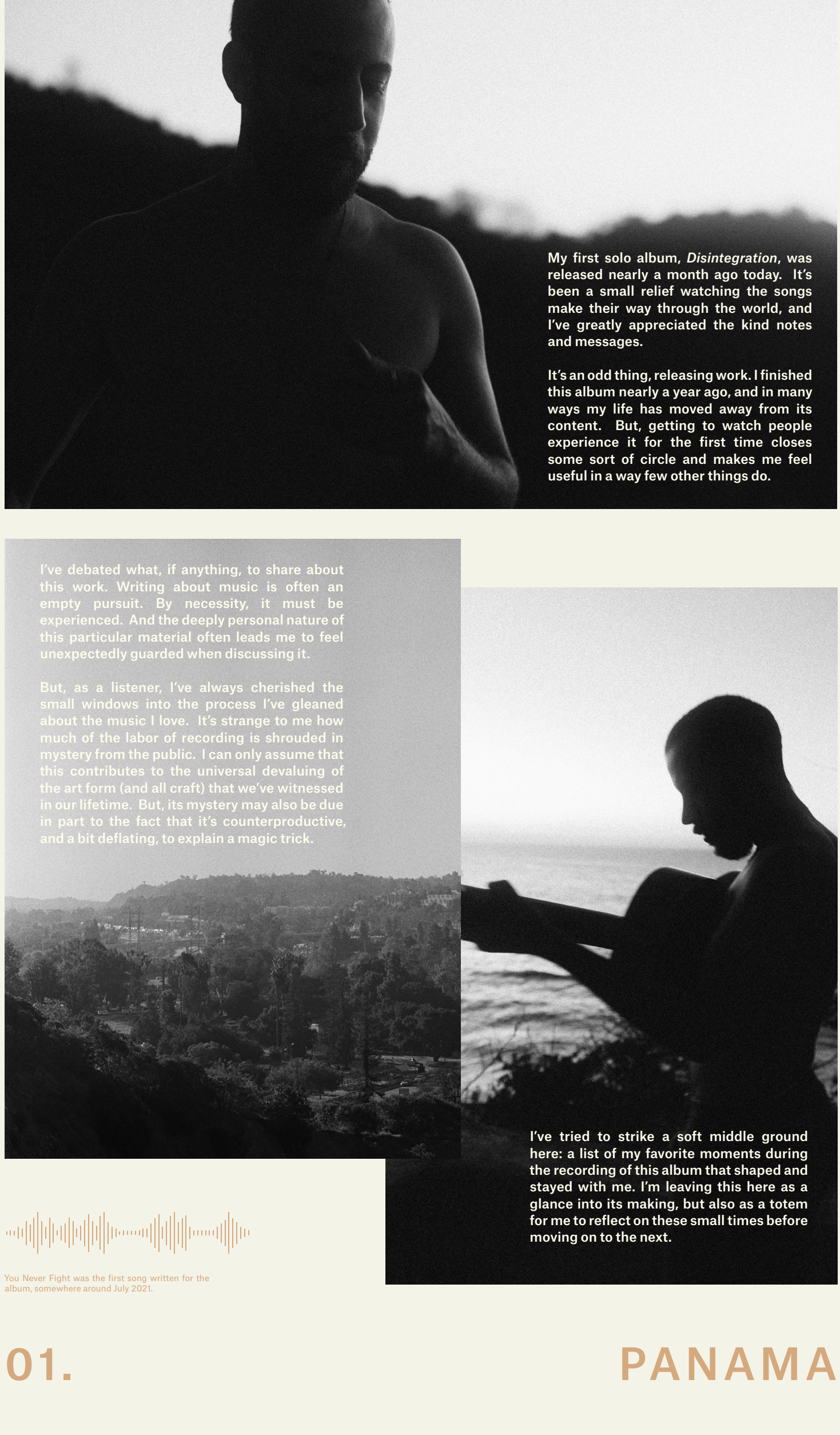
