

= Goldenheart =

Goldenheart is the second studio album by American recording artist Dawn Richard , released on January 15 , 2013 , by Our Dawn Entertainment . After her group Diddy ? Dirty Money disbanded in 2012 , Richard continued to develop her musical identity and worked with creative partner and manager Andrew " Druski " Scott , who co @-@ wrote Goldenheart with her . It is the first in a planned trilogy of albums by Richard about love , loss , and redemption .

Goldenheart is an eccentric R & B album that draws on dream pop , alternative , and dance genres . Its mostly midtempo songs have strong grooves and feature synthesizers , string settings , vintage keyboards , and an array of percussive sounds . A post @-@ breakup concept album , Richard 's songwriting poses relationships and personal subjects as epic tales through magical , medieval imagery and allusions to high fantasy and science fiction tropes .

The album was released independently by Richard and promoted with the lead single " ' 86 " . It debuted at number 137 on the Billboard 200 chart and sold 3 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . Upon its release , Goldenheart received universal acclaim from music critics , who praised its grand musical scope and Richard 's theatrical personality .

= = Background = =

During stints in different musical groups , Dawn Richard wanted to develop her musical identity and pursue a solo recording career . In 2011 , Richard was promoting the album Last Train to Paris ( 2010 ) as a member of Sean Combs ' musical project Diddy ? Dirty Money and released a free mixtape , The Prelude to A Tell Tale Heart , which registered one million downloads within a month . After the group disbanded in 2012 , she worked with producer , manager , and creative partner Andrew " Druski " Scott and released her EP Armor On , which sold 30 @,@ 000 copies . Richard also marketed herself through social media and self @-@ funded music videos on YouTube . Goldenheart is the first of a planned trilogy of albums by Richard about love , loss , and redemption ; it will be followed by BlackHeart and RedemptionHeart . She wrote songs for the albums over the course of six years . Some were written as ten @-@ minute songs and instrumentals , but Richard edited them down to avoid being " long @-@ winded " and " overwhelming " .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Goldenheart has an eccentric , dreamy musical style that incorporates spare , reverberating beats , icy synthesizers , and dream pop textures . Allmusic 's Andy Kellman characterizes its music as " largely pop @-@ oriented contemporary R & B " , while Jesse Cataldo from Slant Magazine finds it to be " aligned with an intensifying style of alternative R & B ... in which albums are intricately structured and thematic . " Marcus Holmlund of Interview observes an " atmospheric aesthetic " that blends " alternative listens like Björk and Imogen Heap with 80s pop ( à la Phil Collins and Prince ) " . Richard , who grew up listening to Collins , Prince , Genesis , Cyndi Lauper , and Peter Gabriel , cites the song " ' 86 " as most exemplary of those influences on the album . Goldenheart also draws heavily on dance music . Its melodic urban contemporary sound incorporates elements of electro , house , and European dance @-@ pop . The ambient , 2 @-@ step " In Your Eyes " and " Riot " both have euphoric house climaxes . " Pretty Wicked Things " features an industrialized , dubstep production , with jerky basslines and pitch @-@ shifted vocals .

Andrew " Druski " Scott 's production on Goldenheart incorporates synth pads , string settings , vintage keyboards , and varied beats . Music writers compare Scott 's partnership with Richard on the album to producer Brian Eno 's work with David Bowie during the latter 's " Berlin " period ; Jonathan Bogart of The Atlantic writes that Scott serves a similar role by " creating dense soundscapes for [ Richard 's ] often electronically altered voice to glide over , wash through , soar in , and pierce with sudden emotion . " The maximalist production of the opening song " In the Hearts Tonight " begins with 45 seconds of both staccato and tremolo strings , solo flute , and a ringing harpsichord line that coalesce with various self @-@ harmonising voices . The album 's closing title

track , a meditation on nostalgia built around Claude Debussy 's " Clair de Lune " , is solely performed with electronically altered voice and piano . Richard 's singing veers from restraint to expressions of yearning , with a quavering timbre . " Return of the Queen " posits Richard 's virtuosic vocal undulations against trip hop and operatic flourishes .

The songs are mostly midtempo , have strong grooves , and occasionally emphasize drums , with various percussive sounds that include bass drums , handclaps , and timpanis . Beginning with an eerie music box loop , " Northern Lights " builds gradually over a drum machine beat and layered , stereo @-@ panning handclaps . The handclaps and drum loop that are buried in the mix of " Gleaux " yield an urgent half @-@ time tremor and obscure chamber strings . The drumming on Goldenheart has a tribal , African @-@ influenced sound , which Richard attributes to the music of her native New Orleans : " It 's that marching band , second @-@ line music , that Creole @-@ influence in the kick , and the snare that drives everything for me . " The album is bookended by stately marches in " Return of a Queen " and " [ 300 ] " . " In Your Eyes " was inspired by the Peter Gabriel song of the same name , which Richard felt had a calypso and South African vibe . Steven Hyden observes several " hallmarks of ' 70s prog and ' 80s soft rock " other than the influence of Gabriel 's " art @-@ school deconstructions of classic ' 60s soul " , including Goldenheart 's Roxy Music @-@ esque album cover .

