



EXCLUSIVE
by LYNN KERNAN

SINGER and author Amanda Palmer says Scots fans will be lab rats for her latest material.

The US artist is playing Edinburgh Festival Fringe next month and the shows will be the testing ground for her next world tour, which kicks off after her solo record is released.

Amanda, who wrote best-selling memoir *The Art Of Asking*, says: "I am at home in New York preparing for recording what will be my first real solo album in about six years."

"I'll be recording that in the fall in LA. The shows in Edinburgh are the laboratory rehearsal shops for my 2019 tour. Every single night will be a bit different and will help me figure out what I'll do all over the world next year."

Amanda has been a pioneer in her field since she started out as a living statue, performing her street act as an 8ft bride giving away flowers to passers-by.

Over the years she's performed with Brian Viglione in punk cabaret act *The Dresden Dolls*, with Jason Webley in duo *Evelyn Evelyn* and on a tribute to David Bowie, *below*, after the singer died. She says playing in the Scots capital is a great way to immerse herself in all sorts of art.

The 42-year-old says: "The Fringe is always really inspiring because you're surrounded by art."

"Everyone who is there is making art, and it reminds me what I'm doing and why I am doing it. When I go to see everyone else's shows it always makes me up my game. It always reminds me that I'm not just working in a singer-songwriter vacuum."

This will be Amanda's first Fringe since becoming a mum. The artist has a two-year-old son Anthony with novelist Neil Gaiman — the man behind Michelle Pfeiffer's hit movie *Stardust*. She adds: "It will be Anthony's first real Fringe experience. Another big reason I wanted to do a whole run of shows in Edinburgh was because there are fantastic puppet shows there."

"By day I'll be on the puppet show scene and by night I'll be at naked burlesque shows and everything in between."

"It is the Fringe so I might

My fans will get test of the Fest



REACHING OUT... Amanda can't wait to play new songs



even find a naked burlesque puppet show."

Amanda is still trying to figure out what it's like to be a mum and a performer.

She continues: "Having a baby has made me braver in some ways. I'm less afraid of telling the truth on stage, and I was pretty unafraid to begin with. I almost feel like I have to prove to the whole world and myself that I can be a badass and a mum."

The new material came after

a tough time in Amanda's life, including losing friend Anthony Martignetti to cancer.

The New Yorker says: "The new record is a really bizarre mix of humour and darkness. I have been through a couple of abortions, the death of my best friend and a miscarriage on Christmas Day. I have used song-writing to get me through those experiences and have come through the other side."

Amanda says being in Dublin on the day

of the vote to repeal Ireland's near-total ban on abortion was an incredible moment. She recalls: "There are women on public stages, telling the truth about their experiences. Being in Dublin on that day really changed me."

Amanda also plans to make the most of her Edinburgh visit.

She adds: "There will be lots of surprises."

● **AN Evening With Amanda F***ing Palmer is on at Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, Aug 9, 10, 17 and 18.**



THE NICKAJACK MEN

WHERE: Denny, Bonnybridge, Falkirk.
WHO: Lewis White (vocals/guitar), Michael Garner (guitar/vocals), Jamie Burns (bass), Lewis Rolland (keys), Matthew McAlister (drums).
FOR FANS OF: The Rolling Stones, Alabama Shakes, The Fratellis.

JIM SAYS: I've been keeping an eye on The Nickajack Men since first catching them at Stereo in Glasgow a couple of years ago.

More recently they impressed with a showcase at the XpoNorth festival in Inverness.

The boys are turning heads with their compelling brand of bluesy, indie rock 'n' roll. The recent double A-side *Changed Ways/Different Languages* shows they've gone up a gear.

Released through Electric Honey Records (the student-run label out of Glasgow Kelvin College) they are in esteemed company. It's the label that brought us early releases from the likes of Biffy Clyro, Belle And Sebastian and Snow Patrol.

They had already inked a deal with 23rd Precinct Music, the publisher borne out of the former



NEW MUSIC
By Jim Gellatly

Glasgow record shop of the same name. They are also managed by 23rd Precinct's Billy Kiltie.

It was at BaAD (Barras Art and Design), where 23rd Precinct are based, that The Nickajack Men first hooked up with Electric Honey. The creative hub in Glasgow's East End hosted last year's inaugural Resonate music industry conference. Bluebells frontman and college lecturer Ken McCluskey was along at the event with some of his students.

