

Jan Garbarek – Dansere (1975)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Dansere* 15:03 2 *Svevende* 4:58 3 *Bris* 6:11 4 *Skrik & Hyl* 1:35 5 *Lokk* 5:39 6 *Til Vennene* 4:47 [play](#) Musicians: Jan Garbarek (saxophone); Bobo Stenson (piano); Palle Danielsson (bass); Jon Christensen (drums).

Among the many stylistic twists and turns negotiated by Jan Garbarek early in his career, the subtle shift in direction from the previous, spectacular *Witchi-Tai-To* to *Dansere* was probably the most decisive. In fact, *Dansere*, recorded in 1975, was one of the first examples of what would come to be known as the "ECM sound," not so much for the usual crystalline recording quality but for a creeping, languidly pastoral sensibility that would become more and more prominent both in Garbarek's own work as well as in the label's releases in general. Still, that granola and Birkenstock aura is subdued enough in this album to grudgingly recommend it to fans of his earlier work. Bassist Palle Danielsson, while less angular and experimental than Arild Andersen, provides a solid and propulsive foundation for Garbarek and Stenson, the former tending to increasingly rein in his playing as the influence of Albert Ayler, so prominent in his first albums, continued to wane. Instead, one can hear traces of Keith Jarrett, with whom Garbarek had recently been working and, indeed, much of *Dansere* compares favorably with Jarrett's quartet work from around the same time. Fans of his subsequent work with the Hilliard Ensemble might find this relatively tough sledding while lovers of albums like *Tryptikon* could well hear excessive smoothness, but it stands up decently enough on its own merits. ~ Brian Olewnick

There is a tendency in ECM's formative jazz releases toward immediately immersive beginnings. *Dansere* is thankfully no exception, with its introductory flutter of sax and glittering piano runs. Comparing this album to the recently reviewed *Belonging*, which features Keith

Jarrett in the same company as Bobo Stenson is here, it's amazing to consider the differences with another pianist at the fulcrum. One musician's worth of difference may not seem like much on the back of an album jacket, but here it translates into essentially ten new voices with their own sensibility of time and space. Stenson's abstractions throughout bleed into the listener's mind like a broad smearing of watercolor across absorbent paper.

This is music that has woken up after a long slumber—so long, in fact, that now it struggles to face the morning glare. The musicians seem to play with their eyes closed, grasping at those fading tendrils of memory that are so close in dream-time yet otherwise so distant. Whereas some of us might grab a note pad and try to capture as many of those fleeting moments before they escape us upon waking, each member of this humble quartet finds an instrument and sets his recollections to music. The album finds the time to stretch its vocal cords, to take in the air, to look outside and judge the weather from the clouds and from the moisture it inhales.

The title track is the most demanding journey here, carrying us through a gallery of moods and locales, and fades out beautifully with Christensen's rim shot clicking like a metronome into the heavy silence. In "Svevende" Stenson emotes a laid-back aesthetic, finding joy in quieter moments. Though we are by now fully awake, we still find ourselves regressing to the darkness of sleep and the promise of vision that it brings. Every moment leaves its own echo, so that each new note carries with it a remnant of all those it has left behind. "Bris" picks up the pace a little and showcases Garbarek in a heptatonic mode. Stenson also has some memorable solo work here, working wonderfully against Christensen's drums and Danielsson's steady thump. Somehow the music remains melancholy, speaking as it does in languages it has yet to understand. "Skrik & Hyl" features a sax/bass duet* of piercing incantations before Stenson brings us back down to terra firma in "Lokk." The title here means "herding song" and indeed feels like a call home. It unfolds like the dotted plain on the album's cover, a desert in moonlight or an ocean swept by a lighthouse. "Til Vennene" is the end of a long and fruitful day. Yet in spite of the album's pastoral flair, I find this final track to be rather urban. It shifts and settles like a drained glass of scotch, leaving only that diluted rim of sepia at the bottom: a mixture of melted ice and solitude. You feel just a little tipsy, straggling home through the rainy streets. Memory and sorrow swirl without blending, like every rainbow-filmed puddle you pass in gutters and potholes. You wander as if you are walking these streets for the first time, knowing that your legs will get you home regardless of your mental state. Your only footholds are those brief moments of bliss shared among friends; the only times when trust was never absent. Your world becomes blurry...or is it you who blurs? ---ecmreviews.com

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