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RYUICHI SAKAMOTO
async

AT THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY



KAB AMERICA INC. PRESENTS A CINERIC/BORDERLAND MEDIA PRODUCTION "RYUICHI SAKAMOTO: ASYNC AT THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY" DIRECTED BY STEPHEN NOMURA SCHIBLE

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SYNOPSIS

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO: async AT THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY is a live performance film captured during an intimate concert by Ryuichi Sakamoto in New York City. Filmed during the production of *Ryuichi Sakamoto: Coda*, a recent documentary about the same artist's life journeys and creative process, the performance marked the first public unveiling of Sakamoto's new opus *async*, hailed as one of the best albums of 2017 by esteemed publications such as Rolling Stone and Pitchfork.

KAB AMERICA INC - CINERIC, INC - BORDERLAND MEDIA
USA - JAPAN / 65' / 2018 / DOCUMENTARY

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO



As composer, performer, producer, and environmentalist, few artists have as diverse a résumé as that of Ryuichi Sakamoto. Sakamoto's work has spanned vast musical territories, from pioneering electronic music as a member of Yellow Magic Orchestra to crafting globally inspired rock albums, classical compositions, a stretch of minimal /ambient music collaborations, and over thirty film scores for directors including Bernardo Bertolucci, Pedro Almodóvar, Brian De Palma, and more recently Alejandro González Iñárritu. His work has been recognized

with accolades including an Academy Award, two Golden Globes, a Grammy, the Order of the Cavaleiro Admissão from the government of Brazil, and the coveted Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the government of France.

Since 3/11 in Japan, Sakamoto has been a strong advocate of support and aid for the victims of the earthquake, tsunami, and anthropogenic nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, launching charity organizations and the music event, NO NUKES. In responding to the consumerism of the 21st century, his politically conscious dynamism has cemented his reputation as a renaissance man.

In 2014, Sakamoto was forced to take the first major break of his career upon his diagnosis with throat cancer. Thanks to rest, friends, family, and fans were able to witness his return in just over a year, and he closed 2015 with two film scores: a collaborative score with Alva Noto for Alejandro González Iñárritu's Academy Award-winning *The Revenant*, and Yoji Yamada's *Nagasaki: Memories Of My Son*. In 2017, Sakamoto released his 16th solo album, *async*, his most personal album to date.

async

async is Ryuichi Sakamoto's first solo album in 8 years (without counting his 2015 Oscar-nominated score of Alejandro González Iñárritu's *The Revenant*). Taking inspiration from everyday objects, sculpture, and nature, Sakamoto composed and arranged what he most wanted to listen to. Paying close attention to the essence of each track and carefully balancing the sounds with a less-is-more perspective, what remains are singular expressions of Sakamoto's current mindset, and one of his most personal albums. The album was primarily recorded in New York City, with some elements drawn from field or location recordings and museums around the world. During the production process, Sakamoto came upon the concept of creating a soundtrack for an imaginary Andrei Tarkovsky film (one of his favorite film directors). He uses piano and orchestra instrumentation, but also a selection of unique acoustic and electric sounds both programmed and organic. The album plays with ideas of a-synchronism, prime numbers, chaos, quantum physics and the blurred lines of life.



COMMENTS FROM
RYUICHI
SAKAMOTO
ABOUT
async

“I have been influenced by images, visuals, for a long time, but this album is probably the one most influenced by moving images. Movies always inspire me. So when I’m feeling empty I start watching any movie. Kung fu B-movies are so inspiring. The music in the old kung fu movies, not the sophisticated ones, is so inspiring. They’re so wild. I watched a lot of those while I was making *async*.”

“For *async*, I decided not to use any established musical forms. For example, in a sonata, which was established in the eighteenth century by Handel and Mozart, the form is very rigid. Even pop songs have some kind of form. I didn’t want to use any of that. Each song on *async* is made with very instant inventions, without formalized thinking. I wanted to find the right shape for each song. But almost every time I’d make something I’d have to ask myself, “What do you want to hear?” Maybe nothing, and that’s okay. My desire was the only rule. My solo work is entirely for myself, so it’s judged by my own satisfaction and whether I have pushed myself to another level. That’s how I judge it.”