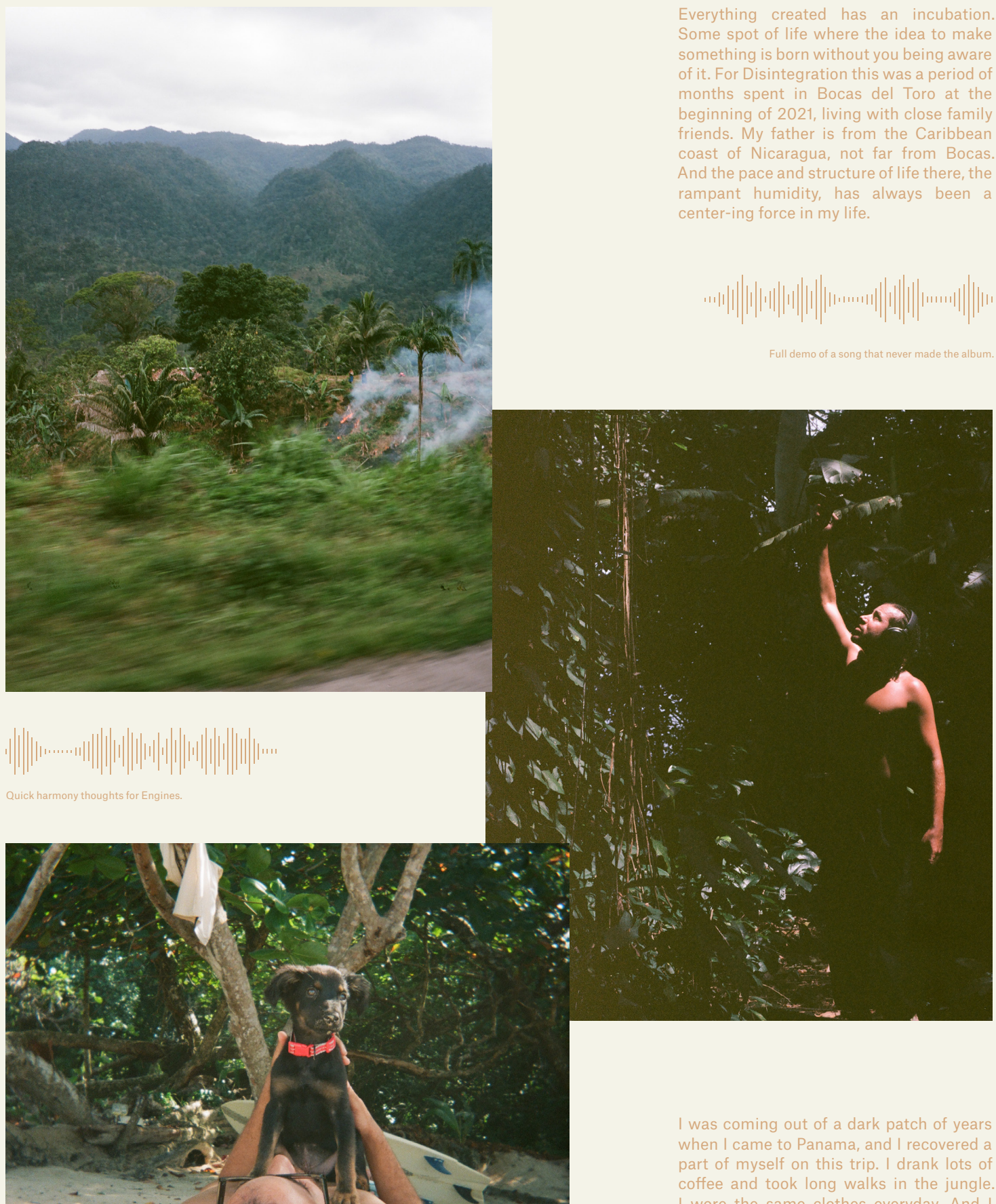


