

METZ
Up On Gravity Hill
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With time, we come to understand the way the joy of connection is mirrored by the void of loss, how the constancy of love is matched only by the impermanence of life, the simple idea that we could not create light if we did not risk the dark—we'd never need to.

So it is with METZ, a band once known for blowing out eardrums with songs of joyous rage who have, over their past few records, begun exploring ways to turn abrasiveness into atmospherics, the evolution of their sound not only a reflection of the maturing of the band themselves but also of a changed world that demands nuance and compassion to comprehend and to survive.

It was a journey already underway on 2020's *Atlas Vending*, but one that reaches new heights on *Up On Gravity Hill*, where the Canadian trio creates a kaleidoscopic sonic world as tender as it is dark, aided once again by engineer Seth Manchester (Mdou Moctar, Lingua Ignota, Battles, The Body). Deep, detailed, and unyieldingly personal, it is not only METZ's most powerful record to date but also their most beautiful.

Still three punks from Ontario at heart, guitarist and vocalist Alex Edkins, drummer Hayden Menzies, and bassist Chris Slorach waste no time as opener "No Reservation/Love Comes Crashing" sweeps in like a wave, sonically and thematically setting the scene for the record to come. A dynamic song about feeling suspended in stasis, layers of dissonance melt into a restlessly heady outro marked by escalating crescendos of shimmering noise that reach for the stars—and is that a violin quivering brightly beneath those elegant swells of guitar, those charging drum fills, those intricate bass lines? It is indeed, courtesy of composer Owen Pallett; his presence an immediate indicator that METZ are thinking more cinematically than ever before.

The change is partially inspired by Edkins' work as a scorer for film and television and his pop-leaning solo project, *Weird Nightmare*, where, he says, he learned to write more intuitively, letting his emotions lead the way. "The lyrical content is more heart-on-sleeve than I've ever allowed myself to do," he says. "I tried to be direct with my words, this record felt like a big step."

But make no mistake: *Up On Gravity Hill* is a total band effort, the work of three musicians who have been playing together for over a decade, with all the trust that entails. "We're at the point now where we feel really strong as a band and as musicians, and there is no second guessing our collective instincts. Allowing ourselves to branch

out and work with other musicians has been a blessing and also continues to remind us that what we have, our musical bond, is very rare and really special.” says Edkins.

For those who believe in the power of the rock band to exemplify the highest resonance of human connection, there is much on *Up On Gravity Hill* to lift the spirit, a puzzle worth repeated listening to unlock or just to get lost in again and again. Rather than the music being flattened into a single plane, the band explores “the space above the cymbals,” resulting in some of the most spacious, sympathetic, and accessible songs—could we call them pop?—of their career. If this seems contradictory, well, METZ has always been something of a contradiction. “We’ve never been heavy enough for metal or hardcore purists, but we’re way too heavy for indie rock. We just don’t have a lane—and that’s okay. We exist outside the lines of delineation. I think this record is even more like that,” says Edkins.

Lyrically, *Up On Gravity Hill* pulls no punches: this is a record about death the way all art is ultimately about death, yet it crackles with life and intensity. “Entwined” is a charging throwback to the cerebral Dischord punk bands the trio grew up loving; the snarling “99” takes on the nonstop onslaught of advertising that marks our modern lives; “We are all just a dream,” sings Edkins on “Superior Mirage,” Menzies’ charged drumming and flickering hi-hats a contrast to the song’s ghostly themes of impermanence. The record peaks on the gorgeous closer “Light Your Way Home,” which features vocal contributions from Amber Webber of Black Mountain. Here, Edkins confronts the choices that keep him from the people he loves, their absence only emphasizing how much they matter. “If only I could see what isn’t shown/ I’d clear a path for you,” he sings, a deeply emotional confession for a band that has found a new way to bend the raw power of rock music to its most delicate, intricate ends.