



## Debora Petrina - In Doma (2010)

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By Mark Saleski After years of writing reviews, I have now stumbled into what must be the most embarrassing way to discover music: via a [tumblr](#) photo blog. I can't even remember what I'd been writing at the time, but I had googled the word "geek" and ended up on a site full of pictures of geeky women. Now of course, I'm not against this sort of thing, because there really are some cool and romantic photos to be found out there. It sort of makes me wonder what we would have come up with if the Internet and digital photography existed in the late 70's.



My scientific (\*\* cough \*\*) study has determined that over 85% of the images on these sites tend to be about Zooey Deschanel, Vans, Unicorns, or some variant on Hello Kitty/hey, look at this cool pink swag I found at the mall. In the middle of all of this was a photo of a woman sitting amidst a pile of keyboards, looking up at the camera with a "I think you should listen" stare.

And so I did. [Debora Petrina](#). Wow. This Italian vocalist/keyboard player is far from your average singer/songwriter, and the breadth of styles she puts on display reminds me of a remark made by author Barney Hoskyns in his Tom Waits bio *Lowside Of The Road*. As much as he loved *Rain Dogs*, he came to the conclusion that it didn't hang together well as an album because of all the disparate musical styles. My ear parts strongly objected to this idea. It has always been one of Waits' strengths, the masterful gathering of seemingly unrelated genres. I'll say the same for Debora Petrina, as *In Doma* brilliantly melds many styles.

How wide-ranging are we talking here? The torchy "Pool Story" starts off with the contained squeal of the krakdoos (a sort of cousin to the theremin), with Petrina beginning to present her story (one of the few sung in English). This sets up the transformation to an absolutely frenetic vocal delivery with avant guitar wizard Elliot Sharp bringing the noise. As Petrina leans into it, a song turned performance art, I'm hearing fragments of Pattie Smith, Yoko Ono, Dawn Upshaw, and Kate Bush.

And it all makes sense.

To go further out (or in, depending on your perspective), we have "Fuori Stagioni," on which the vocal line is floated slowly over a Philip Glass-inspired ostinato. Then there's "A ce soir," sporting all manner of techno flourishes, angular piano arpeggios and a chorus that employs dramatic vocal leaps a la Lene Lovich.

One big reason that all of this music makes sense taken as a piece is that so many of the songs can be heard as mini-suites, with several styles linked together. The aforementioned tunes take

this approach, as does "She Shoe," which begins life with Petrina in a coy little voice over a single synthesizer line but quickly accelerates into a chorus that ends up sounding like Susan Sarandon (from the Rocky Horror era) by way of Yoko Ono.

I know these descriptions make *In Doma* sound a bit disjointed, but the closing (OK, it's not really the last piece of music you'll hear, but I'm not spoilin' it!) "Sounds-Like" glues it all together with a little story about the fish who was mocked for not having a discernible style. Breaking from Italian on the verse, Petrina shouts out a laundry list of genres: Progressive / Black Metal / Nu Jazz / Shoegaze / Bluegrass / Surf-Thrash / Christian Rap / Indie-Idle-Jungle / Powerpop / Acoustic / Two Step / Free Style / Trip Hop / Gothic Glam / Psycho Healing Drum & Bass / Punk Funk Grange Crank Easy Listening / Happy New Wave.

Yeah, I'd say that about covers it.

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