



APRIL VERCH

The photos on April Verch's seventh album are a bit deceiving. The freshly scrubbed beauty could be mistaken for a young television star versus an accomplished player and composer, who started stepdancing at age three and playing the fiddle at age six. Who, by the age of ten, was winning fiddle contests and touring Canada -- releasing two solo albums before graduating from high school.

Now, Verch, who leads her band with her own simultaneous fiddling and dancing (selling out prestigious venues and festivals for years), is giving notice that she is emerging to take the role of one of the top women in the roots genre with her recent release, *Steal The Blue*.

Verch had previously relied on her supple and inventive playing to build a catalogue of albums that were mostly instrumental takes on originals and treasures of the past. On *Steal The Blue*, she brings forth her confident and winsome voice to lead the April Verch Band through songs from familiar roots writers like Ron Block, Sarah Siskind and Larry Cordle - as well as finely detailed instrumentals infused with pure and joyous energy.

Born, raised and now living in Pembroke, Ontario (in the Ottawa Valley), where her family has lived for generations, April grew up in an area with a rich, distinctive musical and stepdancing tradition shaped by the diverse roots of the immigrants drawn to the region's lumber camps. She began taking stepdancing lessons when she was three, but right from the start, she was drawn to the fiddle, too--though her parents made her wait for three years before giving her a fiddle for her sixth birthday. "By the time I was ten," April recalls, "that was it--I knew I wanted to play fiddle and dance for a living. I just wasn't sure how I could do it."

Her talents in both arenas quickly became evident, as she began winning fiddle and dance contests on her own. By the time she finished high school, she had recorded her first two self-released albums (*Springtime* in 1992, *Fiddle Talk* in 1995) and was touring full time, as well as teaching at fiddle camps, always integrating dance and fiddling into a seamless, dynamic whole. Offered a job with a leading fiddle ensemble after graduation, she opted instead to attend Boston's Berklee College of Music, where she was exposed to--and quickly mastered--an array of musical styles. At the same time, she capped her fiddle contest career with a pair of impressive wins, earning the titles of Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle Champion and Canadian Open Fiddle Champion.

Indeed, her success--and her determination to pursue music for a living--were such that April left Berklee after a year. "I only had enough money to get a two year diploma," she says with a laugh, "and I knew that if I did that, I'd be starting out with nothing but loans. So I decided to take the money I had saved for my second year and use it to start my career."

By the time she reached her early 20s, she had matured into a self-assured, vibrant performer, and was picked up by Rounder Records, one of the most prestigious independent record labels in the US. She released *Verchusosity* (2001) upon signing with Rounder Records, followed by *Where I Stand* (2003), produced by old-time music favorite Bruce Molsky -- adding a new dimension to her music, making her singing debut on songs like the Carter Family favorite, "I'll Be All Smiles Tonight." Roots music master Dirk Powell produced the next album, *Take Me Back* (2006), with a new emphasis on songs and arrangements with broader and roots-leaning appeal.

Now with her first independent release since high school, *Steal The Blue*, (Slab Town Records) April offers compelling proof of her continuing development; with songs that range from bluegrass to newgrass, with flourishes of jazz and melodic old-timey music - anchored by her touring band and the voices and songs of some of roots music's most revered artists.

"I was in a really comfortable place in my career when it was time to record again," said April said in a recent interview. "I decided that what I really wanted to do was make an album that just represents what I'm into right now, what I would want to put in my CD player...I've always listened to a variety of styles of music, but my tastes continue to grow and evolve as time goes on, and I wanted to reflect that in this project."

The record kicks off with a brightly tinged country-leaning song, "Slip Away," about taking advantage of life's moments. Verch follows it up with one of Sarah Siskind's songs, "Some People," a lovely and winsome confession, and one of the most contemporary sounding songs on the record. But before the listener has her pegged, she quickly slips into "My Friend Craig," a joyous rollicking ramble of a modern fiddle tune.

Hayes Carll's gorgeous plea, "Long Way Home," is dressed up with harmony and a decidedly bluegrass influence - and then Verch spins out an old-timey medley, "Fork Creek River", which includes her own arrangement of a John Hartford tune. Her own composition, the dreamily, waltz-paced "Independence, VA," is sweetly sung by her fiddle, while the most bluegrass song on the album is a Ron Block-penned gospel number, "He's Holding On To Me."

Verch closes the album by pulling from her Canadian fiddle tradition with "Reels Tadoussac et Lindbergh," perhaps to musically illustrate her declaration at every live show - "My dad always says, 'don't forget where you came from.'"

The April Verch Band features world-class musicians Clay Ross on guitar and Cody Walters on upright-electric bass and banjo. Together, these three passionate musicians tour tirelessly across Canada, the United States, the U.K., Europe and Australia. They have established a reputation as consummate performers, winning over audiences not only with sheer virtuosity on their respective instruments, but also with charm, humor and boundless energy on stage.