# DANIEL NOAH MILLER



My first solo album, *Disintegration*, was released nearly a month ago today. It's been a small relief watching the songs make their way through the world, and I've greatly appreciated the kind notes and messages.

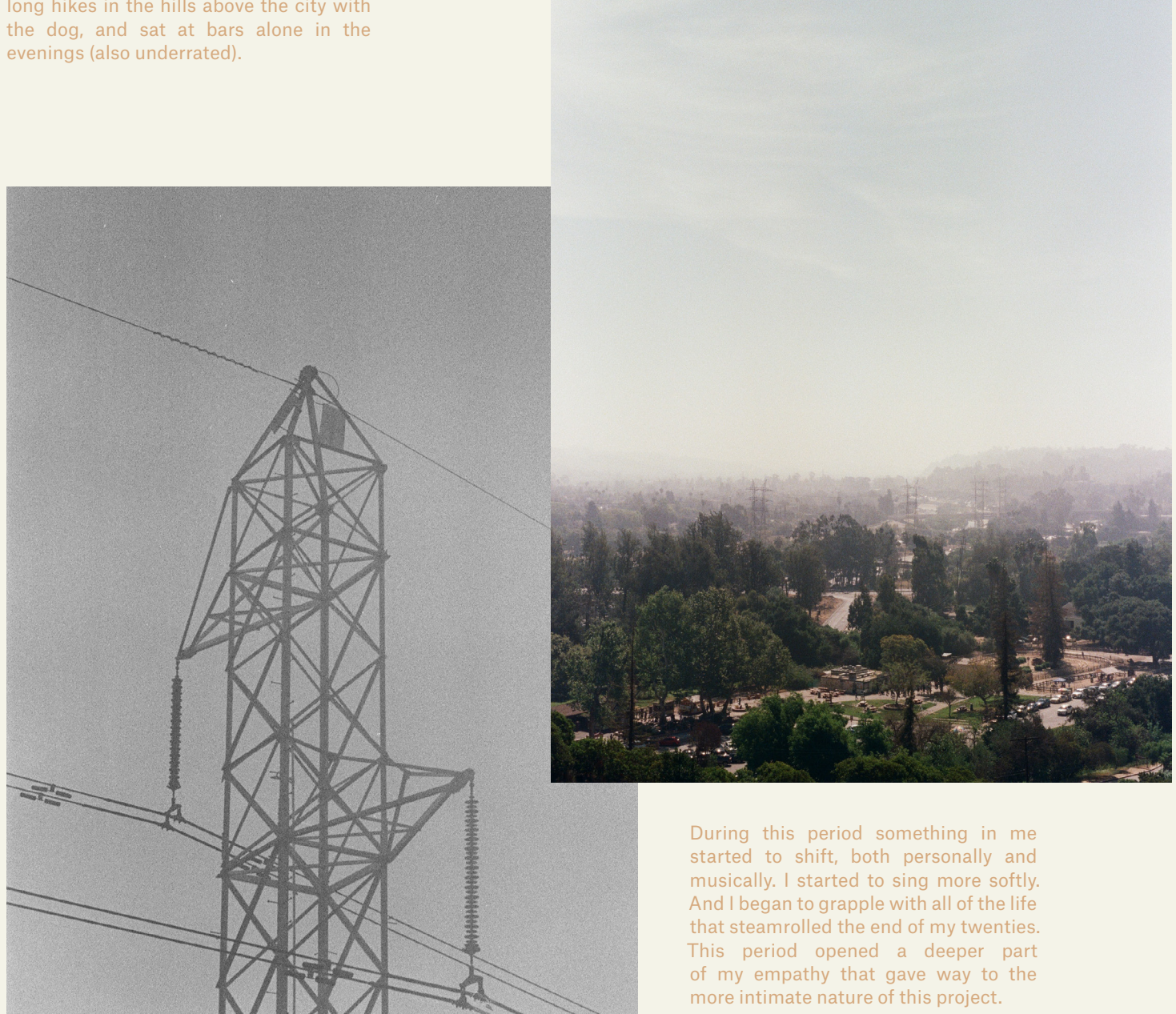
It's an odd thing, releasing work. I finished this album nearly a year ago, and in many ways my life has moved away from its content. But getting to work people expertly on their craft, and also as a performer in a way that makes me feel useful in a way few other things do.



