

# The raver soul of Yoshi Flower

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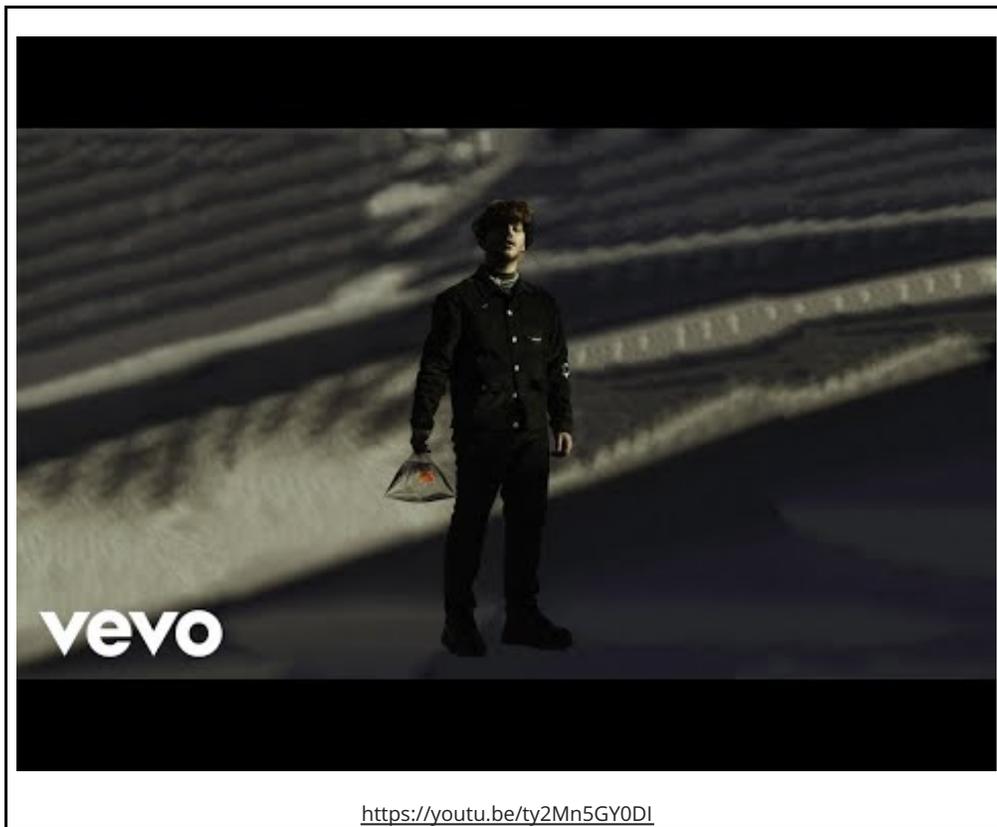


**ALL EARS** Two tracks into [Yoshi Flower's](#) debut mixtape *American Raver* we hear a voicemail from his dad. It's a shortcut to pathos we've heard on a million albums, from Frank Ocean's *Blonde* and Kendrick's *good kid, m.A.A.d city* to recent albums by Aaron Carter and Mike Posner. It's easy for the uninformed to roll their eyes—except Yoshi's "dad" is 26-year-old comedian Brandon Wardell, who regales Yoshi with criticisms in a voice that sounds *almost* like someone's happy-go-lucky pops.

"We recorded like 20 minutes of it," Yoshi told me over the phone—though only a few short snatches made it onto the mixtape. Both performers were quite stoned, and judging by the singer's tortoise-slow drawl and lyrical fixation on chemical consumption, it's not an uncommon state to find him in.

"[Wardell] was like, 'I don't want your mother to hear this, but luckily you're not famous at all, and nobody hears your music unless it's a Spotify curated playlist,'" he says. "He was going in on me. He's like a happy cynic."

Those words could just as easily describe Yoshi Flower, who'll be [playing at the Rickshaw Stop Fri/22](#), as part of San Francisco's long-running weekly Popszene indie dance party.