Goldenheart is a post @-@ breakup concept album that explores themes of imagination and dreams . In discussing trials of relationships , it portrays personal subjects as epic tales of battle and salvation . Gerrick D. Kennedy of the Los Angeles Times writes that its stories of romantic and professional heartbreak are " tightly intertwined through Richard 's imagery " . Her lyrics employ religious imagery , battle motifs , and allusions to high fantasy and science fiction tropes , including heroic last stands , world @-@ dominating empires , parted oceans , starflights , vampiric lovers , and military deployment , all used as metaphors for internal landscape and personal conflict . " Northern Lights " and " Frequency " feature space travel and cybernetic imagery , respectively , with the latter song featuring bandwidth references such as " your signal 's found a home " and " stimulation makes it flow " . Jesse Cataldo from Slant Magazine observes " a kind of feverish mysticism " on the album , which he views is " concerned with magical imagery and the self @-@ restorative properties of the human heart . " " ' 86 " is titled after the slang term and is about ridding oneself of barriers .

Richard views the album as her take on medieval literature , but calls her lyrics less " literal " than contemporary pop music . Lyrically , she portrays herself as an embattled queen in acts of guarding , fighting , surrendering , and conquering . She murmurs in the intro to " Warfaire " , " I fight a battle every day , against discouragement and fear ... I must forever be on guard . " The track 's misspelled title is taken from the television series Game of Thrones . On " Goliath " , she declares , " I faced the Beast with my bare hands " . " Gleaux " is an eccentric spelling of " glow " , referring to what the narrator wants to do with her lover to see each other in the night . " Tug of War " concludes a conflicted quest for dominance at the expense of a lover 's power . On the power ballad " Break of Dawn " , Richard promises herself and a love interest that he will " never see the break of dawn " . Richard , who wanted the album to end on a " hopeful " note , said that the title track " speaks of the fairytale . That naïveté . That moment where you felt anything is possible . " According to Laurie Tuffrey of The Quietus , the song concludes Goldenheart 's lyrical arc with a " wistful retrospect " on a relationship that began with Richard 's declaring her " champion " on " In the Hearts Tonight " and shifted to " Tug of War " , where she became " her own champion " .

= = Release and reception = =

Originally intended for release in October 2012 , Richard delayed Goldenheart 's release after signing a distribution deal with independent company Altavoz Distribution , which would release physical copies to retailers , and provide a wider marketing reach . The album 's lead single , " ' 86 " , was released as a digital download on September 26 . Goldenheart was released in the United States on January 15 , 2013 . Richard released the album independently , as she felt record labels were " taking a bit longer than we want " . It sold 3 @, @ 000 copies in its first week and debuted at

number 137 on the Billboard 200 , number 2 on the Top Heatseekers Albums , and number 68 on the Top R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Albums . The album also reached the top of the iTunes Store 's R & B chart , which prompted music retailer f.y.e. to preemptively release its physical CD .

Goldenheart received widespread acclaim from critics , some of whom hailed Richard as one of the best new acts in pop and R & B. At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream publications , the album received an average score of 81 , based on nine reviews . Alex Macpherson of The Guardian gave it five stars and called it " dazzling and imperious " because of how Richard 's " array of sonic weapons matches her epic , elemental vision . Jason Gubbels from Spin praised her eclectic music and versatile singing , which he credited for " springing finely placed surprises on listeners lulled into reverie , navigating tricky spots just effortlessly enough to mask her mastery " . Writing for NPR , Ann Powers found it altogether contemplative , joyful , and mythological . Jonathan Bogart of The Atlantic wrote that , with her Tolkien @-@ inspired lyrics , Richard " remains true to the oldest and most important standards of R & B , which , more than any other musical genre , charts the uncountable intricacies of the human heart . " Grantland critic Steven Hyden felt that the album blurs R & B conventions like Frank Ocean 's Channel Orange ( 2012 ) and Janelle Monáe 's The ArchAndroid ( 2010 ) , while Laurie Tuffrey from The Quietus said Richard distinguishes herself from her R & B contemporaries with her exceptional creativity .

In a mixed review , Slant Magazine 's Jesse Cataldo gave Goldenheart three stars and wrote that , despite its interesting " musical palette and tenacious personality " , Richard " falls back on the same tired tropes that have made many conventional R & B acts feel so exhaustingly familiar . " Ryan B. Patrick of Exclaim ! found the album 's lyrics uninspired and wrote that it " functions as a hypnotic aural distraction , but little more . " Ben Ratliff of The New York Times characterized Goldenheart as " oddball R & B ... at times mawkish , plodding , self @-@ obsessed , gothy , campy , filmic " , and mused , " Is it good ? I don 't know about that . But it has the dissonant attraction of something ventured . And it 's confident enough to sound normal . " Giving it four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars , AllMusic 's Andy Kellman called Goldenheart " sumptuous and grand " with enough exceptional songs to compensate for its intensity and indulgence . Pitchfork Media critic Andrew Ryce called Richard 's aptitude for theatricality " unparalleled " and wrote that her slightly " hammy " but " earnest personality both endears and empowers her work . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs were produced by Andrew " Druski " Scott , except where noted .

^ [ A ] " Goldenheart " samples " Clair de lune " , composed by Claude Debussy .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from Metacritic .

Andrew " Druski " Scott ? producer

Dawn Richard ? vocals

Deonte ? producer

The Fisticuffs ? producer

= = Charts = =

= = Release history = =