That We Can Play

That We Can Play is the debut EP of the American electronic @-@ music project Games , consisting of producers Daniel Lopatin and Joel Ford . Lopatin and Ford (who had made electronic music together since their school days) produced That We Can Play in an apartment studio , using vintage synthesizers and sequencers to recapture the sound and style of 1980s power pop .
That We Can Play contains six songs , including four original Games tracks (one , the opener " Strawberry Skies " , with vocals by Laurel Halo) . It also has two remixes : a remix of " Strawberry Skies " by the Chicago duo Gatekeeper and a reprise of a song by Canadian musician CFCF . The EP , released in November 2010 on the Hippos in Tanks label , was promoted with music videos and singles . It was well @-@ received by critics , who appreciated the duo 's use of its 1980s power @-@ pop influences , and made the top ten of MP3 blog Gorilla vs. Bear 's year @-@ end list .

Background

Ford and Lopatin , who met in a science class , began playing music together in high school . During their practice sessions they experimented with electronic music using a Roland Juno @-@ 60 (belonging to Lopatin 's father) and their high school 's Ensoniq SQ @-@ 2 , which Ford used as a drum machine . During these sessions , the two became serious about composing electronic music together . For a time they had separate careers , with Ford moving to New York City to play in soft @-@ rock group Tigercity and Lopatin remaining in Boston to produce and compose music as Oneohtrix Point Never . In the summer of 2009 , they developed an idea for a group they called " Games " after what Lopatin described as " an intense 72 @-@ hour internet writing frenzy " . Lopatin and Ford spent a week recording demos at Ford 's home in Massachusetts , developing their sound with " a ridiculously sick collection of vintage synths " they collected during their years as musicians . Other musical commitments slowed the work , but by 2010 they had moved into an apartment (lacking heat and hot water) to focus on the project .

Production and composition

That We Can Play was recorded with a single stereo Pro Tools track and " outboard , secondhand vintage synths and sequencers " . Ford explained the process of making each song in an interview with XLR8R : " It 's almost like we just sit down with gear and are like , ' Whoa , this sounds sweet , ' and then we 'll make a beat , and be like , ' What if we do this ? ' and something comes out and we move from there . Where it gets really complex ? and you can 't be a slacker ? is you have to inventorize all these tiny sounds and constantly be trying to fit all of these moving parts together and see what sticks ? and it 's a lot of repetitive , careful @-@ listening kind of work . "
The writing , recording and mixing of That We Can Play is rooted in 1980s power pop . On a technical level , according to Steve Shaw of Fact magazine , Games 's instrumentation includes everything expected in 1980 's music and is executed correctly : bass lines , strings , keytar and arpeggiators . Instead of merely reproducing the sound from that era , the band pushes the music into unfamiliar territory . According to Pitchfork Media 's Joe Colly , the EP has a nostalgic sound ? due , in part , to the analog synths (" not just vintage but almost aged " instrumentation) and their " glitchy electro jams . "

Songs

That We Can Play 's opening track , " Strawberry Skies " , the only cut on the release that was produced in a real studio , was inspired by the theme of the American television show Law & Order . Critics compared it to Bananarama 's " Cruel Summer " . The track features dream @-@ like vocals by Laurel Halo , mixed with reverb ; according to Fact , it reflects the " cloud @-@ like " sounds of previous releases by Oneohtrix Point Never . In writing the lyrics to the song , Ford and Lopatin came up with several senseless phrases in writing the melody for the lead vocal , the former saying

that he " made them about Shaq and Kobe and eating steak sandwiches and pies , " and the latter saying " Anything just to get the sounds . " " Strawberry Skies " is followed by " MIDI Drift " , which features an Italo bass line , " pitch @-@ bent keytar " and " square wave synths " , and was compared by Michael Brodeur of The Boston Globe to the music of Ratatat .

