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**This Misery Garden** - 2009 - "Another Great Day on Earth"

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(61:50, Progrock Records)

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TRACK LIST:

1. Another Great Day on Earth 5:00
2. Vermilion River 4:54
3. Rejection Song 5:29
4. Instant Recoil 5:54
5. Force Feed 3:37
6. Pantomines 5:17
7. Bittersweet 3:11
8. On the Edge 3:41
9. Swan Song 4:03
10. Dirty Playground 3:53
11. Fractured Days 3:52
12. A Tasteless Poison 3:47
13. Say No Word 3:39
14. Everything Come to an End 5:33

LINEUP:

Benjamin - vocals  
Antoine - guitars  
Laurent - guitars  
Stephan - drums  
Jay - bass

**Prolusion.** The Swiss ensemble THIS MISERY GARDEN was formed in 2005, and two years later it self-released its initial effort "Another Great Day on Earth". In 2009 the band and the album came to the attention of their native label Galileo Records, which signed them and subsequently reissued their debut effort locally, while the American partner label Progrock Records made the album available to the markets it covers.

**Analysis.** Progressive metal has been a widely popular variety of progressive music for three decades now, and although artists on occasion do manage to find uncharted territories within the genre, these occasions tend to be rare. This Misery Garden, a band citing Tool and Katatonia as some of its inspirations, is an example of a band that does try to stay away from the most overly explored varieties of progressive metal. Perhaps not innovative, they at least offer a particular blend of stylistic elements that isn't one covered extensively by other well known artists these days. While heavy, drawn out riffs and more or less quirky riff patterns see to it that the metal elements are well covered on this production, it's the additional parts making up the compositions that are the most noticeable traits. Crunchy or heavy, distorted riffs with a nod or two in the direction of grunge is one of those, while others are light, swirling guitar textures and dampened, subdued riff cascades. Both of them with a slight nod in the direction of indie rock, but even more so towards post rock. The utilization of instruments as sonic textures rather than providing notes, riffs or licks is something of a trademark feature of post rock as I understand it, and while This

Misery Garden often sets up these elements somewhere in between the swirling indie rock guitars and the somewhat more droning post rock melodic noise carpet, the overall effect is more similar to the latter than the former. Assembled in short tracks featuring light, mellow verses and heavy, surging chorus segments or vice versa, with a focus on strong melodies, clean melodic lead vocals and a generally mainstream-oriented approach, the end result is a slick, modern yet also fairly intriguing affair. Good use of contrasting elements, a few vocal effects thrown in on occasion and quirker passages inserted here and there all add up to a well-planned and well-made effort. The major negatives for some listeners might be the overall melancholic mood though; one hour of metal melancholia may just feel like overdoing it just a bit.

**Conclusion.** If mainstream-oriented yet refined neo progressive metal sounds like something you might fancy, This Misery Garden provides a good example of just that. Short tracks focusing on strong and distinct moods and melodies are served one after the other, and the inclusion of elements borrowed from or inspired by grunge, indie rock and post rock add a modern tinge to these efforts, as well as an overall sound not extensively explored by other well-known acts. All in all a promising debut effort.

**OMB=Olav M Bjornsen:** *February 10, 2010*

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