I've debated what, if anything, to share about one's work. Writing about music often feels empty pursuit. By necessity, it must be experienced. And the deeply personal nature of this particular material often leads me to feel unexpectedly guarded in discussing it.

But, as a listener, I've always cherished the small windows into the process. I've gleaned about the music I love. It's strange to me how much of the labor of recording is shrouded in mystery from the public. I can only assume that this contributes to the universal dwelling of the art form (and all craft) that we've witnessed in our lifetime. But, its mystery may also be due in part to the fact that it's counterproductive, and a bit deluding, to expect a magic trick.

## 01. PANAMA



I ended up in Los Angeles on the other side of my time in Panama. And I remember the first year that I was there. I spent an extraordinary amount of time alone. Within the confines of the pandemic, and without community, I often spoke aloud to myself (underated). Here too, I went for long hikes in the hills above the city with the dog, and sat at bars alone in the evenings (also underated).

Everything created has an incubation. Some spot of life where the idea to make something is born without you being aware of it. For *Disintegration* this was a period of months spent in Bocas del Toro at the beginning of 2021, living with close family friends. My father is from the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, not far from Bocas. And the pace and structure of life there, the rampant humidity, has always been a centering force in my life.

We barely made music the first day we met. Just sat in his backyard and talked about the records we loved, the current state of music, and our respective ethos behind creating. Sometimes, that's all it takes: hearing someone, in their own words, discuss the way they approach their work. So it was with us.

I was coming out of a dark patch of years when I came to Panama, and I recovered a part of myself on this trip. I drank lots of coffee and took long walks in the jungle. I wore the same clothes everyday. And I generally began to put some distance between myself and a lot of heaviness in my life at the time. I lost my father a year before this trip, and coming to Panama felt like the first time I properly grieved.

