

= New Multitudes =

New Multitudes is a Woody Guthrie tribute album performed by Jay Farrar , Will Johnson , Anders Parker , and Jim James to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Guthrie 's birth , released through Rounder Records on February 28 , 2012 . The project was initiated by Woody 's daughter Nora Guthrie to have Farrar add music to her father 's lyrics ? specifically , his earliest songwriting years in Los Angeles . Over the course of several years , he invited the others to collaborate and recorded at a variety of locations across the United States . Each artist wrote music to lyrics that inspired him and presented it to the collaborators for recording . The result is an album with diverse musical genres that has garnered positive reviews from critics for its varied styles and instrumentation . The quartet promoted the album with a small promotional tour that took them to record stores , radio programs , theaters , and folk festivals . The group has plans for releasing a second volume .

= = Development and recording = =

New Multitudes is one of several tribute albums for American folk singer @-@ songwriter Woody Guthrie . Guthrie died in 1967 after an extended battle with Huntington 's disease , but his relatively brief career [how does a 26 year career count as brief] helped to inspire innumerable musicians during his lifetime as well as in the 1960s folk revival movement . Initially , this project was announced as a Farrar solo album with Johnson as a contributor . It was intended to follow previous efforts to elaborate on the archives of the Foundation by Billy Bragg and Wilco with the albums Mermaid Avenue (1998) and Mermaid Avenue Vol . II (2000) , Blackfire 's Woody Guthrie Singles (2003) , Jonatha Brooke 's The Works (2008) , and the various artists compilation Note of Hope : A Celebration of Woody Guthrie (2011) . Farrar was initially invited to collaborate with Bragg on the Mermaid Avenue sessions in 1995 , but felt uncomfortable working on the material with someone else . Warner Bros. Records wanted all of Son Volt to collaborate with Bragg , but after Farrar declined , he kept the idea in mind . In 2006 , he approached Nora Guthrie about returning to her father 's lyrics and she agreed .

To write his own batch of songs , Farrar looked through several of the over 3 @,@ 000 handwritten lyrics that Guthrie 's estate has preserved before incidentally focusing on his California period . The connection to Guthrie 's Los Angeles years was accidental ? Farrar simply chose lyrics that he found compelling and Nora pointed out that they came from a relatively brief period of her father 's life when he lived in Los Angeles . He also made a conscious decision to write instrumentation in a style more similar to Guthrie 's than other tribute projects , such as The Klezmatics ' klezmer @-@ based Woody Guthrie 's Happy Joyous Hanukkah and Wonder Wheel . Farrar had never listened to the Bragg and Wilco material to ensure that his songwriting would not be influenced by it .

Immediately before going to the Archives in autumn 2006 , Farrar invited his Gob Iron collaborator Anders Parker to come with him and look over potential material and the two returned several times over a period of months gathering lyrics for composition before recording together starting on July 14 , 2007 . As they found lyrics that interested them , they had reproductions mailed to their homes from the Archives to work on the material at their leisure . The duo finished recording several songs throughout the year but did not have enough material to complete the album . The recordings were also made without a budget or record contract for release .

Nora Guthrie played some of the 2009 recordings for Yames and Farrar invited him to join the duo after discovering that he had visited the Archives as well . Yames wrote the tune for " Hoping Machine " and suggested that fellow Monsters of Folk collaborator Johnson accompany them . Farrar mailed Johnson some lyrics and he composed " Chorine My Sheba Queen " that afternoon , while Yames was attracted to the lyrics of " Empty Bed Blues " while recovering from an injury . Once the entire quartet had composed songs , they entered studios in Brooklyn and East St. Louis throughout 2009 and 2010 , recording songs with live vocals in one or two takes , crowding around a single microphone . The group attempted to have the recordings ready for a 2011 release , but had to finish the album too late in the year .

Farrar has characterized the songwriting process for this album as easier than his typical work

composing new lyrics as it allowed him to be less self @-@ conscious .

= = Tour = =

The quartet toured the United States to support the album , playing all of the groups ' Guthrie compositions as well as some solo work . Bobby Bare , Jr. and Sarah Jaffe opened for them . Early in the tour , the group discussed reconvening for further dates , but decided to cap their initial outing with the Newport Folk Festival .

The performers also released a four @-@ track 10 " single " Let 's Multiply " exclusive for Record Store Day .

= = = Line @-@ up = = =

Jay Farrar ? lead guitar , vocals

Will Johnson ? drums , rhythm guitar , vocals

Anders Parker ? drums , rhythm guitar , vocals

Yim Yames ? bass guitar , vocals

= = = Dates = = =

Additionally , Parker performed some of the New Multitudes material at the initial benefit concert SwitchPoint hosted by IntraHealth International in Saxapahaw , North Carolina on April 20 .