The Nickajack Men singer Lewis White explained: "They watched our set then asked if we wanted to put out our next release with them. We were obviously real happy to work with such a prestigious student label." Irish producer Larry Hogan — whose credits



▶ Watch a video of the band at: thescottishsun.co.uk

include Ronan Keating, The Saw Doctors and Brian Kennedy — also caught their set at Resonate.

They soon found themselves working with him at Dublin's legendary Windmill Lane Recording Studios, previously used by the likes of U2, The Script, Lady Gaga and The Rolling Stones.

Lewis said: "Due to time restraints we could only record one song over there, so we decided to do *Changed Ways*. It was a pleasure getting to work in such a studio. Hopefully we can get back over at some point in the future."

Scots indie favourites The View are big fans, with Kyle Falconer telling me The Nickajack Men are "absolute genius". As he tours his debut solo album *No Thank You*, it's no surprise that Kyle has invited them to support him at his Falkirk gig at Warehouse on August 18.

Before then you can catch the band at the Belladrum festival near Inverness on August 4, followed by Linnithgow's Party At The Palace on August 12. The Nickajack Men have also announced their first headline tour for September, taking in Café Drummond in Aberdeen, The Mash House in Edinburgh and Dundee's Church.

More: facebook.com/thenickajackmen

● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio, Sundays 2-4pm.

www.amazingradio.com
www.jimgellatly.com



Yoku's Island Express

Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC £15.99

THINK pinball and metroidvania and you have the new thrill that is Yoku's Island Express.

The guys at Villa Gorilla have certainly been thinking outside the box with an adventure that will keep you fully entertained from the first moment to the last.

You play as Yoku the beetle — who is enjoying life delivering parcels on a large and open-world island called Mokumana.

But an island god is trapped in a sleep so you have to collect three chiefs to perform a ritual and save the day. It looks like your standard indie platformer as you start out, but it is soon clear that you can't jump. You have to use flippers and bumpers to travel around the world. The metroidvania tone means you find that, if you have to backtrack, you'll go through tables you have already cleared,



which is a bit of a pain. However, there is a fast travel system that unlocks later in the game and removes that particular issue. This is a breath of fresh air that brings something new to the table.

Add in the overall polish and finish to the game and it's a must play.

★★★★
STUART CULLEN

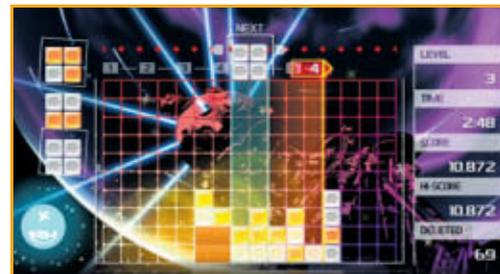
● **PLAYGROUND** games are showcasing Forza Horizon 4 with a series of live streams on Mixer.

Fans are getting a sneak peek at new modes and features as well as what cars you'll get to race around the new game in October. This week's second show



revealed the new map will blend areas from the Lake District and Cheshire with Glen Rannoch in Perthshire. Edinburgh is also expected to play a starring role. The likes of Princes Street, the get to race around the new game in October. This week's second show

Royal Mile, Arthur's Seat and the Castle look set to feature.



Lumines Remastered

Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC £11.99

YOU are taking a chance when you decide to remaster a game that is widely thought to be one of the best puzzle games ever made.

Expectation is massive and it is easy to get the knives out if ANYTHING is not quite right.

So props to the developers for their efforts with Lumines. The original graphics in 2004 were clean and very crisp with a great techno look. The HD treatment makes them pop with colour. The soundtrack remains awesome as and they have kept the original 40 tracks.

Good thinking. It was addictive, now it is even more so. This is a classic that has been polished until it shines — so treat yourself.

It is all about gameplay. There is no story and you don't care. You just want to get started and then keep on playing.

It initially looks like a Tetris clone but there is more to it. Squares fall in groups of four made up of two colours.

You have to stack them up by matching the colours, like your standard puzzler. However, the twist is that the soundtrack powers a beat line that passes over the screen. You can dial into the multiplayer side — on and offline — and see how you match up against pals. Either way, start it and you won't want to finish.

★★★★
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