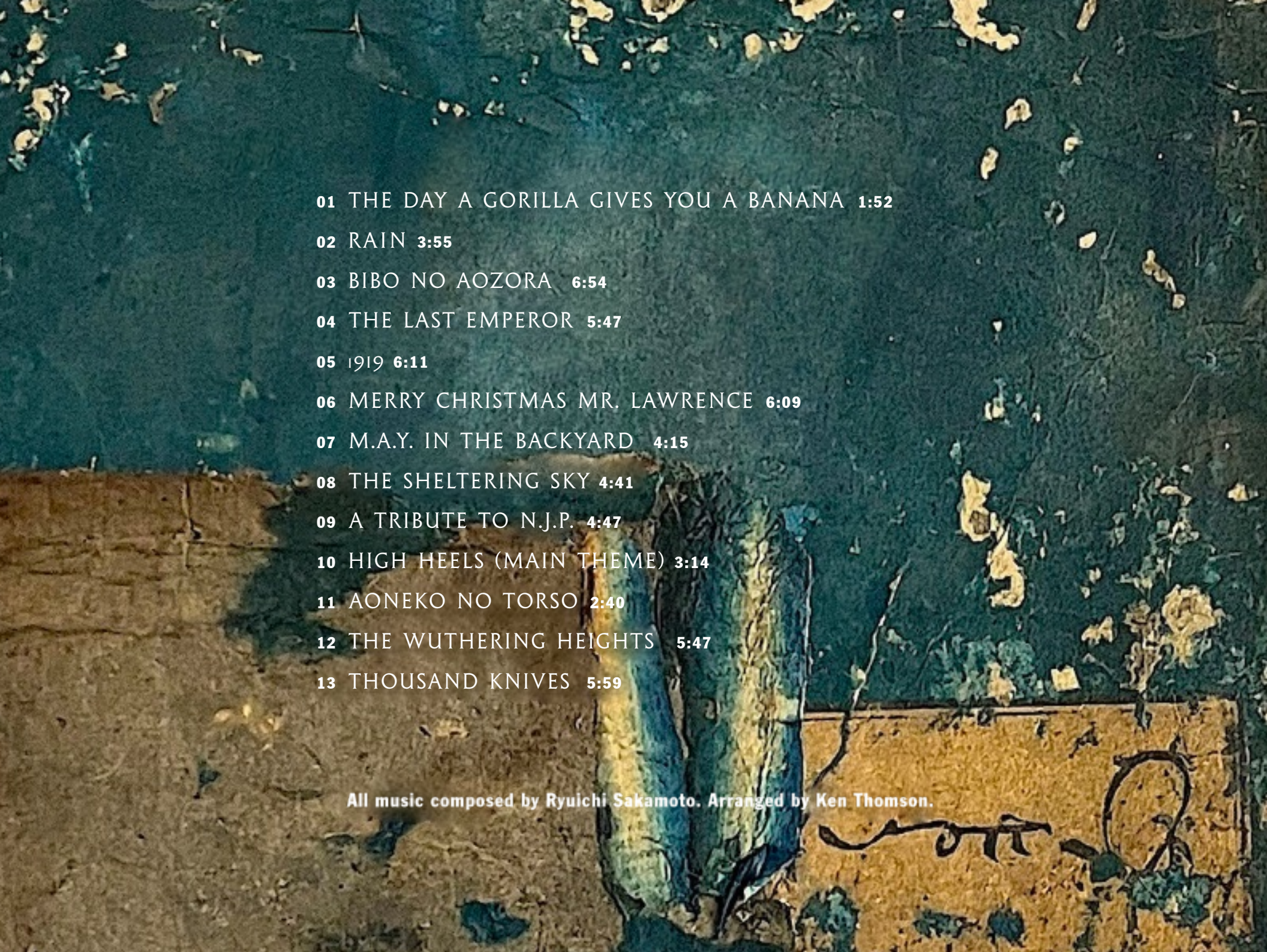
