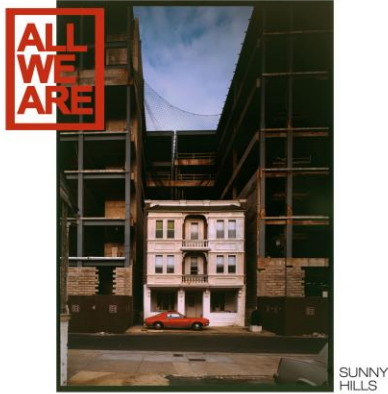




IRASCIBLE MUSIC



ALL WE ARE (UK)

Album: Sunny Hills

Label: Domino

Release Date: 09.06.2017

Web: www.thisisallweare.co.uk/

EPK: irascible.ch/de/releases/all-we-are/sunny-hills/

“We’ve been gone from home for too long for our roots to remain and this leaves us anchorless. We’ve taken to making music to feel a sense of belonging in a world where we don’t really belong anywhere. In a sense that is what All We Are is about, a surrogate family born from music.”

- All We Are, 2017

Remember pop that wasn’t just background music? That didn’t just dream of the past but fearlessly faces down the present and the future? Music that helps?

Liverpool-based three-piece All We Are do. In *Sunny Hills* they have created an irresistibly danceable, uplifting album about what it means to be alive right now, how it feels to be alive right now, and the power of friendship and togetherness in a world intent on driving us apart. It’s telling that hearing an album that’s both timeless and timely *seems* such a rarity - All We Are themselves are stunned that any band could not feel compelled to respond to the times we’re in.

“For us it’s hard to understand how an artist can’t be influenced and talk about what’s going on, sometimes you hear music coming out that seems to come from a completely different world”, explain the group. “It’s important to try and raise our heads up and draw attention to the everyday intolerable things that somehow become background noise. The need for us to have an outlet for this was very influential in writing this album.”

Coming together as students at Liverpool’s Institute for Performing Arts in 2011, the trio are made up of Guro Gikling (Norway), Luis Santos from Brazil (guitars) and Richard O’Flynn from Ireland (drums). Years of playing and developing their multifaceted music meant that their debut album for Double Six/Domino got major plaudits from critics and fans in 2015, but *Sunny Hills* is a serious step up that reflects their increasing cohesiveness as a unit, as well as the times All We Are, and all of us, find ourselves in. Emblematic of a diversity and dissidence criminally lacking in music at the moment

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the heterogeneity of All We Are's make up is both their launch pad and their onward spur - especially in times where that kind of diversity is being marginalised and attacked.

"We're even more determined to say, through our music, that it's ok not to belong", say the band. "Everyone on this planet is in a sense isolated in some way; it's the human condition, but there is a sense of unity in that loneliness. We want to say that it's ok to feel different; it's ok to feel alone and just do what you can to be loved and loving."

After spending much of 2015 touring and honing their sound further the band started to write new material with a new sense of urgency and power, songs that documented the emotional rollercoaster the trio have been on in the past two years. Where *All We Are* was funky, liquid, seamless, *Sunny Hills* has a wobble to it, a human heartbeat and a grit that reflects the energy of the band's thrilling live shows. The aforementioned idea of displacement as well as notions of personal struggle, despair and hope started pouring out in the writing process and the result is an album shot through with struggle but pulsing with a spirit of resistance and joy. Inevitably, the city of Liverpool itself affected the album.

Or as the group put it: "All We Are is a Liverpool band. We have been formed by and have absorbed the spirit of the city. Liverpool is an immigrant city and has a proud history of welcoming everyone, drawing from the culture of the people who choose to live here and making that part of its own unique vibe."

Liverpool is also a singularly radical and resistant city and the band see a parallel between today's climate of alienation and fear and that of the era when Margaret Thatcher, the city's most despised political figure ever, was presiding over a government that seriously considered evacuating the entire city after the Toxteth Riots in 1981. That was also the time that gave birth to post punk, a movement largely incubated in the north west of England, and it's this bristling, dissident spirit that provides the foundation of *Sunny Hills*.

The record's message burns through largely because the painstaking care and attention paid to the sound is also reflected in every aspect of the album's design - from the music itself, to the sequencing and the album's hugely symbolic artwork. All We Are at all times want to create a total experience with *Sunny Hills*, the kind of record you can lose yourself, and find yourself, in.

"The artwork shows an old house sandwiched between two large buildings under industrial development", say the band. "The woman who owned the house refused to sell to a number of developers including Donald Trump. She resisted for years while the developers even bought the space above the house. She finally won the case and stayed there for a decade more until her death. Before that mo-

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ment she watched Donald Trump's casino fail and finally close its doors. There is a feeling of powerful resistance in this story that we relate to along with a real sense of defiance and eventual victory against a bigger power."

What makes *Sunny Hills* so rewarding is that it isn't just a recalibration and reaffirmation of All We Are's spirit, it's musically a simultaneous refinement and loosening of what made the debut so compelling. Tracks like the startling opener 'Burn It All Out', and blistering battering ram 'Human' suggest psychedelia, avant-rock, krautrock and the aforementioned post-punk were all heavy influences on the band's sound but also that the band are finally surpassing those wide influences, truly becoming magically more than their parts. *Sunny Hills* doesn't sound like an amalgam or a stitch up - it sounds fluid, cohesive, and holistic. The band are now making All We Are music, nothing else.

A big factor in the band arriving at their visceral new creative destination was the formation of a new working relationship with Kwesi Sey, better known as the Warp Recording artist and producer Kwesi (Solange, Loyle Carner, Kano). "We started working with Kwesi as an A&R through his role at the label", they explain. "But the more we planned the forthcoming album it became clear he really got the music and us, as people and so eventually he put himself up for the job. It's more of an old-school approach, the A&R/producer and that was quite attractive to us. He's incredibly versatile and really got stuck in personally and emotionally in a way which helped us realise the vision we had for these songs."

"With this record we don't want to hold back and more than anything we want people to relate and hopefully end up taking something important from it", says the group. "Directness and humanity were, we felt, the best way to do that. All the imperfections and wobbles are what make this album human. We never really tried to make them happen consciously but when they did, we were really careful to honour that feeling. Not just in the writing and recording process but also in the mix and master. In that way it's different to the debut as we are far more confident in letting that happen. There is a beauty in the imperfections this time around."

For the band *Sunny Hills* was healing music. "*Sunny Hills* is the positive outcome, the end result, the catharsis. It was very important to us to start the record with 'Burn It All Out'. 'Burn It All Out' sets the tone, it kind of says get ready to be re-born, to re-skin, as the rest of the songs punch themselves out of the darkness towards the light. The titles reflect us emerging from a dark place to some form of redemption."

"There is a sort of 'self-immolation' in the record, a voluntary death in the darkness and a rebirth from surrendering to that", offer the band, "we would love people to take this message and translate it to their world on a personal level and on a more macro level. There is always a way out of even the worst



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place. Human beings are resilient and capable of the most incredible things and there's always a light at the end of the tunnel.”

Political, poetic, danceable and affirming - for all the proud citizens of nowhere, All We Are give you *Sunny Hills*.