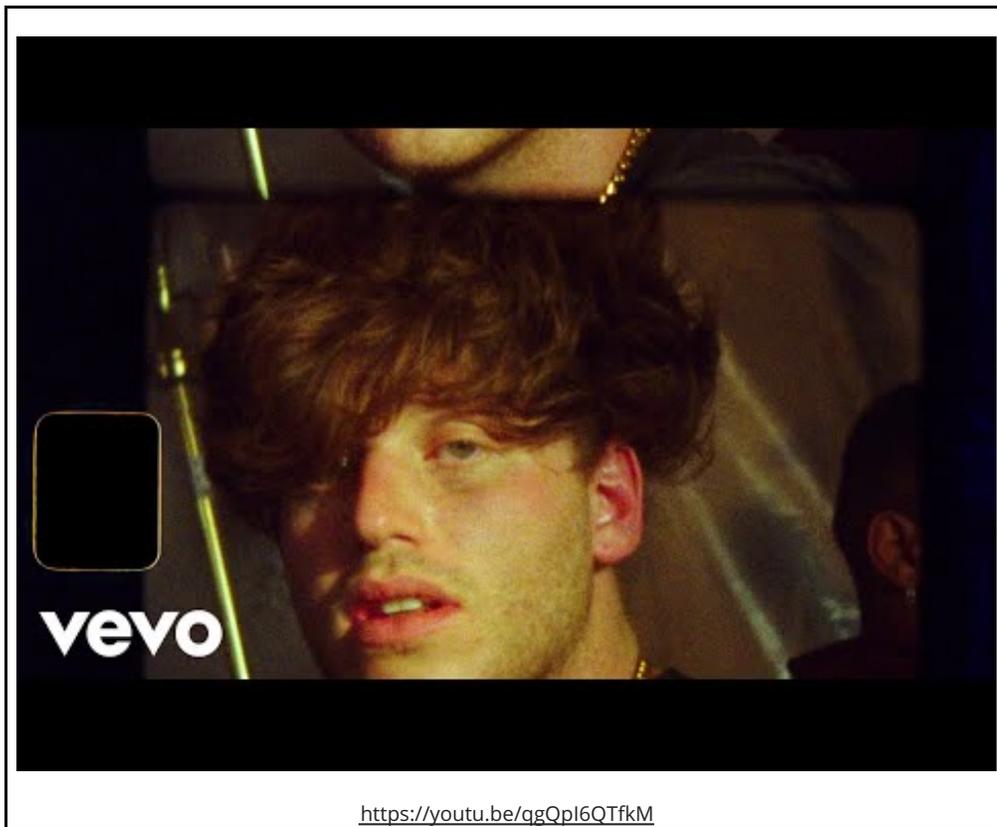
<https://youtu.be/ty2Mn5GY0D!>

The Detroit artist presents himself in his music as sort of as half-hedonist, half-guru. "Sometimes I wanna listen to Lil Pump, sometimes I wanna listen to Deepak Chopra," he tells me, and he comes off a little like both—the former most prominently in how his music is explicitly youth-oriented. "It's not for people who have guns and mortgages," he quips.

Born Josh Smith, Yoshi came of age in Detroit's underground rave scene and saw legendary local DJs like Moodymann and Carl Craig as a teenager while gobbling all manner of drugs: nitrous, molly, acid.

"None of us had money to go to a festival," he says. "So by the time we were able to even go to one they were all mad expensive, so we'd just go to warehouses and it was very freeing. Nobody had to be a certain type of way. All you had to do was feel the bass."

His raver bona fides form a strong part of his artistic identity (the track titles of *American Raver* spell out a pledge of allegiance to "the rave"). But his music is worlds away from Detroit dance music. He makes pop in an omnivorous, post-Internet sense; he sings, he raps, he strums an acoustic while filling the margins with hip-hop beats and post-Diplo chipmunk vocals. It's hard to pin down but easy to imagine on pop radio.



He first came to prominence as one-half of goth-R&B duo Gosh Pith before his manager, on a whim, cold-emailed his SoundCloud link to a promoter at Bonnaroo in 2017. They had a spot they needed to fill, and rumors about the identity of the mysterious Yoshi Flower began to spread like wildfire—not least once he and his friends put up signs around the festival grounds reading “TAKE ACID AND GO SEE YOSHI FLOWER.”

This was the first-ever Flower gig, and he now plays the kinds of festivals he couldn’t afford growing up. But with fame comes public scrutiny, and the Wardell clips on his album could be seen as a reflection of the barrier any celebrity or proto-celebrity crosses where the whole world holds a mirror up to you.

“A lot more people are asking me to explain myself, and I’ve realized I’m just so fucking extreme in my ways,” he says. “Either Bohemian dwelling or complete utter materialism... I meditated today with diamonds on.”

**YOSHI FLOWER, KENNYHOOLA, PARENTZ, DJ AARON AXELSEN**

**9 p.m., \$13-\$15.**

**Rickshaw Stop, SF**

**[More info here](#)**

Daniel Bromfield

Daniel Bromfield is a San Francisco native and arts journalist whose work has appeared in the Bay Guardian, San Francisco Magazine, Resident Advisor, and various music sites. He ran the SF Rebirth blog, documenting all-ages shows in the Bay Area, from 2010 to 2013. His work can be found at [danielbromfield.com](http://danielbromfield.com)

