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REVIEW

Music Review: Gardenian - *Soulburner*

Written by [Chris Beaumont](#)

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Gardenian is a melodic death metal act hailing from Sweden. They are a band that displays considerable talent on this, their second album, but their career quickly burned out following a third release in 2000. Their career began with the 1997 release *Two Feet Stand* on Listenable Records. Based on the strength of that debut, the quartet found themselves on the larger metal label Nuclear Blast, where they would release their subsequent two records.

This is the first time I had ever heard of Gardenian, and find their name does not give me the sense that they were a metal band. I did a quick search and could not find an explanation for the name, but I suspect it is derived from Gardenian Tradition, witchcraft based on the teaching of Gerald Gardener. Gardener was an Englishman who wrote texts on Wiccan practices and witchcraft. He seems to be an interesting character, whether or not he was indeed the inspiration for the band's name is unclear, but it seems like a logical assumption.

All names aside, the album is a mixed bag. Nothing is outright bad, quite the opposite; most of the album is quite strong. The problem is that, while the music is good and easy to get into, not much of it stood out to me. I feel as if I have heard it before. Perhaps I have. Gardenian is from Gothenburg, where a distinct death metal sound was born, dubbed, creatively enough, the Gothenburg Sound. The sound is typified by the combination of dual melodies with brutal heaviness, or at least that is the way I have taken it. The bands, In Flames, At the Gates, Dissection, and Dark Tranquility are other examples of the sound.

Soulburner has plenty of melody and brutality to spare throughout the forty-seven minute runtime. Odd as it is, the songs that stand out and help elevate the album as a whole, are the ones that feature guest vocalist Eric Hawk. Hawk, of the band Artch, provides all of the clean vocals heard throughout the album. Originally, Gardenian vocalist Jim Kjell had planned on providing the clean vocals, but he found he was unable to do a suitable job, requiring the enlistment of outside help. I must admit that the choice of Hawk (whom I had also never heard before) was a brilliant one. His unique sound, while not great, perfectly blends into the song structure and plays well with Kjell's growl.

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Christopher Beaumont spends much of his time writing about entertainment when he isn't sitting in a movie theater. He is known around the office as the "Movie Guy" and is always ready to talk about his favorite form of entertainment and offer up recommendations. Interests include science fiction, horror, and metal music. His writings can be found at [Draven99's Musings](#), as well as [Film School Reiects](#).