  The third track , " Planet Party " , called " Apple IIe funk " by Joe Colly of Pitchfork Media , contains " wailing guitar synths " , " fist @-@ pumping bass " , " scattergun freestyle drums " and " sudden , surprisingly violent orchestral stabs " . Produced in the summer of 2010 and the first song to be chosen for inclusion on That We Can Play , Ford recalled , " We were making this smooth @-@ rock , Alan Parsons Project @-@ style shit , and then it completely got sliced and diced , mistakes happened in Pro Tools , and it became something else . " " Shadows in Bloom " , a reprise of Secret Service 's " Flash in the Night " , is a melancholy , mid @-@ tempo power ballad featuring bass , snare and synth harmonies described by a reviewer as violent , cavernous , and harsh .

  That We Can Play also includes two remixes ; Chicago duo Gatekeeper 's version of " Strawberry Skies " contains a sample of the PlayStation start @-@ up sound and , according to Fact 's Steve Shaw , " ups the ' 80s ante and slows the pace with their trademark industrial sex club character (sampling Boards of Canada in the process) , the result sounding far more like a real computer game than any of the UK club tracks currently referencing them " . The EP ends with Games 's version of CFCF 's " It Was Never Meant to Be " , which Shaw described it as a " lush affair " with " chopped DX7 pads and afro @-@ new age staccato melodies " .

= = Promotion = =

  The first song released from That We Can Play was " Midi Drift " , which was posted on Games 's blog in April 2010 . " Shadows in Bloom " premiered on the MP3 blog Gorilla vs. Bear and Pitchfork Media 's Altered Zones website on September 29 , 2010 . On December 14 , a remix of " Strawberry Skies " by electronic musician Hudson Mohawke (not included on the EP) became available for download on Fact 's website ; according to the magazine , it " manages to be totally malevolent while also sounding like an amazing street party , which is quite an achievement " . A Stereogum writer called the Hudson Mohawke remix " nice " , but preferred Gatekeeper 's " strangulation " of the song .

  That We Can Play was also promoted with several music videos . A video for " Planet Party " was released on Delicious Scopitone in August 2010 , which Larry Fitzmaurice of Pitchfork Media described as " a stutteringly smooth , been @-@ around @-@ for @-@ a @-@ few @-@ minutes " production with " jet skis , killer whales , water slides , wind surfing , track racing , and tape @-@ warped women " . A video for " Shadows in Bloom " by WEIRDCORE was released on November 11 and , according to Fitzmaurice , " showcases a warped take on airline attendants and air travel that has to be seen to be believed . " On December 13 a video for " Strawberry Skies " , directed by Josef Kraska and described by Gorilla vs. Bear as an " ' 80s chat line @-@ shower montage " , premiered on the blog .

= = Release and reception = =

  In August 2010 , Games stated that That We Can Play would be released in late September or early October 2010 . However , when the release date and track list were announced on September 9 the release date had been pushed back to November 2 . The EP , distributed by Hippos in Tanks with cover artwork by Christian " Megazord " Oldham and cover design by Rasmus Emanuel Svensson , was positively received by critics . In a November 3 , 2010 review Steve Shaw praised That We Can Play for its accurate references to 1980s music , writing that the EP " resides in a both unsettled and an unsettling state , with hints of something very strong and unique perhaps being tied down by exploring more recognisable formats " . Shaw recommended it to his readers , giving it a rating of four out of five . In a Boston Globe review Michael Brodeur described the EP as " unrelentingly retro , but intriguingly interstitial " , with a smoothness which " sounds like a familiar future " . Joe Colly of Pitchfork Media called That We Can Play " a quirky and technical treat " but

criticized the EP 's brevity , lamenting the omission of previous Games singles " Everything Is Working " and " Heartlands " . That We Can Play was ranked eighth on Gorilla vs. Bear 's list of the top 30 albums of 2010 ; according to Chris Cantalini , " The run time here is slight , but the EP 's brevity works in its favor , as there 's not a wasted second on this thing . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Daniel Lopatin and Joel Ford .
Sample credits
" Shadows In Bloom " samples " Flash In The Night " by Secret Service .

= = Credits and personnel = =

Credits and personnel from liner notes :
Personnel
Production , songwriting , performers ? Daniel Lopatin and Joel Ford
Mastering , additional mixing on " Strawberry Skies " ? Al Carlson
Additional vocals on " Strawberry Skies " ? Laurel Halo
Artwork ? Christian " Megazord " Oldham
Artwork design ? Rasmus Emanuel Svensson
Equipment