

FLEET FOXES

SHORE



Hello,

I'm so excited to announce that the fourth Fleet Foxes album *Shore*, **fifteen songs in fifty-five minutes**, will be released in full on **September 22, the autumnal equinox**. If you had asked me this past April, watching the world be rearranged and with a half-finished album on a hard drive in my closet, I would have told you the record was likely to never come out at all. So it is an enormous joy that it all came together in the way that it did and that we're able to share it so soon after its completion.

WRITING

I began writing *Shore* in September of 2018, right at the end of the 170-show tour for the last Fleet Foxes album *Crack-Up*. I'm very proud of that record, and of the tour we were able to mount around it, but living for that long inside *Crack-Up*'s dense compositions, and touring that relentlessly, left me in a quandary: **I didn't want to take another long break from music**; I really wanted to work and feel useful, **but I needed to find a new, brighter way of making songs if I was going to go straight into something large and ambitious again**. I found myself listening more to **Arthur Russell, Curtis Mayfield, Nina Simone, Michael Nau, Van Morrison, Sam Cooke, The Roches, João Gilberto, Piero Piccioni, Tim Bernardes, Tim Maia, Jai Paul, and Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou** - music that is simultaneously complex and elemental, "sophisticated" and humane, propulsive rhythmically but feathery melodically. I'd make playlists of hundreds of warm songs to immerse myself in, and I'd write as much as I could every day, keeping only the best pieces that emerged from wherever it is that melodies and song ideas come from. After all these years, I still don't really know, and that's what keeps it so interesting.

I wanted to make an album that **celebrated life in the face of death**, honoring our lost musical heroes explicitly in the lyrics and carrying them with me musically, committing to **living fully and vibrantly in a way they no longer can**, in a way they maybe couldn't even when they were with us, despite the joy they brought to so many. I wanted to make an album that felt like a **relief**, like your toes finally touching sand after being caught in a rip current. I wanted the album to exist in a liminal space **outside of time**, inhabiting both the future and the past, accessing something spiritual or personal that is untouchable by whatever the state of the world may be at a given moment, whatever our season. I see "shore" as a place of safety on the edge of something uncertain, staring at Whitman's waves reciting "death," **tempted by the adventure of the unknown at the same time you are relishing the comfort of the stable ground beneath you**. This was the mindset I found, the fuel I found, for making this album.

BEGINNING RECORDING

After a year of consistent writing, including on **one month-long writing trip to rural Portugal** where I started a number of these songs, I began recording in September of 2019 at **Aaron Dessner's incredible Long Pond studio in upstate New York**. Throwing the studio doors open and hearing the late-summer hum of cicadas, nesting herons, and passing breezes, while putting my loose demos to tape for the first time, was an unreal and beautiful experience. I'm so grateful to Aaron for allowing us to use his space. This was the first session for the record and my first session working with **Beatriz Artola**, the incredible recording and mixing engineer. It went wonderfully, and Beatriz and I went on to make the album completely together - there wasn't a day of proper recording at which she wasn't present, a first in my studio experience with collaborators. Beatriz is a very inspiring person. She embodies a rare combination of technical mastery, marathon work ethic, and consistent positivity, productivity, and ease, and I was so lucky to get to work on this music with her. The amazing horn quartet **The Westerlies (Andy Clausen, Chloe Rowlands, Riley Mulherkar and Willem de Koch)** contributed to the recordings at Long Pond as well, adding beautiful horn arrangements and performances to what were then fairly half-baked song sketches. It was a bit like adding cornice sculptures to a building that only had its frame finished, but their contributions gave me something to aspire to as recording continued. The great drummer **Joshua Jaeger** also helped us map out the rhythms of the songs at this session and gave some great spiritual guidance / energetic lift. Thank you Josh!

From Long Pond, Beatriz and I traveled to France for a **short session at Studios St. Germain**. This was just a bit

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of studio-rat wish fulfillment more than it was a practical consideration, but it meant we were able to record with the unbelievable **Uwade Akhere**, the vocalist who sings “Wading In Waist-High Water,” as well as on “Can I Believe You” and “Shore.” She was studying at Oxford at the time and was kind enough to take the train to France for a day of recording with us. I absolutely love her voice and I’m so honored she opens the album. In between takes, she would explore the studio, playing the pianos and guitars, singing Beatles songs with ease and grace and blowing our minds. We were able to send her back to Oxford with some recordings of her covers. It was a great studio day, as good as they get.