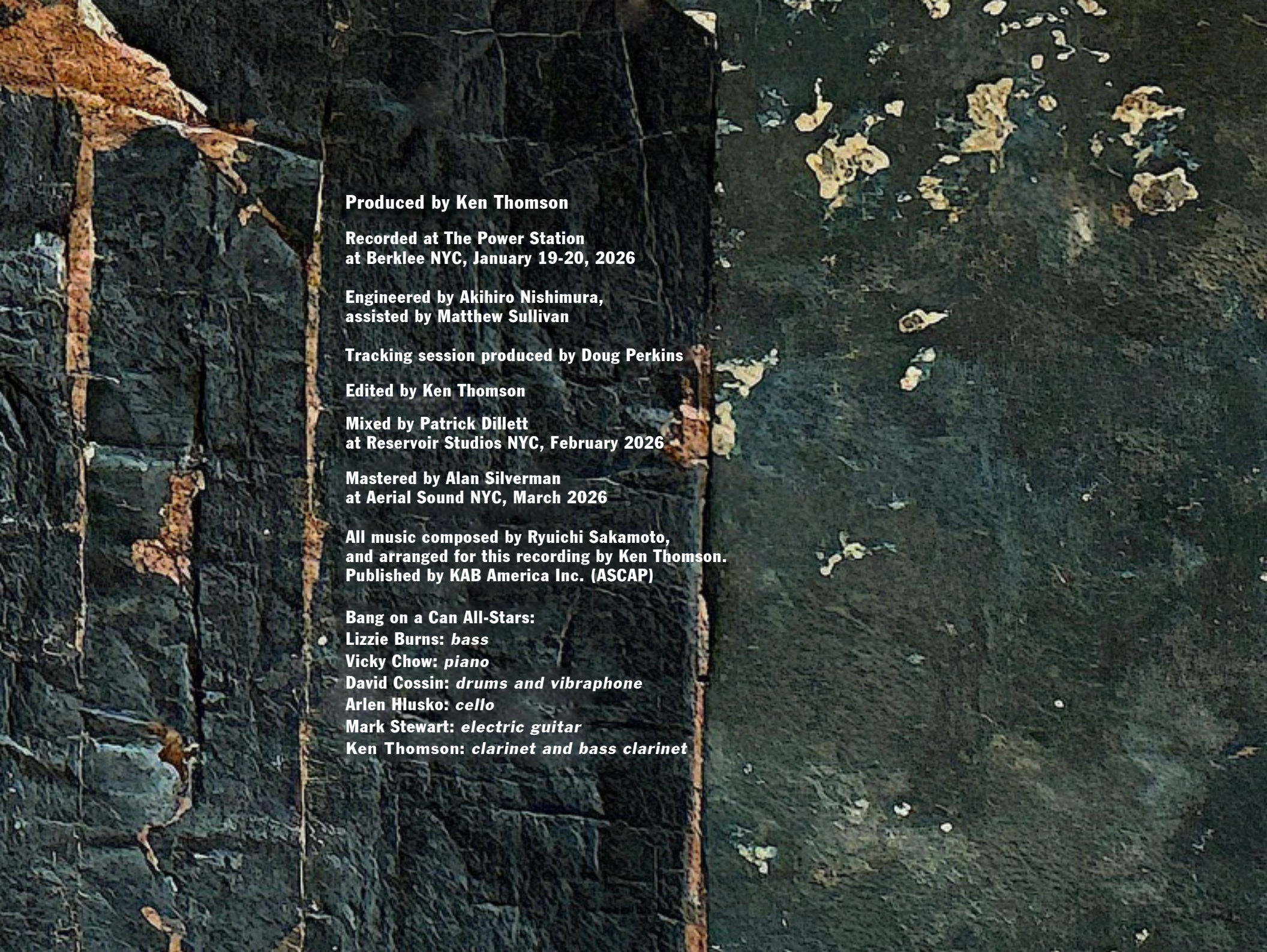

BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS
RYUICHI SAKAMOTO / 1996





01 THE DAY A GORILLA GIVES YOU A BANANA 1:52
02 RAIN 3:55
03 BIBO NO AOZORA 6:54
04 THE LAST EMPEROR 5:47
05 1919 6:11
06 MERRY CHRISTMAS MR. LAWRENCE 6:09
07 M.A.Y. IN THE BACKYARD 4:15
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09 A TRIBUTE TO N.J.P. 4:47
10 HIGH HEELS (MAIN THEME) 3:14
11 AONEKO NO TORSO 2:40
12 THE WUTHERING HEIGHTS 5:47
13 THOUSAND KNIVES 5:59

All music composed by Ryuichi Sakamoto. Arranged by Ken Thomson.



Produced by Ken Thomson

Recorded at The Power Station
at Berklee NYC, January 19-20, 2026

Engineered by Akihiro Nishimura,
assisted by Matthew Sullivan

Tracking session produced by Doug Perkins

Edited by Ken Thomson

Mixed by Patrick Dillett
at Reservoir Studios NYC, February 2026

Mastered by Alan Silverman
at Aerial Sound NYC, March 2026

All music composed by Ryuichi Sakamoto,
and arranged for this recording by Ken Thomson.
Published by KAB America Inc. (ASCAP)

Bang on a Can All-Stars:
Lizzie Burns: ***bass***
Vicky Chow: ***piano***
David Cossin: ***drums and vibraphone***
Arlen Hlusko: ***cello***
Mark Stewart: ***electric guitar***
Ken Thomson: ***clarinet and bass clarinet***

One of Japan's most beloved composers, Ryuichi Sakamoto became known in the US through his collaborations with David Bowie and later blockbuster film soundtracks from ***The Last Emperor*** to ***The Revenant***. Sakamoto reinvented himself regularly, creating influential work in techno, ambient, jazz, latin, classical, experimental, and countless other genres. While his career took him from his early band Yellow Magic Orchestra to his later work as one of the most important film composers of his generation, he also released more than two dozen solo records.

Of these, we chose to focus on the album ***1996***, in which he reworked many of his pre-existing pieces for a trio of a violinist, cellist and himself as the pianist. Because we're also a chamber group, this album was our clue as to which of his pieces he felt were most important to be heard in this setting. Further, in "1919", one of the two new works he wrote for the record, he deliberately nods at the American minimalists - composers with whom we have a close relationship.

