

APRIL VERCH

THAT'S HOW WE RUN

April Verch, doesn't just perform music, she exudes it. The internationally renowned Canadian fiddler, singer, songwriter and stepdancer has a passion for performing and her goal is to touch the lives of those who are listening at any given moment. "The world is this amazing puzzle that we can't fully understand and music is the joy that pulls it all together and helps us make sense of it," says Verch, with a dynamic excitement and confidence that makes you believe her in a heartbeat.

Dirk Powell, a multi-instrumentalist, who's worked with Jack White, Joan Baez, Riverdance and the film *Cold Mountain*, is awed by April's ability to play any kind of roots music as though it was her native tongue. "She's so fluent in the language of music that she never needs to imitate," Powell says. "She hears the heart of it and lets that become part of her core. April's just got that, man; she's always speaking the language for real. She is a rare mix of all the technique and super-flashy things, along with the deep soul and tradition that comes from having grown up with the music."

On her eighth CD, *That's How We Run*, April explores the Southern mountain traditions known as old time music, but always brings her Northern roots with her. Plucky, straight-backed Canadian tunes fit so snugly beside ancient Appalachian airs that you'd think they'd been neighbors for centuries. When she sings her own songs, you feel sultry Southern air blowing through every wet, bluesy slide of "That's How We Run," just as you feel the tight-shouldered Northern chill in her heartbroken "Still Trying." Through sinewy old time American reels or crisp Canadian hops, singing the happy Ontario chestnut "Moonshine Mac," or swapping hot licks with the cream of old time's new breed, like Dirk Powell, Riley Baugus, and Rayna Gellert, April is always being April.

Verch was born to traditional music, in Canada's hard-working, hard-dancing Ottawa Valley. She was a local star at four, step dancing with her sister and winning awards at contests. The fact that they were for "Youngest Competitor" didn't dampen her child-eyed enthusiasm. She became the first woman in history to win both of Canada's most prestigious fiddle championships, the Grand Masters and Canadian Open; and when Canada hosted the 2010 Winter Olympics, she was asked to represent her country's music at the opening ceremonies.

Ottawa Valley music is a foot-stomping, open-minded fusion of Irish, Scottish, French, German, and Polish influences, sprinkled with tangy spices of American country music. The twang of the banjo and the driving Franco-Celtic pulse of the fiddle are as ingrained in April as snowbound winters and Saturday dances.

“What makes the Ottawa Valley unique,” she says, “is that it’s melting-pot music. People there work hard, and when it was time to let loose, you went out and had fun together; you danced and played music. Growing up around that, being able to perform and see how happy it made people feel, I’m sure that’s what drew me into music.”

That desire to share music is why she’s among the most in-demand performers in roots music today, both with her own crack three-piece band and Bowfire, with whom she occasionally tours. The April Verch Band consists of April at the helm and world-class musicians Clay Ross on guitar and Cody Walters on upright-electric bass and banjo. They have toured across Canada, the United States, the U.K., Europe, Australia and China. Together they have established a reputation as consummate performers with boundless energy on stage that inevitably brings audiences to their feet.

Fred Kaiser programmed the storied Philadelphia Folk Festival for over 20 years, and now runs the 125-seat Mainstay in Maryland. He’s booked her at both. “Not every performer can adapt from large to small venues,” he says, “but I know April’s show will work, and I know audiences will want her back. That’s because of her talent, energy, showmanship, and the quality of musicians she brings with her; but it’s also because of her performing intelligence. She has a great way of keeping things changing and moving, not only with her energy level, but the different kinds of tunes she plays.”

Powell says, “April has an amazing ability to touch people’s hearts, get them having fun, and sharing the whole range of human emotions. She’s a grand master fiddler and a very expressive singer, but what sets her apart is the openness, humor and social fun she got growing up in the music. It’s not always easy for professionals to keep that social joy in their music. Even though April is playing at a very high level, she brings that explosive joy with her.”



April Verch Music
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