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The Dirty Beat
Venero Amanno

Middle-aged Max is dead. He's in his sealed coffin, and all the people who have played an important role in his story and are still alive are in the funeral parlour to mourn his death. He was a musician, a drummer, led to the

life by his beloved stepfather. Max had been in a not very successful rock band, then a rather more successful jazz band. In between, he rode all the thrilling highs and wrist-slitting lows of making live music in low dives.

The novel is narrated mostly by Max as he relives his past, but sometimes a friend takes over and gives his or her version. There's Deborah Canova, a captivating violinist from the bush who bowled men over like ninepins then got flattened herself. There's Tony, once a D-grade singer and now a massively successful businessman. There's Iron John, once their manager and now a broken man. Laetecia, Patti, Jamie ... all the days and dreams of a life.

This is a lovely rocking rolling swoop of a novel about a muso with a penchant for self-destruction, but in the most engaging way. A blast.

★★★ University of Queensland Press \$32.95
Reviewed by Alison Pressley