

# THE DANSE SOCIETY - DEMO VOL.1

**The Danse Society Demos Vol. 1 Dark Entries** I'm reviewing the new "Change Of Skin" album tomorrow, but figured dealing with the old before the new made best sense. This collection is something fans of the band, or of original Goth generally, should be eager to get and it was quite a surprise to me. Not the songs, as I'd had a tape version of the Greenhouse session since the mid 80's, but it's on vinyl. Josh sent me one after I'd done some sleevenotes and sent photos and when it arrived the other day it was like shooting backwards in time, as I don't have a record deck anymore, and the album even comes in a polythene slipcase, making it seem exactly what it was like to unwrap an album way back when. I should also add that because I'm not senile the points I made for the sleevenotes, which weren't able to be fully included due to space restrictions, pretty much constituted a review in themselves, so I am not writing a new review, but using those selfsame words here. Josh sent me a CDr copy with the vinyl, and I have been bathing happily in the deliciously musty sounds, with the beguiling barbs and devious energy rushes. Very few bands ever managed such a supremely scurrilous atmosphere. The thing about The Danse Society is it all seemed straightforward, but wasn't. The sound was clear, clean and apparently roomy, but the songs were always busier than their department suggests, as though they were masters of exaggerated stillness. The ferocious rhythms could also fall back to dappled, heaving drums and pulsating, undulating bass, with the slippery keyboards, glacially pretty or mistily atmospheric, with guitar spidery or pushing with a grey intensity in the bleak but somehow breath-taking interiors they called home, with Steve Rawlings roving throughout, sometimes a collapsing scheming gurgle, sometimes an imperious chant. Like most bands the difference between their live edge and recorded warmth developed the further they went with recordings, as Record Company People balk at the notion of visceral energy, and that's what makes this collection so appealing. I have had these recordings (minus the 'Outro') myself for quite some time, as their jovial manager Jazz Summers handed me a copy with a statement somewhere along the lines of, "better than

the album" (referring to "Heaven Is Waiting") which is definitely true, in terms of how it captures them. A lot of these songs never made the album anyway, although some were hoovered up for the CD reissue, meaning you can come to this as something new, enjoying The Danse Society close up. Theirs is a sound which hasn't aged, leaving their records sounding as fresh, diminutively dank, and ergonomically exultant as they were three decades back. There is an intro and outro, for starters, topping and tailing the collection reverberating with a grow(l)ing stylistic sense of ambient foreboding then easing out with lighter tendrils drooping and dripping. Now "Heaven Is Waiting" itself is a fine album, but looking at 'Come Inside' we have a brief twinkling note, then a slow bass intro, distant vocals drawing nearer over mild drums and gaining clarity, yet remaining fairly sedate. The bass is the main glowering presence, the guitar fidgeting in the background. On the demos the bass is grittier, the guitar chops and sways like ominous overhead cables, Steve pitches straight in, and they push forward together. 'Wake Up' is a splashing mess in some ways, but as the guitar trails ignite, and the vocals complain, the keyboards fight to be heard as the rhythmic battering is maintained, bass plunging through the drum barricade. On the album version it has a steady electronic badgering pulsebeat, with pretty synth overlay and bristling drum flourishes before a languid Rawlings sashays down the stairs; a poppier take of events, with playful vocal hectoring. Steve patiently exudes a sense of freeze-dried ruin throughout a stately version of 'The Seduction', the keyboards serene yet impishly hostile as the drums come over the hill like land-based torpedoes, and it throbs until it just ... stops. (The version on the CD release is comprehensively spring-cleaned and teasing, although both versions bleed.) The 'Heaven Is Waiting' demo was recorded inside a watering can by the sound of it, which must have been a bit of a squeeze as Steve is left out completely. The bass is a sonic virus, the keyboards offer a delicate patter, the drums shuffle briskly, the guitar is whisked up into an agile cloud and the chorus escapes eventually. It's delightfully odd, whistling, squeaking and sighing, the keyboards trying to distance themselves to accompany the guitar on a form of simpering beauty. 'The Sway' is yelping, raw and soaring, the rhythm stuck in second gear and anxious, guitar operating like tweezers, vocals lost and hazy. 'Valiant To Vile' is threadbare with its knobbly bass, agonised vocals and stealthy beat, and

all the better for it, instead of the subdued grandeur of the album. 'Seen The Light' is an exorcised funk entity with an unholy drum and bass racket, blaring vocal compress and honking synth, but Captain Rawlings calls his crew in to order and they weave a compulsive, erratic clattering, vocal-spattered course. 'The Hurt' is a dimpled groan, with a rheumatic take on the album's sleeker fulfilment, as here the keyboards create a keenly delineated, sour panorama with curiously reflective vocals. Again both version have their own charm, but here we get the in your face experience. 'Arabia' has a massively impressive, chilly sweep to it, the rhythm still burly as the sound gets twirly. Great songs, obviously, from great times, but also great inspiration for anyone starting a band today, who wants to blend the enigmatic with the unruly. We can only hope there are earlier demos which can lead to Volume 2 and 3. (*And I now gather there are!*) <http://www.darkentriesrecords.com>