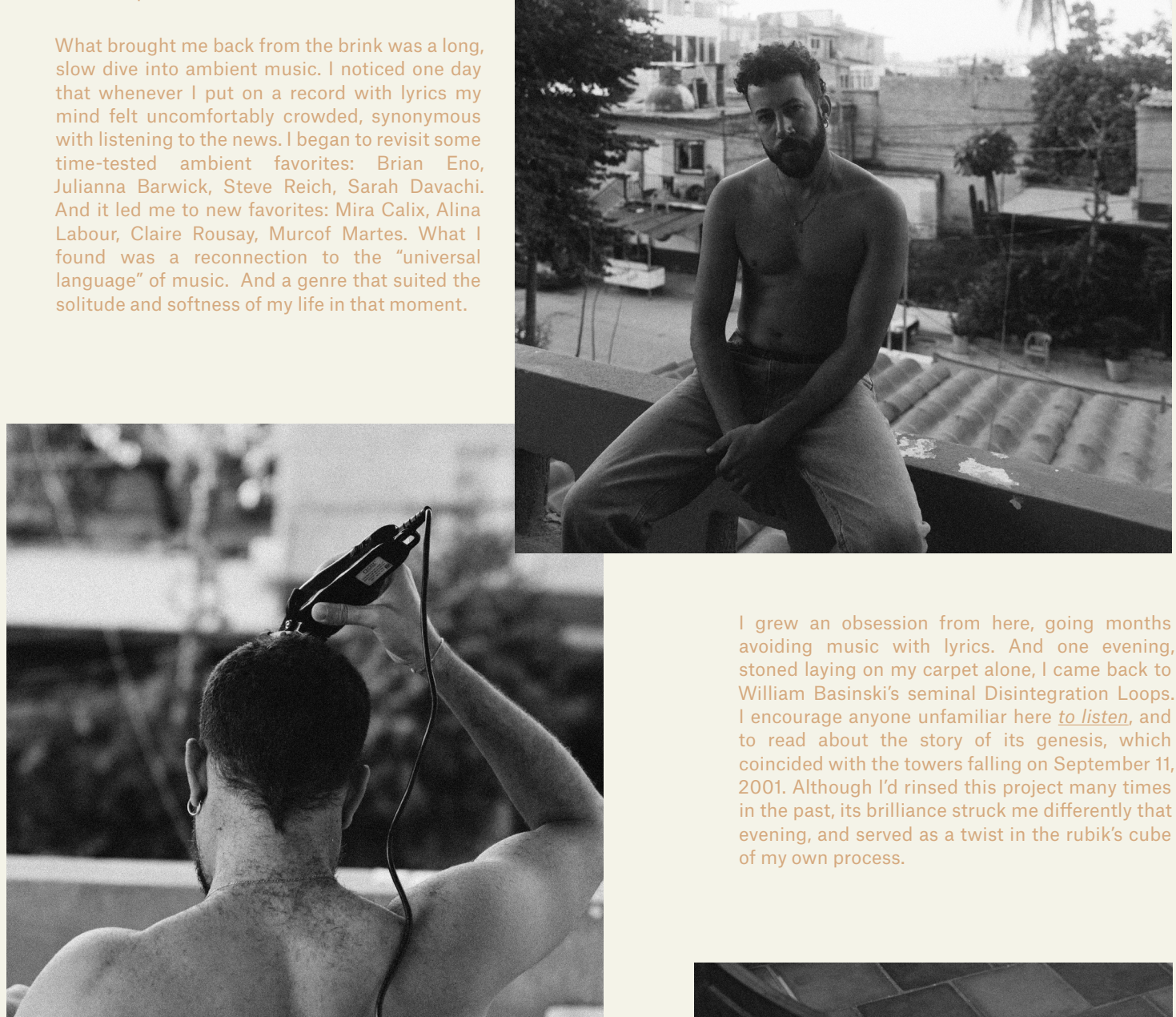
## 02. SOLITUDE



That afternoon began our year and a half long journey to completing this album, the details of which would sound a lot like explaining a magic trick. But, I want to stress and show gratitude here for how much my connection to Jack shaped me and gave me confidence in my own ideas again. He truly opened his home to me (let me sleep on the studio floor) and gave me community when I needed it most. The music always came second to that.

I wrote my first songs in more than a year here. They were awful, and none of them made the album. But, it started something in me. And when I left the islands, with a rescued puppy in tow, I felt my life unfolding in a new direction.