I have always wanted to work at **Woody Jackson’s Electro-Vox studio** in **Los Angeles**, ever since visiting a few years back, so from France we traveled there, ultimately setting up at Vox for most of November of 2019 through March of 2020, bouncing between the two rooms they have set up there now. Woody’s collection of recording equipment and instruments is, in my opinion, the best in the world. We were able to use Frank Sinatra’s touring drum kit, the actual vibraphone played on *Pet Sounds*, every great model of every great guitar and bass ever made, Mahayana temple blocks, taiko drums, a prototype Orchestron, treated congas, Fela Kuti’s organ, Baldwin electric harpsichords, the list goes on and on. The album wouldn’t be what it is had it not been made mostly at Vox, so thank you so much to Woody, and of course to Michael Harris and Chris Cerullo, Vox’s incredible in-house production / engineering team, for everything.

Vox was also where we got to spend two weeks working with **Christopher Bear**, drummer / songwriter / percussionist / instrumentalist non plus ultra, an artist I have always admired and have always wanted to work with in some capacity. Recording Chris was a dream, such a fun experience, and he ultimately contributed drums and percussion to much of the album. Thank you, Chris, for your talent and grace!

CONFUSION, PANDEMIC, COMPLETION

By late February of 2020, I was honestly a bit lost with the record. I had most of the album mapped out and I had a lot of wonderful contributions from other artists committed to tape, but for some reason **I hadn’t yet written a single lyric** that I was comfortable with, for really any of the songs. I would write many sets of lyrics and discard them, trying and failing to find the lyrical point of view that matched or augmented the musical world I was building. Some of the songs were quite complete musically, but some were very unfinished or confused, and I was in the unenviable position of writing new songs in the studio, which is always more stressful and fraught than writing new songs at home. I continued working diligently through this bare patch, however, until one day when **Michael Harris handed me an N-95 mask** and said, “Coronavirus is coming to America,” and I had to quickly make some new plans.

I left Vox prematurely (all of my guitars are actually still there), and returned back to New York, knowing that a lockdown was likely coming, and that Beatriz, who lives in New York, would be unable to travel for any future sessions we might need to do. But for three months, as the world changed in front of our eyes, nothing much happened for me besides sheltering in place, walking in marches, and everything else we all have been going through together.

In June, I began taking day-long quarantined drives through upstate New York with no destinations in mind, not getting out of the car except to get gas between 8am and 8pm. On these long drives, the lyrics I had been searching for all year began to come to me, seemingly from nowhere. I would recite them into my phone and write them down in parking lots, and after three or four weeks of this I had lyrics for fifteen songs whereas before I had none. I couldn’t believe it. Armed with words to match the music, finally, **I could finish the album.**

Beatriz was able to secure us a space to keep working for July and August, **The Diamond Mine** in Long Island City. This ended up being a boon in so many ways, as I was properly introduced to **Homer Steinweiss and Paul Spring of the band Holy Hive**, who became fast friends and collaborators on the songs in a way I couldn’t have anticipated. Homer ended up contributing incredible drum performances to four songs on the album, and Paul lent a very encouraging but constructive ear to the rough mixes as they came together. Recording at the Diamond Mine

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in July and August was wild, wonderful, charmed, the crazing heat of New York in high summer resonating with the feeling of finally coming to the end of something in a way that was even better than I had anticipated. I checked the news less but felt somehow more connected to the real world, making new friends and finding new communities. I remember many warm nights on the studio roof, watching Manhattanhenge or a passing summer thunderstorm and feeling full of electricity and potential in a way I hadn't in years.

Beatriz and I were also able to do some vocals and overdubs at the incredible **Electric Lady Studios** in this time - thank you so much to **Lee Foster** for opening your doors to us in our crunch-time. We couldn't have finished this without you.

SOME THOUGHTS

Since the unexpected success of the first Fleet Foxes album over a decade ago, **I have spent more time than I'm happy to admit in a state of constant worry and anxiety.** Worried about what I should make, how it will be received, worried about the moves of other artists, my place amongst them, worried about my singing voice and mental health on long tours. I've never let myself enjoy this process as much as I could, or as much as I should. I've been so lucky in so many ways in my life, so lucky to be born with the seeds of the talents I have cultivated and lucky to have had so many unreal experiences. Maybe with luck can come guilt sometimes. I know I've welcomed hardship wherever I could find it, real or imagined, as a way of subconsciously tempering all this unreal luck I've had.

