

# SIX60

Once transmitted through speakers and into the airwaves, music belongs to the people. The audience ascribes meaning and significance to songs and ultimately absorbs them for life.

By the same token, SIX60 belong to listeners. The history-making award-winning New Zealand quintet—Matiu Walters [vocals, guitar], Marlon Gerbes [keyboard], Ji Fraser [lead guitar], Chris Mac [bass], and Eli Paewai [drums]—stir rock, reggae, funk, and pop together with a twist of kiwi roots music and Maori instrumentation. Invoking this spirit and Kiwi roots, their latest music and next evolution showcases traditional Maori instruments such as Pūtātara and Pūkāe (stone and long trumpets), Bone Kōauao (Bone Flute), and Karanga Weka (Stone Flute). “We want to take our Maori culture and put it into a mainstream radio world,” exclaims Matiu. “There are only a handful of people in the world who can play these instruments, and we felt getting them into a mainstream album could give them a chance to stay alive.”

Over a decade before breaking records and selling out stadiums back home or signing to Epic Records stateside, the boys then welcomed the world into their musical ecosystem and set a career precedent in 2008 while still students.

“At University of Otago, we shared a flat at 660 Castle Street in Dunedin, New Zealand,” recalls Matiu. “We originally didn’t name the band. Instead, our first college fans gave the band the name by calling us the ‘*SIX60 Boys*,’ which evolved into SIX60. We adopted this philosophy into our albums. The fans add the final touches and have naming rights over things we do. The songs aren’t done until the audience has them. So, the album doesn’t really have a spirit or a name until the crowd consumes it.”

As such, SIX60 engender a rare level of devotion from fans, bordering on downright phenomenal. The group’s 2011 full-length, *SIX60 (I. The Gold Album)*, bowed at #1 on the charts in New Zealand and eventually went septuple-platinum. *SIX60 (II. The Colours Album)* saw them reclaim the top spot on the charts in 2015 and go quintuple-platinum. To date, New Zealand single sales exceed 1 million as global streams surpass 200 million and counting. At the 2018 NZ Music Awards, they garnered “*Best Group*” in addition to five other honors.

A year later, they made history. Performing their biggest show to date, they sold out Western Springs Stadium in New Zealand and became “*the first New Zealand Act to Sell 50,000 Tickets to a Show at the Stadium*” (They repeated the same feat for 2020!). The gig proved to be a major milestone both professionally and musically.

“It really gave us the self-confidence to challenge ourselves and push the envelope,” the frontman continues. “It also gave us a sense of perspective that we really had to shine a light for our culture and home country.”

That's exactly what they do on their third full-length album and Epic Records debut, *SIX60*. This time around, the band recorded across the globe. They went from writing sessions in Dunedin and Auckland to working out of Metalworks Studio in Toronto alongside Evan Bogart [Beyoncé, Lizzo] before settling into Larrabee Studios in Los Angeles to "*bring the vision together*" with Malay [Frank Ocean, Alessia Cara].

"Recording it all over the world over in different seasons with snow in Canada, summer in New Zealand, and being really deep in the music world of L.A. helped fuse the sound of the music," Matiu goes on. "It was really about chasing great sounds."

Those sounds course through the first singles "Please Don't Go" and "Raining." Kicking off with an Alan Lomax sample from "Whoa Buck," the groove-laden "Please Don't Go" exudes a feel-good "*fusion of the past with a West Coast vibe and SIX60 melodies.*" Meanwhile, "Raining" hinges on island-inflected guitars and a Caribbean swing, evoking what the band describes as "*a reggae 'Ain't No Sunshine'.*" The opener "Never Enough" reflects the musicians' culture by incorporating a Maori trumpet.

"The trumpet is used to welcome everyone to a ceremony or call the troops to battle in war," he elaborates. "We took the call and kept the high energy. The trumpet carries through the whole song and keeps an underlying sense of urgency."

Everything culminates on the contemplative, yet catchy "Bitter End." It serves as a poetic and powerful send-off.

"It's thinking about legacy and what memory you want to leave behind," he adds. "How will you be remembered when your time is done?"

In the end, *SIX60* deliver a body of work meant to be remembered and shared among the people for a long time to come.

"We wanted to make the most genuine and authentic representation of *SIX60* in an album," Matiu leaves off. "We aimed to create a genre-less piece of art. The band represents something bigger than the individuals. We hope the fans love it. We hope it's an album they play forever and add their own life stories and create memories around each of the songs."