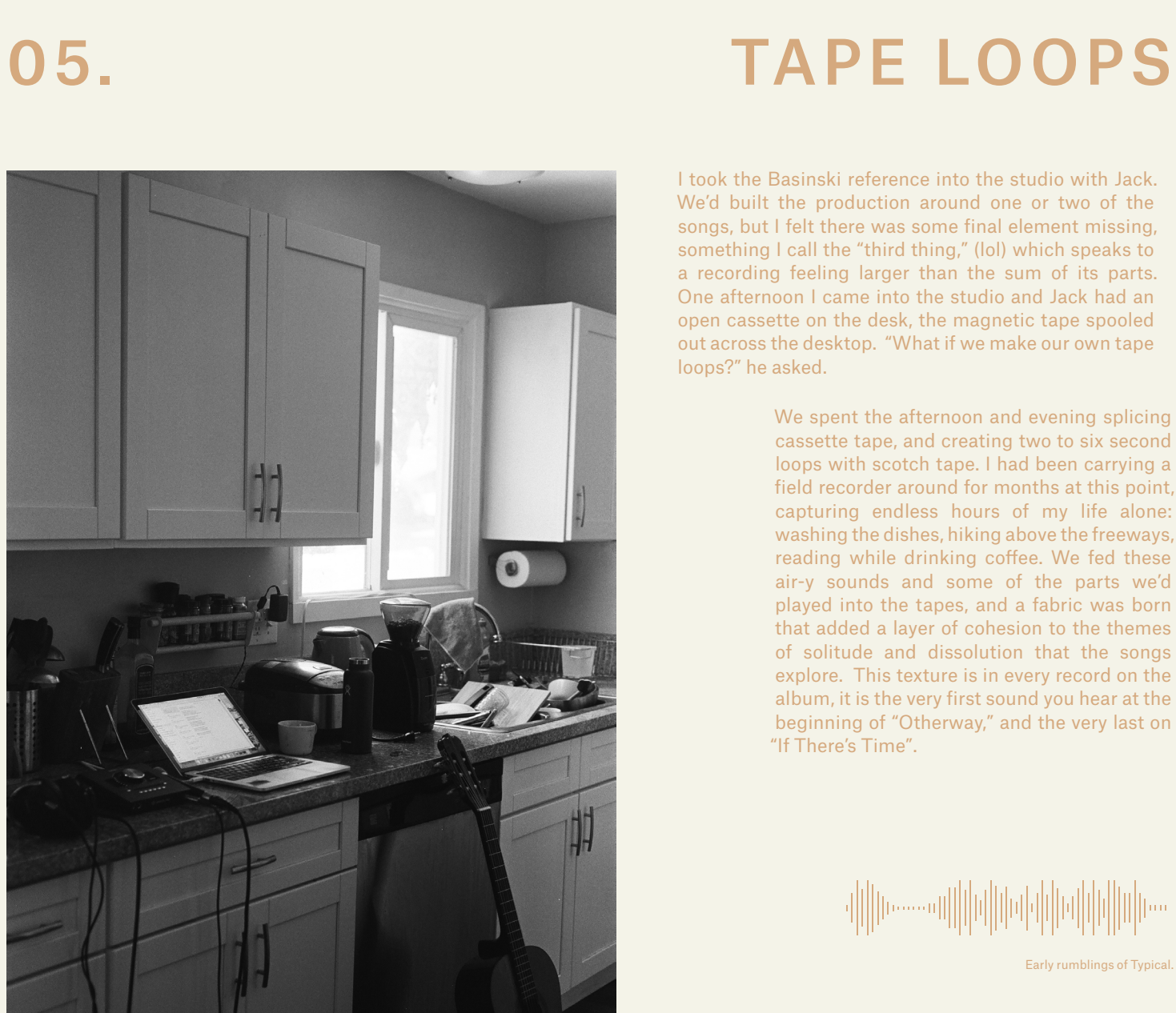
## 03. MEETING JACK



When Jack and I connected, clarity ensued. We barely made music the first day we met. Just sat in his backyard and talked about the records we loved, the current state of music, and our respective ethos behind creating. Sometimes, that's all it takes: hearing someone, in their own words, discuss the way they approach their work. So it was with us.

My introduction to Jack Hallenbeck, who produced all of *Disintegration* with me, was a shift away from that loneliness. Jack worked on the beautiful album of our close mutual friend, Topaz Jones, and it was through this connection that our worlds collided. At the time, I had been avoiding music with lyrics. And one evening, stoned laying on my carpet alone, I came back to William Basinski's seminal *Disintegration Loops*. I coincided anyone unfamiliar here to *LISTEN*, and to read about the nature of its genesis, which coincided with the towers falling on September 11, 2001. Although I'd rinsed this project many times in the past, its brilliance struck me differently that evening, and served as a necessary reminder that I should be making it.

## 04. AMBIENT MUSIC



I went through a period of about two years where my connection to music felt muddled and confused. Like any musician, I am a listener and music lover. First and foremost, and without community, I often spoke aloud to myself (underated). Here too, I went for long hikes in the hills above the city with the dog, and sat at bars alone in the evenings (also underated).

I grew an obsession from here, going months avoiding music with lyrics. And one evening, stoned laying on my carpet alone, I came back to William Basinski's seminal *Disintegration Loops*. I coincided anyone unfamiliar here to *LISTEN*, and to read about the nature of its genesis, which coincided with the towers falling on September 11, 2001. Although I'd rinsed this project many times in the past, its brilliance struck me differently that evening, and served as a necessary reminder that I should be making it.

