

THE DRESDEN DOLLS: UPCOMING

As the saying goes, life is about the journey, not the destination. And perhaps this same concept can be applied to seeing a live show instead of being content with listening to a recorded album.

It's about creation.

This philosophy is the driving force behind the Boston-based band **The Dresden Dolls**, a punk-cabaret duo appearing at In The Venue in Salt Lake City on Tuesday.



Amanda Palmer, speaking by phone from a tour break in Washington, D.C., said live music and theater -- both just sub-genres under the larger theatrical umbrella -- are about connecting with the audience.

"I think it's very much about what people need. Not necessarily what the performer needs to express -- although that's certainly part of it," Palmer said. "But it's what people need in their everyday lives. It's why people go to the theater, why they love going to a rock 'n' roll show that is theatrical. Because that is something in all of us that we respond to. It's that idea of a special event and ... watching people make art together in a live setting, instead of just seeing the direct, secondhand effect of that -- like a painting or the record or artifacts.

"You're actually watching the moment. ... When you're buying a ticket and going to see a show, you're watching those people having that connection with each other on stage, having that connection with the audience, you know, in that specific time right there, and then you're feeling it happen and you're experiencing it with your tribe of people."

For Palmer, the performance -- or journey of creating art -- with drumming bandmate Brian Viglione is what is most important.

The passion for music and performance is something the two share, and that is what makes their live shows so special.

"There's a lot of improvisation and a lot of silliness, and we try out a lot of things -- plenty of times that fail," Palmer said.

Musical idols for Palmer -- the Cure, The Legendary Pink Dots, David Bowie -- have influenced her to bring an intense presence to the shows, making it more of an event than a regular old rock concert.

"The way that we play with each other and the way that we interact with each other is very immediate and pretty exciting," Palmer said.

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of **The Dresden Dolls'** live shows is what happens before the two take the stage.

Both Palmer and Viglione want to provide a creative outlet for their fans and others by allowing them to perform -- sounding a bit like an amateur talent show -- beforehand in order to create a cabaret-style atmosphere. Belly dancers, stilt walkers, jugglers, people walking on nails, and other creative theatrical types have all been part of pre-**Dresden Dolls** shows.

"It's just been beautiful to watch people use this as an outlet for their creativity because I think for both me and Brian that's something that's so important about what we do," Palmer said. "That at the end of the day, to not really make this about us, but to give other people their own form and their own inspiration to make something creative in their lives.

"And watching it happen practically makes me cry every night," she said.

As far as creativity for her, Palmer said she doesn't consider herself one of those tortured songwriters who must make music or die.

"I think my life is more dependent on the fact that I really need to perform," Palmer said. "I think that I'm a performer first and a musician second."

She said she bounced back and forth between music and theater all her life, many times intertwining the two genres. For her, music has simply been her favorite form of self expression.

"To me, it's really more important that I be able to express myself to people in a live setting and that's why I love acting and I love street theater and I love my band," she said.

But remember, the performance must go both ways -- satisfaction for both the performer and the audience. Palmer said she hopes the audience gets what it needs from the show.

"Some people want to come and you can tell that they want to be emotionally overwhelmed," she said. "They want to cry at certain songs and so they do, and they've gotten what they wanted. And some people want to come and headbang and rock out. And some people just want to come and sit quietly in the corner and listen. And some people want to come and flamboyantly dress up in crazy costumes and strut around and get a lot of attention.

"And since everybody needs everything differently, we can only hope that we remain open enough that we don't shut anybody out. And that anyone can come and feel that they have something to offer or something they can get and they can walk away happy

"And that's all I can hope for."