By February 2020, I was again consumed with worry and anxiety over this album and how I would finish it. But since March, with a pandemic spiraling out of control, living in a failed state, watching and participating in a rash of protests and marches against systemic injustice, most of my anxiety around the album disappeared. It just came to seem so small in comparison to what we were all experiencing together. In its place came a gratitude, a joy at having the time and resources to devote to making sound, and a different perspective on how important or not this music was in the grand scheme of things. Music is both the most inessential and the most essential thing. **We don't need music to live, but I couldn't imagine life without it.** It became a great gift to no longer carry any worry or anxiety around the album, in light of everything that is going on. A tour may not happen for a year, music careers may not be what they once were. So it may be, but music remains essential. This reframing was another stroke of unexpected luck I have been the undeserving recipient of. **I was able to take the wheel completely and see the album through much better than I had imagined it,** with help from so many incredible collaborators, safe and lucky in a new frame of mind.

THE FUTURE

Since the beginning, Fleet Foxes has encompassed two facets: the studio albums and the live show. The studio albums have always been predominantly my work and my vision; I've always handled all the songwriting, most of the vocals and harmonies, and most of the recording of the instrumentation, usually working most closely with one other person, a producer or bandmate, to see the album through to completion. That's as true now as it was a decade ago. In addition to that, I've been lucky to participate in the great adventure of long world tours with a fairly consistent team of live collaborators who I love and respect. And since we won't be able to collaborate live in the near future, we have begun experimenting with writing songs together, in a way that we have never done before in the history of the band. **For 2021, we hope to have nine more songs ready, to augment the fifteen here.** Those songs will be **co-written from the ground up with Morgan Henderson, Skyler Skjelset, Casey Wescott, and Christian Wargo,** in an attempt to make good use of this liminal time without extensive touring to be done. I'm incredibly excited to see where those songs end up and I hope that by the time they are done we will be able to bring all of this music to crowds around the world in some form or another.

I sincerely hope you enjoy listening to *Shore* as much as we enjoyed making it. I treated it as if it could be the last big album I try and make, not because it will be, but because we can't predict the future, and I didn't want to leave any gas in the tank. Thank you for your support over the years and please enjoy.

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THANK YOU

In addition to the above-mentioned collaborators, I would like to thank the following people for their contributions to *Shore*:

Brian Wilson: thank you, so much, for letting us **sample the small snippets of your voice** we used on "Cradling Mother, Cradling Woman." The snippets are from a clip of you recording layer after layer of vocal overdubs onto "Don't Talk (Put Your Head on My Shoulder)" from the *Pet Sounds* box set. As a teenager, I would listen to this clip for hours on end, amazed at what you were building with just your voice. This clip, more than any other piece of music, completely changed and guided my life. It is a tremendous honor that these small echoes of it appear on a song that is itself such an odyssey of overdubs influenced by your work. Thank you!

Kersti Jan Werdal: thank you, thank you, thank you for making an **entire 55 minute Super-16mm film**, in a MONTH, to accompany the album on release. Your visuals captured around Washington State are incredible and the perfect minimalist accompaniment to my at-times dense and maximalist album. Thank you for working so hard and having such a clear vision.

Meara O'Reilly: thank you for contributing incredible **vocal arrangements and performances** to "Jara," "A Long Way Past the Past," "Cradling Mother, Cradling Woman," and "Shore." Nobody has ever made vocal arrangements like Meara and it is an honor to have these pieces present on *Shore*.

Tim Bernardes: thank you for singing so beautifully in Portuguese on "Going-to-the-Sun Road." I am a huge admirer of yours and I hope we can collaborate more in the future. It is an honor!

Daniel Rossen: thank you for contributing instrumentation to the final climax of "Cradling Mother, Cradling Woman." I have been a huge fan from the days of Yellow House and it is a surreal honor to have you contribute to this album. Thank you for being such a great friend over the years and I love your new music very much.

Kevin Morby: thank you so much for singing with me on "Sunblind." You are one of the greats, and a great friend and colleague.

Marta Sofia Honer: thank you for contributing violin and viola remotely to "Cradling Mother, Cradling Woman"! I sincerely hope we can do a full session together sometime.

Michael Bloch: thank you for the beautiful touches of classical guitar you added to "Featherweight"! You are an incredible musician and it was a joy to have you in the studio.

Hamilton Leithauser, Georgiana Leithauser, Frederika Leithauser, Juliet Butters, and Faye Butters: Hamilton, thank you for rounding up the perfect ad hoc children's choir to sing a bit on "Wading In Waist-High Water" and "Young Man's Game"! It's an honor to have them on the album and an honor that you made that happen. Thank you so much.

There are so many more people to thank, but I will save that for the liner notes. Be well, be good to each other, be kind to yourself, and please, please vote!

With love,
Robin Pecknold
September 10th, 2020
New York City