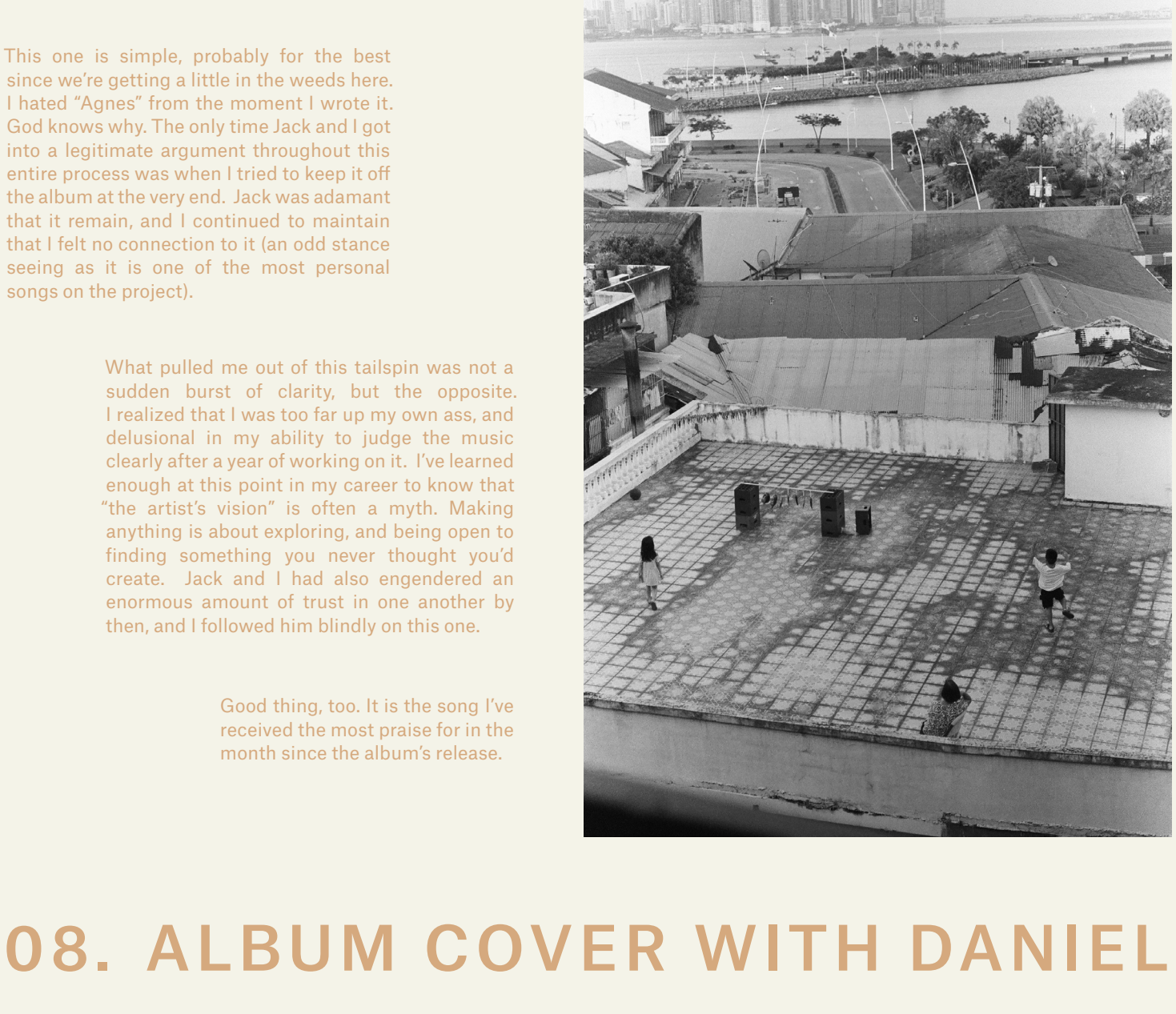
## 05. TAPE LOOPS



I met Buck Meek, a brilliant artist and the guitarist of the band Big Thief, on a gorgeous afternoon surfing at Topanga Canyon. We remained in touch and would get in the water every so often. At some point, I invited him to the studio with Jack and I, and on our second day together we wrote "Bullseye". Buck brought the initial riff in, and the three of us sat around in a circle and built the rest. It was easily one of the most effortless cohesive writing experiences I've had. The song just fell into our laps. I went home and wrote the lyrics that night. And Buck laid some extra guitar and vocals while we were trying up loose ends. He is such a generous, kind, and talented person. And his presence brightened the process.

