

**Pat Metheny Unity Group**  
*Kin (←→)*

The year 2013 has been a banner one for **PAT METHENY**. After being awarded his 20<sup>th</sup> Grammy, for *Unity Band*, and the release of his critically acclaimed recording of *Tap: John Zorn's Book of Angels, Vol. 20*, Metheny received word that the readers of *DownBeat* magazine had voted to induct him into its Hall of Fame. Not only is Metheny the youngest member, but he is also only the fourth jazz guitarist to be chosen for that honor, joining Charlie Christian, Django Reinhardt, and Wes Montgomery.

The coming year promises to be equally exciting. As Metheny says: “The *Unity Band* record and tour was life changing for me, and I really wanted to find a way to keep it going and take it to the next level. One night, I woke up with the tantalizing idea of taking the concept of ‘unity’ even further. With this next project, I envisioned building a platform capable of addressing the entire spectrum of things I have done over the years, from *Bright Size Life* to *Secret Story*, from my Group projects to the *Orchestrion*, and more, all in one place.” He continues: “With this incredible lineup of musicians—Chris Potter, Ben Williams, Antonio Sanchez, and the addition of multi-instrumentalist Giulio Carmassi—just about anything is possible”

With this mission statement, the scene was set for Metheny to deliver a career-encompassing recording. With the release of *Kin (←→)*, Metheny has, not for the first time in his complex and ever-evolving career, re-invented himself.

“The core quartet of Chris, Ben, Antonio, and me played more than 100 concerts over the year that followed the release of our *Unity Band* record. Over the course of that period, the band became one of those rare combinations of players where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; it gelled in every way, and that just seemed to beg for expansion and further research.” He continues, “Simultaneously, I had been itching to write using more of a lush and orchestrated kind of concept that went beyond the sonic limits of what a straight-ahead quartet might invoke. But I really didn’t want to lose the energy, focus, and intensity of what this band had developed. I wanted to take it further. If the first *Unity Band* record was a thoughtful, black and white documentary of four musicians in a recording studio playing, this record is more like the Technicolor,

IMAX version of what a band like this could be—but with that hardcore thing still sitting right in the middle of it all.”

Metheny goes on to say: “Writing this music and putting it together for this incredible collection of players and really integrating all of the materials at hand was one of the biggest challenges I have ever undertaken, but hearing the final result on this recording is also one of the most satisfying feelings I have ever had as a musician. And the possibilities that it suggests seem endless to me in the best possible way.”

In addition to contributing his usual tenor and soprano saxophone skills, Chris Potter is featured on half a dozen woodwind instruments in the ensemble, while Ben Williams is featured as soloist not only as a traditional acoustic bassist, but also on electric bass and, in one case, trading solos with Potter—showing off his arco bowing technique. Drummer Antonio Sanchez is showcased throughout: as is always Metheny’s preference, the drums are front and center on the album, yet there are constant textural surprises coming from the kit as well as a track that begins with Sanchez on *cajón* leading the charge.

Metheny himself, while often letting his band mates shine on the compositional vehicles he has designed for them, uses every moment as a soloist to maximum effect. From his powerful opening statement on the leadoff track using his trusty Ibanez to create a new guitar texture, to the variety of approaches he brings to the harmonic complexities that proliferate throughout, Metheny’s solos contain rare melodic moments that give his improvisations the same indelible qualities that his best compositions have.

Multi-instrumentalist Giulio Carmassi is the new wild card in Metheny’s hand this time around. Throughout the album, Carmassi holds the difficult and important role of piano accompanist to this fluent core of players. Metheny wanted to create a sense of richness that went beyond the more traditional quartet sound of the original Unity Band. To this end, in addition to Metheny’s own electronic, orchestrionic, and synth orchestrations, Carmassi adds trumpet, French horn, flute, alto sax, recorder, vibraphone, whistling, trombone, and some of the most beautiful and evocative vocals on any Metheny recording.

Each of the first four tracks on the record clocks in at more than 10 minutes, with the opening “On Day One” at nearly a quarter of an hour in length. But these are pieces that are not simply extended improvisational “jams”; they are meticulously detailed and developed structures that remain somewhat impervious to any traditional analysis while *also* providing inspirational environments for improvisation. There is a constant shifting of forms, time signatures, and pedal points along with ever-changing opportunities for the various personalities of each player to shine—sometimes in unexpected ways.

The title track, *Kin* (←→), seems to best capture Metheny’s new way of looking at music. Using the elements that make electronic dance music the sound of the streets, Metheny cooks up a brew that incorporates the drama and scope of some of his more sweeping projects with a digital forward-motion and makes it sound not only exciting, but natural as well.