= = = Response = = =

The tour was well @-@ received , with The New York Times critic Nate Chinen describing their Webster Hall performance as familiar , but with a unique confluence of styles from each lyricist , from Yames ' " hazy magnetism " to Parker 's " straightforward folk @-@ rock earnestness . " The Philadelphia Inquirer 's review by Sam Adams praised the performers by concluding that " all four musicians are worthy of following in Guthrie 's footsteps , each in his own distinctive way . "

= = Reception = =

The album has received generally positive reviews from critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 81 , based on 13 reviews , which indicates " generally favorable reviews " . MusicOMH 's Max Raymond has praised the album as being " engrossing " due to the emotional depth of the lyrics as well as the warm and relaxed sound of the studio recording . Will Hermes of Rolling Stone gave the album a mixed review , praising the vocal harmonies . The diversity in sound was highlighted by AbsolutePunk 's Gregory Robson , Jason Schneider of Exclaim ! and the A.V. Club 's Chris Martins , ranging from electric blues to psychedelia as well as the atypical lyrics from Guthrie ? focusing on the city of Los Angeles rather than his communist @-@ leaning politics and Dustbowl tragedy narratives . American Songwriter 's Evan Schlansky noted the same apolitical tone of the lyrics , but qualified that with Yames ' delivery on " My Revolutionary Mind " . He praised the album 's diversity as a strength , allowing each vocalist an opportunity to display his unique talents . Writing for Los Angeles Times , Randy Lewis agrees that the songwriting diversity is a strength , comparing individual tracks with R.E.M. , The Velvet Underground , Richard Thompson , and John Mellencamp . Graham Reid of The New Zealand Herald also notes similarities to R.E.M. , fellow Guthrie admirer Bob Dylan , The Byrds , and Eagles . The PopMatters review by Jeff Strowe points out the blues influences in the album , adding to its emotional depth . About.com 's Kim Ruehl has criticized the diversity and complexity of the album as contrary to the simplicity of Guthrie 's actual recordings , concluding that " If this weren 't presented so staunchly as being at least part ' Woody Guthrie album , ' it might be a little easier to swallow . " Doug Collette of All About Jazz also reviewed the deluxe

edition bonus disc , comparing it favorably to the proper album as well as the previous Farrar ? Parker collaboration Gob Iron . The album topped American publication Billboard 's Heatseekers .

= = Track listing = =

All lyrics written by Woody Guthrie , all lead vocals by co @-@ writer

" Hoping Machine " (Farrar) ? 4 : 52

" Fly High " (Parker) ? 3 : 45

" My Revolutionary Mind " (Yames) ? 4 : 43

" VD City " (Johnson) ? 4 : 05

" Old L.A. " (Parker) ? 3 : 03

" Talking Empty Bed Blues " (Yames) ? 4 : 09

" Chorine My Sheba Queen " (Johnson) ? 4 : 50

" Careless Reckless Love " (Farrar) ? 5 : 01

" Angel 's Blues " (Parker) ? 4 : 38

" No Fear " (Johnson) ? 3 : 36

" Changing World " (Yames) ? 3 : 48

" New Multitudes " (Farrar) ? 2 : 47

Limited edition bonus disc

All music written and performed by Farrar and Parker .

" Around New York " ? 0 : 51

" Jake Walk Blues " ? 1 : 59

" Whereabouts Can I Hide " ? 2 : 51

" Old Kokaine " ? 3 : 04

" I Was a Goner " ? 3 : 42

" San Antone Meat House " ? 3 : 59

" Dopefiend Robber " ? 4 : 41

" World 's On Fire " ? 3 : 12

" When I Get Home " ? 3 : 51

" Atom Dance " ? 2 : 34

" Your Smile Cured Me " ? 2 : 41

= = Personnel = =

Woody Guthrie ? artwork , lyrics

Jay Farrar ? vocals , guitar , composition , production

Will Johnson ? vocals , guitar , saw on " Chorine My Sheba Queen " , composition , production

Anders Parker ? vocals , guitar , composition , production

Yim Yames ? vocals , guitar , bass guitar , composition , production

Technical personnel

John Agnello ? mixing

Larissa Collins ? art direction , package design

Mike Martin ? engineering

Matt Pence ? mixing

Kevin Ratterman ? mixing

Brad Sarno ? mastering

Mark Spencer ? mixing

Anna Webber ? photography

Additional musicians

Buck Carter

Jimmy Griffin

Creston Lea

Konrad Meissner