We spent the afternoon and evening splicing cassette tape, and creating two to six second loops with Scotch tape. I had been carrying a field recorder around for months at this point, capturing endless hours of my life alone: washing the dishes, hunking above the feedtrays, reading while drinking coffee. We fed these airy sounds and some of the parts were played into the tapes, and a fabric was born that added a layer of cohesion to the themes of solitude and dissolution that the songs explore. This texture is in every record on the album. It is the very first sound you hear at the beginning of "Otherway," and the very last on "If There's Time."

## 06. COLLABORATORS



I had the opportunity to work with some incredible musicians on this album, and it remains the part of the process I was most inspired by. Being able to share a room with people you respect, and to watch them contribute and build upon your ideas, is life affirming.

I've known Dane Orr for several years now. He came on tour with Anna Wise when she opened for Lewis Dal Mar. He is a skilled multi-instrumentalist, and a warm friend. I invited him to the studio with no expectations, and he showed up that day with his tenor saxophone and opened a window on the entire project. Within the first notes he laid down on "Otherway," I felt something about the whole album and its possibility shift. Dane's playing quickly became a highlight on the project, and served as a necessary reminder throughout its making to always reach a little further.

## 07. AGNES



This one is simple, probably for the best since we're getting a little in the weeds here. I hated "Agnes" from the moment I wrote it. God knows why. The only time Jack and I got into a legitimate argument throughout this entire process was when I tried to keep it off the album at the very end. Jack was adamant that I remain, and I continued to maintain that I felt no connection to it (an odd stance seeing as it is one of the most personal songs on the project).

There's something I've learned about making art (and may be living in general) which is that if you mind the process, the result takes care of itself. Daniel and I didn't need to get the film developed to know we'd gotten the cover shot that day. The same way I knew the connection that Jack and I shared upon meeting was the type needed to make an intimate collection of songs. All you have to do is continue to show up, and let life happen.

## 08. ALBUM COVER WITH DANIEL



At the beginning of 2023 I traveled to Bucerias, Mexico to visit the family home of my longtime friend and photographer Daniel Topete. Daniel shot the first ever press photo of Lewis Dal Mar, as well as the cover for our debut album. And there was something symbolic about beginning this new chapter of my life with his image. Surfing, drinking, shooting film, and eating fried fish and the best birria of my fucking life.

We climbed the spiral staircase up to the second floor and saw that the roof had caved in, leaving an enormous panoramic view of the azure ocean below and setting sun above. It felt like another dimension entirely. We had about fifteen minutes of daylight left, and Daniel started taking as many photos as he could while I danced across the roof, soaking the scene in. Alex captured a single-shot video of me singing "Opening Me" while standing on the cliff. And we climbed down the cliff in the dark.



One humid afternoon we linked with the surf filmmaker Alex (redacted for location secrecy) to grab some additional footage. We met him at his aspirational concrete, brutalist apartment in the jungle up above the Pacific, ate some mushrooms, had a delicious aguachile, and played the album for him. He had an idea, he said. The music had reminded him of a small abandoned home outside of town. He would take us there at sundown.

I fumbled many times throughout this process, and I hope this indignant and imperfect list is not misconstrued as my belief that I've made some incredible work of art. Far from it. I love to say that nobody hates my work more than me. I am very much at the beginning of a new journey where I am learning more than I ever have about myself and my abilities.



It's constantly humbling. But, I have faith that if I continue to show up, live, reflect, and make time to make work, that my music may someday catch up to the best parts of my imagination.

Good thing, too. It is the song I've received the most praise for in the month since the album's release.



Thank you, as always, for listening.



*Disintegration* available on vinyl and cassette here

