

BLENDER

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MUSIC AND MORE
THE DRESDEN DOLLS

YES, VIRGINIA ☆☆☆½

ROADRUNNER

Boston duo mash up punk rock and cabaret, sing about transsexuals and Nazi sympathizers

Most of the Dresden Dolls' second album is devoted to the uses of illusion—and abuses. The title refers to the famous 1897 exchange between an 8-year-old girl and a newspaper editor about the existence of Santa Claus; throughout this alternately brash and grandiose song cycle, pianist and singer Amanda Palmer explores sexual obsession (including, on the opening track, sex-change surgery), fanatical extremism (the protagonist of "Mrs. O" maintains the Holocaust never happened) and the elaborate deceptions that alcoholics commit daily. Her lyrics drip acid, especially when she shouts, which is often. But what makes her screeds work is the music she and drummer Brian Viglione fervently pound out—an amped-up grotesque of torchy vaudeville and European parlor songs that starts as high-concept camp and winds up strangely illuminating.

TOM MOON

DOWNLOAD: "Backstabber,"
"Dirty Business"