

HARBOUR BOARD

Harbour Board is a new indie folk rock project by actor Matthew Sunderland and producer Jeffrey Holdaway with Marc Chesterman and Nicolas Tillon.

Loss, regret, hope, stories of true crime, weathered by the salt air of long ocean voyages. Stories of being far from home inside songs of coming home with echoes of the tradition of Guthrie, Cash and Waits tempered by the influence of cinema soundtrack and contemporary influences such as Alt-J and Fontaines D.C.

Harbour Board are based in Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

On Friday May 10th, 2024, Harbour Board release their debut EP “The Strays”, a collection of four songs exploring lost friends, lost climate and lost roads.

The Stray

With a sound that nods toward the crooners of the 1950s or perhaps the softer ballads of Nick Cave, Harbour Board brings us a cautionary tale set on a lonely mountainside. With chiming bell-like guitars and sparse airy piano, Mathew Sunderland tells us a story of a man haunted by destruction backed by Heather Mansfield’s ghostly vocals.

“The Stray began as a demo I knocked out in a single take in a blind guitarist mate’s living room a few sheets to the wind. When Jeffrey and I reworked it, I realised it was about an old friend Tania who had lost her life under horrific circumstances in a Grey Lynn halfway house. I had first met her sitting at Verona cafe in the early noughties. It was very late and I was sitting in a booth by myself singing to no one in particular and suddenly this girl’s voice drifted across the room, singing along with me, like a call and response. Suddenly she appeared, this force of nature charisma machine and before you knew it we were thick as thieves, inseparable. We formed a band called “The Strays” and did our first and only gig at the W H Tongue funeral parlour on the corner of Symonds Street and Mt Eden Road. Then I moved

to Sydney and we lost touch, and then, one terrible afternoon, she was gone". - Matthew Sunderland.

Harbour Board Biography:

Harbour Board is a new music project with vocals by actor/writer/director Matthew Sunderland and production from audio designer Jeffrey Holdaway with recorded percussion by Marc Chesterman and brass by Nico Tillon.

Known for portraying dark and emotionally troubled characters, Matthew is a familiar face in Australasian cinema appearing in over 20 Australian and New Zealand feature films. Jeffrey is an audio engineer with a long history in recording and mixing for NZ indie cinema productions, independent alternative music and live performance.

Harbour Board takes inspiration from the long tradition of folk singers from Woody Guthrie through Leonard Cohen to Nick Cave mixed with sounds informed by cinema soundtrack and the influence of contemporary acts such as Alt-J, The National and Fontaines D.C.

The project that became Harbour Board had a long gestation. The members of this band originally met back in 2003 when Jeffrey and Marc were the sound team recording and producing the sound for the cult cinema classic "Woodenhead" in which Matthew Sunderland played a mute circus strongman.

"Even though we didn't use his voice much in recording the film, Matthew's voice was always one I kept in the back of my mind as something I wanted to record. We worked together on a few other cinema projects but somehow the stars never aligned to do a music project for nearly 20 years". – Jeffrey Holdaway.

Eventually, in mid-2022, Matthew and Jeffrey were in the same city at the same time and began working through leftover material saved on hard drives from Jeffrey's past projects creating and recording new instrumentation and vocals around rough vocal demos Matthew had made in various cities around the world. As the songs materialised and grew Marc and Nico became involved in the project.

Marc Chesterman is a composer, experimental musician, audio engineer and producer based in Wellington, his fascination with percussion drives the drum track mixing in Harbour Board.

Nicolas Tillon is a brass player from Nantes, France. A past member of the gypsy brass band Imperial Kikiristan, he now lives in Auckland.

Various other old friends make one-off appearances on the debut Harbour Board EP. Heather Mansfield from The Brunettes sings the backing vocals on "The Stray" and Tamasin Taylor from The Nudie Suits plays the violins on "Astronomy".