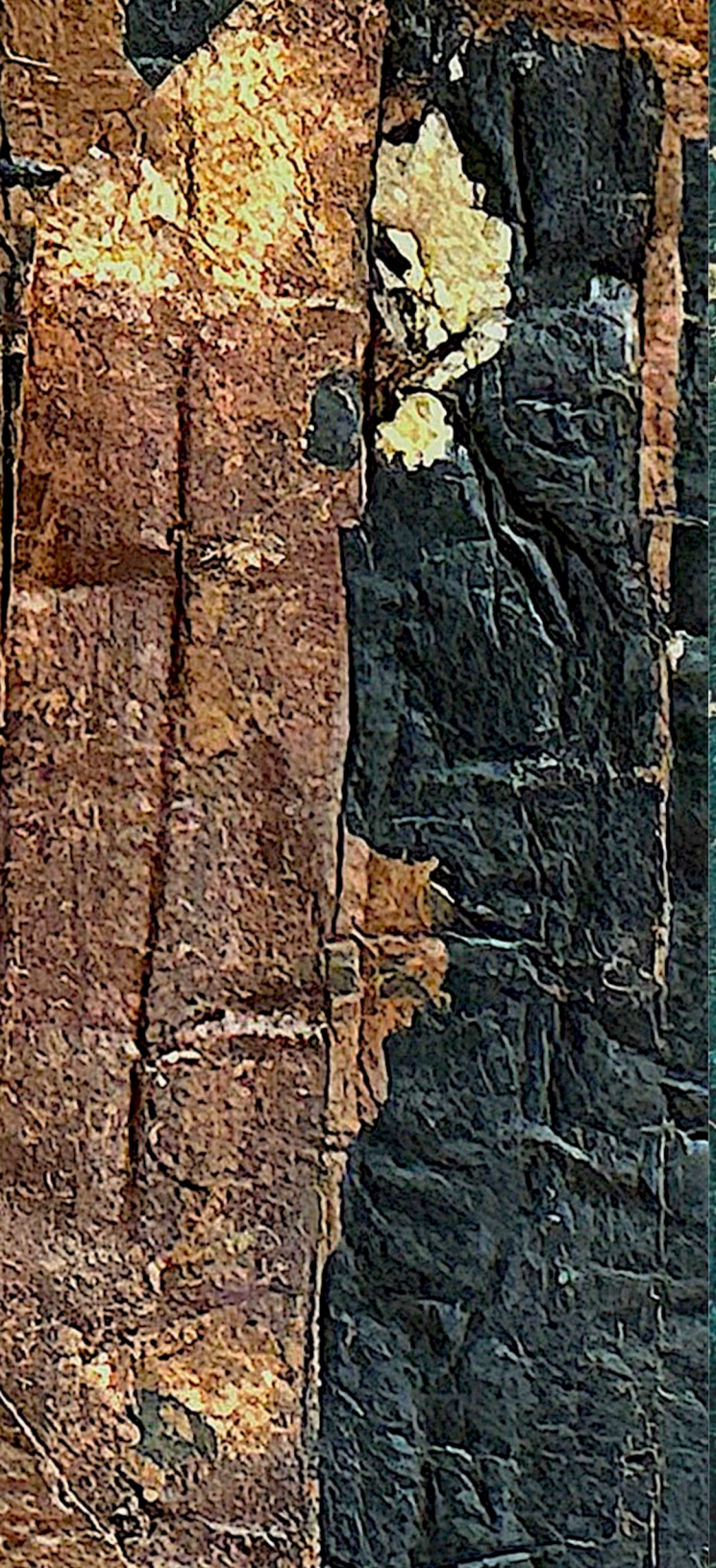
Arranging these works was a rewarding challenge. Though my main focus was the ***1996*** studio album, I also studied other versions. Sometimes these were live videos; often they were completely different renditions of the same pieces, from different projects with different bands. While researching all the performances, I searched for the common thread and realized that though Sakamoto himself would re-contextualize his own work relentlessly over the years, his harmonies stayed the same. I found that by focusing on the precise details of every chord and staying laser-focused on transcribing every inner voice, we could do his compositions justice. The work ***sounded*** like his.

After the initial analysis and transcription, I began making arrangements that worked for the Bang on a Can All-Stars' unique instrumentation. Having been a member of the band since 2014, I was able to tailor the arrangements to my colleagues' individual sound - what they love to play, and what they sound great doing - and hopefully bring a new perspective to these works while honoring the originals.

When the arrangements were ready, we began the long rehearsal process. As a group, we're accustomed to playing music from different genres, but one thing that's always non-negotiable is playing in time and with precise rhythm, because much of our music requires this unrelenting precision. However, many of Sakamoto's works need to be treated in exactly the opposite way. Sakamoto as a composer and pianist was emotional - he bent time; he improvised; sweat poured out. To harness his music, we had to access a hidden part of our own collective musicality. We had to push and pull the time of the music, and emote his gorgeous melodic lines. In many ways, this record documents another development of us as a band as we take a new look at these classics.

PS: "Thousand Knives", the title track of Sakamoto's first album as a leader, is not on the original 1996 album. We began playing it live as an encore, and had so much fun with it, we thought we'd add it to the record.

- Ken Thomson, 2026.



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Kenny Savelson and Julia Wolfe
Cantaloupe Club Producers Circle:
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Eric Scott Klein, Ken Nielsen,
Roger Stude and Ola Torstensson

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Norika Sora, Philippa Thompson.

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As always, we thank you for your support.



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