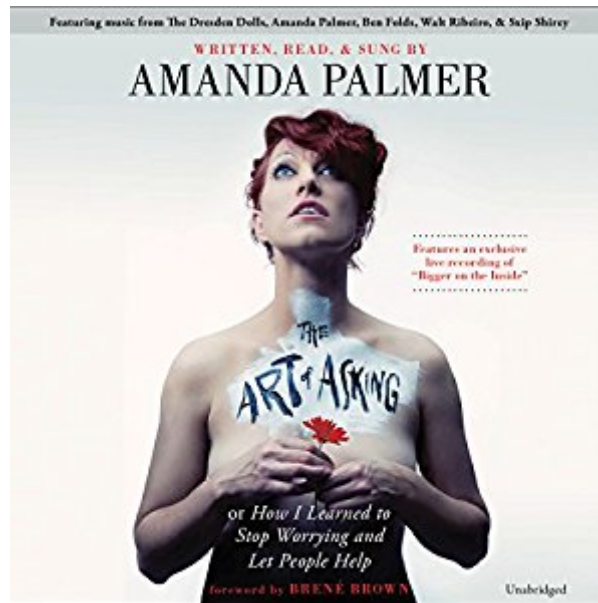


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# The Art Of Asking: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Let People Help



## Synopsis

"When we really see each other, we want to help each other." —Amanda Palmer Imagine standing on a box in the middle of a busy city, dressed as a white-faced bride, and silently using your eyes to ask people for money. Or touring Europe in a punk cabaret band and finding a place to sleep each night by reaching out to strangers on Twitter. For Amanda Palmer, actions like these have gone beyond satisfying her basic needs for food and shelter - they've taught her how to turn strangers into friends, build communities, and discover her own giving impulses. And because she had learned how to ask, she was able to go to the world to ask for the money to make a new album and tour with it, and to raise over a million dollars in a month. In *The Art of Asking*, Palmer expands upon her popular TED talk to reveal how ordinary people, those of us without thousands of Twitter followers and adoring fans, can use these same principles in our own lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There is no way to describe my experience reading this book, of reading Amanda Palmer's unique voice. So very much of what she shared resonated so deeply with me, I find myself unable to articulate just how I feel, like I was reading myself in certain parts. I know I am not alone in this feeling, for it was her TED talk on the topic of this book that led to its inception...because it resonated with so many. We all want to be seen, understood, loved. Do yourself a favor, don't judge this book on negative information/misinformation about Amanda Palmer's history or even potentially this book, basically any preconceived notions of negativity. Read this with an open heart. Make up your own mind. If you're here reading this then you are curious about it for a

reason. Follow that intuition down the rabbit hole and if you cannot find the transformative power of overwhelming love at the end of that epic journey...then I will send you some of mine, for I found not only the love for everyone she gives so freely with this intimate look at her life...but also a renewed trust in humanity. In the collective power of individuals coming together in ways we should...though rarely do. Yes, it is about asking, though not in the way you might think. I saw it more as a give and take. A mutual exchange, a mutual benefit that all involved are ultimately blessed by. A bravely written and poignant reminder that we all belong together. To love, help, give, receive, rejoice, mourn, all the gradations of human emotion, inherently, are meant to be shared with each other. We've built the walls around ourselves too high. They need to come down. The gift this book gave me, the gift Amanda Palmer and the plethora of her supporters, fans, friends, family, etc. was to follow your dreams, share the love...trust and above all...take the flower.

Amanda Palmer -- indie musician/artist/blogger/frequent exhibitionist/formerly half of the punk cabaret band The Dresden Dolls -- is a polarizing figure. Her army of adoring fans follow her every move; her detractors are ready to pounce on her every public misstep, which she provides via the simple expedient of rarely filtering anything she thinks, says or does. If you have an opinion about Amanda Palmer, reading her new book *The Art of Asking* will very likely reinforce it, many times over. *The Art of Asking* (subtitle: *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Let People Help*) is an expansion of the popular TED talk she gave in 2013 of the same name, in which she described her early days working as a "living statue" street performer and how her lifelong business model developed out of the relationships she built with fans. When your work means something to someone, she found, that person will want to pay you for it. "I think people have been obsessed with the wrong question, which is 'How do we make people pay for music?'" she said then. "What if we started asking, 'How do we let people pay for music?'" Over three million people have since watched that video. Her book takes it farther, delving even deeper into the value she's found that people place on art when it speaks to them and the transactional nature of human connection. Just as importantly, it's a master class on how an artist can build, maintain and grow an audience in a new social media environment where record labels rarely promote anyone these days whose name isn't Beyonce or Taylor Swift. "How

