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April Verch Steps Out For a Down Home Good Time

With opening act Arlon Bennett, April Verch and the April Verch Band kick off the Hurdy Gurdy's 30th season.

By [Don E. Smith Jr.](#) [Email the author](#) September 11, 2011 [Print](#)

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The [Fair Lawn Community Center](#) was ruled by tap dancing, stepping and "good ol' fashioned" bluegrass music Saturday night as [April Verch](#) proved herself to be a double triple-threat.

First, she has two capable musicians in the April Verch Band trio with Clay Ross, on the acoustic guitar, and Cody Walters, on the bass and banjo. Second, Verch sang, played the fiddle and step danced with equal talent for the opening concert of the [Hurdy Gurdy Music Festival](#).

When Verch took the stage, it became a backwoods blue grass "stompfest" as she mixed the step dancing she learned growing up in Ottawa Valley, with fiddle playing that bordered on classical violin. Her performance was mostly dedicated to the instrumental, but when she sang, she proved to be just as amazing.

Style wise, Verch borrows from Lisa Loeb with the dark hair, glasses and girl-next-door smile, but musically she is incomparable. It's easy to see the influence of Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette or early Dolly Pardon.

Opening act Arlon Bennett's first song (which was the first song for the Hurdy Gurdy Music Festival's 30th Anniversary) was, fittingly, titled "There's Nothing Like a Song." Bennett sang that a song could cut to the heart of a person or unite listeners in the most somber of occasions. A true folk singer, Bennett's work can be compared to Cat Stevens or Bob Dylan.

Bennett's subject matter drifted from Vietnam War veteran traveling America on a motorcycle to Albert Einstein understanding physics but not the heart. He ended his set singing, "Be the change you want to see around you/ Be the right in a world of wrong/ Be the one, the one to make a difference."

One of the highlights of the evening was the surprise appearance of noted tap dancer George Bohn. He and Verch engaged in a "dueling tap dancers," as Walters plucked the banjo.

After the performance, Verch greeted fans and signed autographs with her bandmates.

The next Hurdy Gurdy Music Festival performance is scheduled for Oct. 1 with the band Bearfoot and opening act Loretta Hagan.

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