

# CD Review: Amanda Palmer — Amanda Palmer Goes Down Under

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[Amanda Palmer](#)

*Amanda Palmer Goes Down Under*  
**Liberator**

By [Al Kaufman](#)

There are two basic tenets of a rock concert if you want to get the crowd riled up: 1. Say the city/state/country's name 2. Say "fuck." And if anyone knows how to pander to a crowd, it is punk performance artist Amanda Palmer. On her latest solo CD, which consists mostly of live cuts from Australia shows, she deals almost exclusively with the country down under, and throws in her usually salty language to get the point across. Take the second song, aptly called "[Australia.](#)" From behind her gorgeous sounding piano, she contemplates, "I could decide to do these dishes/Time to decide." The music and her voice swells when she declares: "Fuck it, I'm gonna go to Australia." The crowd dutifully erupts.

And that's the thing. It's too easy. It's a trap Palmer sometimes falls into. For every inspired turn, such as her *Evelyn, Evelyn* collaboration with Jason Webley, or her gender-bender turn as the emcee in a Massachusetts production of *Cabaret*, she posts [nude pictures of herself](#) to celebrate her freedom from Roadrunner Records, or performs one trick ponies like an all ukulele Radiohead cover album. Her "I'm wild, I'm crazy, but please, please love me" shtick is beginning to show signs of wear.

*Amanda Palmer Goes Down Under* is Palmer's most egocentric release yet, and that's saying something. It's her love letter to her fans of Australia and New Zealand. It's the first place outside the U.S. where her Dresden Dolls really made a dent. It's a place where she would like to have a second home with new hubby Neil Gaiman. But this love letter is so personal, so private, it feels like we're reading her diary. There was a point in Madonna's career, when she released the *Sex* book, when people responded with, "That's too much. I don't want to know that much about you. Some things are best left to the imagination." This may be that moment for Amanda Palmer.

On the intro to "[New Zealand.](#)" Palmer admits that she wrote the song in her dressing room. It's all about her, her depression, her menstrual cycle, before realizing all the beauty of the island nation. She gleefully disregards meter and knows that her adoring crowd will lap it up like so much ice cream on a hot summer day. They do, and there's nothing wrong with that. Everyone has the right to throw the occasional pandering novelty song into their set. Palmer just has a few too many here. "[Vegemite \(The Black Death\)](#)" is a hilarious showtune song about wanting her lover to choose between her and that horrible black paste, and it's a tribute to her that she can get

her fans to wildly applaud her denouncement of their favorite food, but is it art, or just a quick joke? And, the question should be asked, what is the difference?

That said, there is some substance. Yes, “Map of Tasmania” (featuring the Young Punx) is strictly a song about the glories of pubic hair, but the thumping beat is addictive, and the [video](#) not only makes Lady Gaga seem like Mister Rogers, but it may also cause a spike in the sale of [merkins](#).

[“Bad Wine and Lemon Cake”](#) gives her friend, Tom Dickens, a chance to get his narcissism on as they collaborate on his song (with his band, The Jane Austen Argument) that has a certain fragile inner strength and Magnetic Fields feel. What is amazing is that someone as self-absorbed as Palmer (and I mean that in the best possible way) works best with others. Even her brilliant solo CD, *Who Killed Amanda Palmer?*, was a collaboration with Ben Folds. It’s almost as if when she is forced to share, she makes herself bring more to the table than just some egocentric rants. And just listen to her cover of Nick Cave’s “The Ship Song.” What a piano, what a voice, what sheer beauty.

Amanda Palmer is an artist who lives her work. She tirelessly fights for artistic freedom. She is open and fearless, and wants to shock and offend, but at the same time she craves love and attention, as many artists do. It’s a difficult tightrope to walk. Palmer still walks it, but, as much as her ravenous fans may disagree, she may be starting to slip just a bit.