

This, our 14th recording (along with 2 compilations) is another exploration of the American cultural landscape. We feel the depth of Americanism is how we embrace- and are enriched by- our differences. It's the inherent richness of diversity. Greektown and Little Italy, soul food to sushi, it is the tapestry of this country. Yet so often we take it for granted, or what the value is to preserve them. Well image this. Take America, remove every Chinatown, Little Saigon, Beale Street, every Old Town and Mercado and every Little Tokyo—just take them off the map—and see how much we'd be missing.

Little Tokyo is a joyful, soulful journey through these musical 'neighborhoods.' Armed with our unique palate it is our attempt to re-awaken this country's greatest resource. For us, its always about being different. Its vital to NOT be the same. We embrace our sound, of June's incredible koto, the rhythmic variety and intensity of taiko and Japanese percussion, Kimo's brilliant keyboard playing, Danny and Dean's grooves—and venture forth into all manner of music. We dig it, we thrive on it.

Kampai!

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The story behind the music.

#### 1. Midnight Sun

-june kuramoto, dan kuramoto

In many ways this song is a template for the entire project. June wrote this exotic melody and I immediately 'heard' sensual middle-eastern sounds and rhythms, evoking both power and mystery. We are all human beings on this planet, and the cultural multiplicity in this song is a tribute to just that.

#### 2. On the Fence

-kimo cornwell, dan kuramoto

Blending piano, tenor sax and koto is something we really love, and in this contemporary jazz setting it is our version of the jazz quintet. It evokes a style of contemporary jazz that is part of our 'musical soul.' Check out Kimo's hip solo in the middle of the tune.

#### 3. Lanai

-James Lloyd

This is the only song on the CD not written by the band, and is a real gem from James Lloyd, leader of our contemporaries, Pieces of a Dream. For those who may not know, Lanai is an idyllic Hawaiian island off the coast of Maui.

#### 4. Red Beans and Rice

-kimo cornwell

In the wake of Katrina, this is a song dedicated to the richness and culture that New Orleans brings to this country. Much of our musical foundation is in the jazz, the second line, the spirituality of the Crescent City. Combining those elements with Japanese rhythms that are surprisingly almost identical, Red Beans is a stroll through the 'Quarter,' and don't never forget the Rice.

5. Sir Charles  
-dan kuramoto

Every Hiroshima CD has at least one song that has a Latin feel, probably a reflection of my roots growing up in East LA. In Sir Charles I tried to create a happy Caribbean samba filled with the joy of Vince Charles, a musician, friend and mentor for whom this song was created. You should have seen his smile.

6. Hidden Times  
-june kuramoto, kimo cornwell

June is a very soulful human being. She says the voices and spirits from the past constantly surround us still--both known and yet to be discovered. This is the premise for this dynamic concept piece by her and Kimo. Last year, while signing autographs after our set at the Pasadena Jazz Festival, June met relatives she had never known, and the journey led June, her cousin and sister to discover their huge extended, warm and beautiful (Webber/Inouye) family! Also, if you listen carefully, the mix by Don Murray is a journey in itself.

7. Shades of Honor  
-june kuramoto, kimo cornwell

As June defines it, honor is filled with layers--of courage, humility, grace, pride, integrity & beauty. These are the 'colors' that she saw when asked to do a musical tribute to Justice Joyce Kennard (only the second woman to serve on the California Supreme Court since 1989) receiving the Lifetime Achievement by the Japanese American Bar Association. As she puts it, "together with Kimo, this honor extends to all souls....to all of you ...with deepest gratitude."

8. Quan Yin (Goddess of Compassion)  
-dan kuramoto

Our last several projects have had the good fortune to include a piece with the extraordinary Karen Hwa Chee Han, Er-hu virtuoso. In this outing, June and Karen, our two Quan Yin, interweave Chinese and Japanese music in a jazz setting blending over two thousand years of music in a swinging American jazz idiom with Kimo and Dean Taba on acoustic bass.

9. Drama  
-dan kuramoto

I love rock, and funk, and blues and R&B. I remember the excitement of going to hear live music in the days when everyone was still totally creative--when you would hear a band first start to 'hit' and the place would go crazy. That's why I wrote Drama. All of us in the band love the energy, and built on Dean's funky bass we hope you do too.

10. Hiro Chill  
-dan kuramoto

Hanging with my daughter in New York, we liked checking out the euro 'chill' music scene there. I really dug it and the way it integrated old and new. That's exactly what we tried to do. In many ways, the 'chill scene' embraces a wide range of musics, and thanks to the guidance of my daughter, Hiro Chill, is added to this new genre.

#### 11. Little Tokyo Underground -dan kuramoto

I really miss bands that would 'take it out.' Lay a jazzy funky groove and just lean on it. 'Underground' was done very spontaneously, in fact Kimo and June's solos are exactly as they played it the first time we 'ran it down' in rehearsals (glad we turned some mics on). Think way late at nite, having some fun and vibing at the Underground.