do we create a world in which people don't think of art just as a product, but as a relationship? she asks. And she answers, in detail. For some readers, her description of the trials and triumphs of her record-breaking Kickstarter campaign where she asked for \$100,000 and received \$1.2 million may be worth the price of the book. It's also a memoir, as it has to be because to be Amanda Palmer is to expose yourself completely. If there's anything that Palmer watchers can agree on, it's that she puts everything out there, for good or bad, whether it's on Twitter or Facebook or Tumblr or Instagram or her blog or in her songs or, now, in this book. "The Art of Asking" is as emotionally open and blunt as everything else she does. But is it any good? Unquestionably, fans will love it. Palmer has an easy writing style that lends itself perfectly to stories told while sitting around the kitchen table or hanging out by the bar and she opens up here as never before, skipping around her life out of order to talk about influences, seminal moments, important people such as the next-door neighbor who became her mentor, and, throughout, her relationship to her husband, author Neil Gaiman. For that matter, Gaiman fans will appreciate the glimpse into their private life. Anyone who wondered what these two very different people saw in each other may gain some insight as to how they grew together and how they make it work. If you're not a fan, you may become one. If you dislike Amanda Palmer you may find your assumptions validated, however, as she occasionally sinks into self-indulgence and skips over a few of the smaller controversies in her life. She talks about her early life and her decision to become a street performer standing on a box in a wedding dress as "The 8-Foot Bride," holding motionless until someone dropped a bill or some coins in her hat. She describes the surprising, almost tangible feelings of connection as she offered a flower or made eye contact and how she discovered that such connections had value. Palmer went on to form The Dresden Dolls with drummer Brian Viglione, seeking "salvation through" with their pounding, screaming Victorian punk rock style. Their audience grew, helped in part by her insistence on meeting fans after the show and her use of mailing lists and parties -- early social media -- for more fan interactions. She began building a community. When touring, the Dresden Dolls regularly asked for volunteers, food, crash space, and for local musicians to get up on stage and open for them in exchange for merchandise table space and hugs. Palmer found that asking for help almost invariably resulted in success and an artistic community of people who were joyously looking out for each other. When the Dolls were signed to a label, their first album sold well but not to the label's expectations. They also wanted Palmer to stop talking to her current fans to go court new ones, she said. It took her years to

finally break away. “The whole point of being an artist, I thought, was to be connected to people,” she said. “To make a family. A family you were with all the time, like it or not. That was the way we’d been doing it for years, whether or not we had an album or a tour to promote.” Not everyone saw it the same way. When she took asking to a whole new level with a Kickstarter campaign for her new album, “Theater of Evil” (disclosure: I was a contributor at the CD level), she broke the site’s record at the time and went on to launch the tour for the new album. As she had for the past decade she asked for local musicians to sit in, but this time the request was coming from someone recently famous for getting a million-plus dollars -- never mind that most of it was for pre-orders and shipping -- and she was soundly castigated for ripping off musicians. She posted a breakdown to prove it wasn’t all profit, and ultimately paid the musicians, but the damage was done and her reputation took a hit. Soon after she wrote a poem empathizing with Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev that brought a firestorm of criticism. She writes about those events, as she writes about everything. Palmer’s intimate relationship with her fans has, from the beginning, been based on trust. Crowd-surfing, asking for help, couchsurfing, letting people pick their own price for her music... all of it relies on the goodwill of fans to pay her to make more art for them. Ultimately the book is about learning how to ask. “Often it is our own sense that we are undeserving of help that has immobilized us,” she said. “Whether it’s in the arts, at work, or in our relationships, we often resist asking not only because we’re afraid of rejection but also because we don’t even think we deserve what we’re asking for.”

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