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Gardenian: Soulburner/Sindustries

As Metal Mind Productions has recently done with old Roadrunner Records classics, they are now also working with Nuclear Blast to reissue lost classics from the vaults. Gardenian were a Swedish band that patterned their sound after Gothenberg greats like At the Gates, Dark Tranquility, and In Flames, and released these two albums, *Soulburner* and *Sindustries*, in 1999 and 2000 for Nuclear Blast.



Both outings are fairly solid if at times somewhat unspectacular Swedish melodic death metal. *Soulburner* contains some impressive tunes, as Gardenian mixes harsh death growls with clean melodic vocals, used most effectively on tracks like "If Tomorrow's Gone" and "As a True King", where Jim Kjell lets it all hang out, hitting the listener with every possible extreme vocal style in his arsenal, and guest clean vocalist Eric Hawk adding in the melodic touch. Music wise, these songs are nice and melodic, heavy, but not quite brutal, with plenty of tasty guitar harmonies (the In Flames influence looms large in this aspect) and beefy riffs. The band even dives into power metal territory on "Small Electric Space" where they sound very similar to Iron Maiden, Helloween, Brainstorm, or Edguy. Of course, if you favor rampaging melo-death, there are the killer numbers "Black Days", "Chaos In Flesh", and "Ecstasy of Life", each one a blistering concoction of deep growls, crushing riffs, and some strong melodic power metal wailing. You can hear bits of Edge of Sanity, Opeth, Dark Tranquility, and Brainstorm in these songs.

Over on 2000's *Sindustries*, the band worked with Peter Tagtgren (Hypocrisy/Pain) at Studio Abyss, and the results were slightly more straightforward with plenty of brutal moments yet still retaining the band's melodic sensibilities. This time around Kjell handles all the vocals himself, including the clean passages, and while he doesn't quite possess the same pipes as Hawk, he does a decent job here, letting his effective growls steal the show. Thanks to Tagtgren's presence, there's somewhat of an industrial flavor here (Peter was really pushing his band Pain at the time), which lessens the death metal impact somewhat, making this release less enjoyable overall than *Soulburner*. Still, tracks like "Heartless", "Selfproclaimed Messiah", "Scissorfight", and the title track are quite strong and contain plenty of exciting moments.