

ROCK

★★★★★

## The Dresden Dolls

Yes, Virginia...

ROADRUNNER



The epithet “unique” is overused, and often misapplied to artists who are unusual. In the case of The Dresden Dolls, it may be justified. The Bostonian duo of Amanda Palmer (keyboards, vocals) and Brian Viglione (drums, vocals) look like Jemima from *Play School* and a Pierrot doll gone a bit *Clockwork Orange*, and make a torrid and intensely compelling noise using an electric piano, a small drum kit, and their vocal cords. To call them incomparable isn't quite accurate. Their sound nods towards Sparks (that “best behaviour/mother nature” rhyme in “My Alcoholic Friends” is an almighty tip-off), and most of all there's Bertolt Brecht (their self-applied description is “Brechtian punk cabaret”). Their second album proper (or third, if you count live album *A is for Accident*) is a deeper, richer affair than their self-titled official debut; “Girl Anachronism” is still catchy, sardonic teenage angst, and there's a music-box simplicity to “Coin Operated Boy”. Whether Palmer's writing about sexual envy (“She's the kind of girl who leaves out condoms on the bedroom dresser/Just to make you jealous of the girls she fucked before”) or the emptiness of masturbation (“the first orgasm of the morning is like a fire drill”), her eye for detail remains pitiless and laser-sharp. **Simon Price**