METZ

*Atlas Vending*

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“Change is inevitable if you’re lucky,” says guitarist/vocalist Alex Edkins while talking about *Atlas Vending*, the fourth full-length album by Toronto’s METZ. “Our goal is to remain in flux, to grow in a natural and gradual way. We’ve always been wary to not overthink or intellectualize the music we love but also not satisfied until we’ve accomplished something that pushes us forward.” The music made by Edkins and his compatriots Hayden Menzies (drums) and Chris Slorach (bass) has always been a little difficult to pin down. Their earliest recordings contained nods to the teeming energy of early ‘90s DIY hardcore, the aggravated angularities of This Heat, and the noisy riffing of AmRep’s quintessential guitar manglers, but there was never a moment where METZ sounded like they were paying tribute to the heroes of their youth. If anything, the sonic trajectory of their albums captured the journey of a band shedding influences and digging deeper into their fundamental core—steady propulsive drums, chest-thumping bass lines, bloody-fingered guitar riffs, the howling angst of our fading innocence. With *Atlas Vending*, METZ not only continues to push their music into new territories of dynamics, crooked melodies, and sweat-drenched rhythms, they explore the theme of growing up and maturing within a format typically suspended in youth.

Covering seemingly disparate themes such as paternity, crushing social anxiety, addiction, isolation, media-induced paranoia, and the restless urge to leave everything behind, each of *Atlas Vending*’s ten songs offer a snapshot of today's modern condition and together form a musical and narrative whole. Album opener “Pulse” is a completely unnerving exercise in reductionist tension, with verses providing little more than a lone discordant chord, a hammering kick drum, and the occasional punctuation of a diving bass note. From there METZ launches into “Blind Youth Industrial Park,” an absolute scorcher of paranoid dissonance and malicious force centered on a chromatic descending riff and a merciless four-to-the-floor drum battery.

The album hits its stride with “No Ceiling”—a minute-and-a-half rager that comes about as close to containing a pop hook as anything METZ has ever written. Though it’s still saturated with in-the-red distortion, this truncated anthem about discovering love and purpose provides the rare counterpoint to the band’s grievous compositions. But there’s no yielding to complacency on *Atlas Vending*, and the mercurial nature of love and romance is expertly captured in the alternately brutal verses and beguiling choruses of “Hail Taxi.” If METZ’s current mission is to mirror the inevitable struggles of adulthood, they’ve successfully managed to tap into the conflicted relationship between rebellion and revelry with the song’s tactics of offsetting their signature bombast with anthemic melodic resolutions.

The song sequencing follows a cradle-to-grave trajectory, spanning from primitive origins through increasingly nuanced and turbulent peaks and valleys all the way to the climactic closer, “A Boat to Drown In.” The lyrics speak to this arc as well, with the songs addressing life’s struggles all the way through to death, as Edkins snarls “crashed through the pearly gates and opened up my eyes, I can see it now” before the band launches into the album’s cascading outro.

While past METZ albums thrived on an abrasive relentlessness, the trio embarked on *Atlas Vending* with the goal to make a more patient and honest record—something that invited repeated listens rather than a few exhilarating bludgeonings. It’s as if the band realized they were in it for the long haul, and their music could serve as a constant as they navigated life’s trials and tribulations. The result is a record that sounds massive, articulate, and earnest. Bolstered by the co-production of Ben Greenberg (Uniform) and the engineering and mixing skills of Seth Manchester (Daughters, Lingua Ignota, The Body) at Machines with Magnets in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, METZ deliver the most dynamic, dimensional, and compelling work of their career.