DIRECTOR

STEPHEN NOMURA SCHIBLE



Stephen grew up in Tokyo and studied film at NYU. After serving as an assistant director to documentarian Kazuo Hara (*Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*), he worked as a producer's rep for Japanese films such as Shinji Aoyama's *Eureka* and Naomi Kawase's *Firefly*, and oversaw international co-productions such as *H-Story* by Nobuhiro Suwa. He was one of the producers for Sofia Coppola's Oscar-winning *Lost in Translation*, and was responsible for all Japanese aspects of the production. Stephen directed/produced the music documentary *Eric Clapton: Sessions for Robert J*, which

aired on BBC and PBS. In 2017, Stephen completed *Ryuichi Sakamoto: Coda*, which was his first theatrical feature film as a director and premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

INTERVIEW WITH
STEPHEN
NOMURA
SCHIBLE

What challenges awaited you for filming this concert?

The concert was filmed during a single performance with 8 cameras. The schedule was very limited, so we were not able to do a run through during rehearsals. We had some time to prepare and block camera angles, though a lot was uncertain as Ryuichi's team was also making determinations for their layout of instruments in the space until the very last minute. So we really had to improvise and do everything in one take. To make things even more challenging, we had a very limited amount of time to load in our cameras and set up before the performance. We had to try to be very military as an operation. We barely got ready in time to start shooting.

How did you manage during the shoot?

Ryuichi is the kind of performer who does things differently every time. So all we could do is have certain formations in mind as we filmed in one take. I spoke to my amazing team of shooters through their headsets while working off of a big monitor in a separate room. That is what you have to do when you shoot a live concert. We simply had to follow the action as well as we could. We tried to dance to the music, so to speak, as we shot. We had to be very focused. It is not such an easy thing to do, but I like filming in this way when I shoot performances. I feel it brings a certain kind of tension and deeper reality to the screen. I think I do this because I want to bring viewers more into the moment and have them open their ears to the music somehow - give people a chance to immerse themselves.



What was your goal in making this concert film?

I wanted to recreate what it felt like to be in that room during this very unique and amazing experience that Ryuichi gave to the audience. Needless to say we had an amazing team of cinematographers led by Tom Richmond and Neo S. Sora. They both knew Ryuichi's work well through our work together on *Coda*. That helped a lot. The renowned artist Shiro Takatani, who often collaborates with Mr. Sakamoto, created most of the images that were projected onscreen during the concert. We incorporated the beautiful footage into our editing process as we began editing. We also collaborated with the experimental filmmaker Takashi Makino, and added his beautiful footage to the mix.



What impressed you the most about this project?

The joy of filming the concert was really to have the chance to be there and to witness Ryuichi unveil his work in front of an audience for the very first time. We followed the creative process behind his latest album *async* for our documentary *Ryuichi Sakamoto: Coda*. So the initial intent was to capture the very first moment he shared his new work in front of the public. The most amazing thing was that Ryuichi had created such an immersive soundscape that was layered to his live performance. It was very three dimensional. Being in that intimate space with Ryuichi was a very deep experience for the audience, and I simply wanted to recreate that cinematically for this film. *Coda* is about Ryuichi's life experiences, creative process, journeys, the bigger picture. This film is more like a parallel experience, and it is all about his latest expression captured real-time. Ryuichi oversaw the 5.1 mix of the concert, and I was simply amazed when I first had a chance to hear it in the screening room. Until then I had only heard the stereo mix of the album which is also profound, but quite different. I was literally blown away by the three dimensionality of the experience of listening to the 5.1 mix. Once I heard that mix I became inspired to edit the material in a way that allows the audience to enter Ryuichi's world - the world of sound.

CREDITS

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