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Gardens Of The Moon: The Malazan Book Of The Fallen, Book 1



Synopsis

The Malazan Empire simmers with discontent, bled dry by interminable warfare, bitter infighting, and bloody confrontations with ancient and implacable sorcerers. Even the imperial legions, long inured to the bloodshed, yearn for some respite. Yet Empress Laseen's rule remains absolute, enforced by her dreaded Claw assassins. For Sergeant Whiskeyjack and his squad of Bridgeburners, and for Tattersail, their lone surviving mage, the aftermath of the siege of Pale should have been a time to mourn the many dead. But Darujhistan, last of the Free Cities, yet holds out. It is to this ancient citadel that Laseen turns her predatory gaze. However, the Empire is not alone in this great game. Sinister, shadowbound forces are gathering as the gods themselves prepare to play their hand.... Conceived and written on a panoramic scale, Gardens of the Moon is epic fantasy of the highest order - an enthralling adventure by an outstanding voice.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 26 hours and 8 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Brilliance Audio

Audible.com Release Date: October 3, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B009L65JEG

Best Sellers Rank: #56 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Epic #160 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Epic #373 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature

Customer Reviews

After reading the reviews, but also talking to some people who have read Erikson's works, I must say I found myself to be an oddity. I neither love nor hate Erikson's works. Or, to be more precise, I love and hate them at the same time. The problem with this book (as well as the entire Malazan series) is that both the proponents and the opponents are right. That is, Erikson's writing has some excellent points, but it has some major weaknesses itself. It's one of the very rare cases where I'd describe the quality of the writing as "controversial". First, the strong points. Erikson is an excellent worldbuilder. He's an excellent character builder. He's a great plotbuilder. He's got all the qualities a

good fantasy writer needs. If you find a plotline, you're guaranteed to find it well constructed. If you find a well-formed character, you'll find him/her believable and coherent. If you find some world description, it'll surely be breathtaking. Now, the weak points. It's no coincidence that I started each of the sentences in the previous paragraph with "if you find". The problem with Erikson is, sometimes you get tired of searching. I think the one quality Erikson lacks most is underlining. Even mediocre fantasy authors know that in order to get the reader focused on their writing, they have to let him know what's important in the book and what's not. Erikson seems to ignore this truth - he seems to be constantly poking the reader, telling him "there are no less important parts in the book, everything is equally important". To show how much this is an issue, a comparison. I find that Martin actually cares for the reader's attention and keeps track of his main characters and plotlines - I don't have such feeling with Erikson.

Now where do I start? Gardens of the moon is the first book in a series of 10 (5 out so far) based on at least 5 continents and I estimated over 10 different character POV per book. There is also about 300,000 years of relevant history, numerous different species and a completely different system of 'magic' to the regular fantasy fare. With countless mysteries and good number of extremely powerful beings it is quite hard to get your head around it at first. So I will try my best in this review to give you a good idea of what to expect from the series as a whole. Firstly if you are looking for any of the following, beware! A young nobody (or lost prince) finds famous sword, hacks up baddy, saves the world. Main characters that never seem to die. A light read i.e. Few brain cells or imagination required (Harry Potter?). Author spoon feeding i.e. everything is explained immediately. Elves, Orcs, Hobbits, goblins etc. After about 100 pages of Gardens of the Moon you will be very confused, after about 200 it will be even worse, it was for me when I first read it. The story does pick up, but there are still a number of things that will have your head spinning. Erikson is not the type to give info dumps so the brain cells will have to stay sharp while reading this book since the info is spread through all the books. The first book is the weakest of the 5 currently published simply because it is impossible to fully understand everything that happens since you don't have enough information about the Malazan world. But perseverance pays off tenfold as soon as the second book and there is hardly any filler (WOT?) so it is worthwhile not to skim through.

There's good news and no so good news. The good news is, Erikson's "The Gardens of the Moon" is a fat, intelligent and wonderfully convoluted fantasy novel. Along with Ricardo Pinto's quite dissimilar but equally intelligent "The Chosen", this is one of the best genre debuts to appear in the last two or

three years. (As an aside: Erikson is a Canadian, now living in the UK. Pinto is Portuguese, but also lives in the UK. Hmm, wonder if I should emigrate too? After all, look at Poirot... Quite good for the little grey cells, it seems). The not so good news (well, the daunting news, at least) is that "Gardens" seems to be the first of a projected 10-volume series. Oh dear! Not again! Of course, the good news is not going to sound too good if you don't like "military" fantasy. "Gardens" is very much about war, dealing as it does with the Empress of Malazan attempting to conquer, by foul means rather than fair, everything in (and indeed out of) her site. There's a lot of intrigue and a lot of politics, and there's a hell of a lot of (deftly distributed) historical background, but in this first instalment at least, that's what it pretty much boils down to. Conversely, the not so good news is going to sound very sweet if you're the sort of reader who gobbles up each and every of Glen Cook's "Black Company" books the moment they appear. "Gardens" is not only similar to the Black Company series in that it deals mainly with the often magical struggles between irreconcilable and not quite comprehensible adversaries, but also in that it generally depicts events from the viewpoint of the more or less "ordinary" soldier (sorcerous or otherwise). Erikson is, however, better at this than Cook; he is also rather more ambitious.

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