

Three Chords and the Truth UK

A UK perspective of country, roots and Americana music both live and in the home.

Monday, 14 October 2013

April Verch Band - Cookley Village Hall, Worcestershire Sunday 13th October 2013

Occasionally you come across the utopian scenario when all the essential ingredients for a perfect gig are in place. For a roots artist there can be no finer environment than a rural setting, an opportunity to ditch all things electric and an appreciative audience ready to embrace the fruits of their talents. To witness such a happening is a precious experience and April Verch's first visit to Cookley Village Hall in the North Worcestershire countryside was an evening to treasure as well as leaving a jaw-dropping mark on your musical senses. Of course it helps when the central figure is blessed with an amazing talent to play fiddle, step dance and deliver many beautiful songs in an informative and enthusiastic manner.

This evening of wonderful music which swayed through the repertoire of North American roots music with a specific nod to bluegrass, western swing and old time Appalachian was delivered by an accomplished trio of April, Cody Walters and Hayes Griffin, all three with a solid grounding in a style so rich in heritage and legacy. Their mix of instrumental exchange and shared vocals serenely reflected the combo of tunes and songs selected for the evening with a special focus on the latest album BRIGHT LIKE GOLD. This magical recording was brought to life in the intimate setting of a venue which fitted the ethos of the 'Live and Local' promotion.

It was impossible to split the impressive effect of April's fiddle playing and step dancing which she proudly enthused was in a style of her Ottawa Valley upbringing, a Canadian melting pot of European folk culture. The blending of her roots with those of the US Mid-Western background of Cody (banjo/bass) and Hayes (guitar/mandolin) laid the foundation of a delightful history lesson in traditional music spanning two nations from Ontario through West Virginia as well as taking in North Carolina and spreading west to the Mississippi. The anecdotes and education belied the young years of the enthused trio who matched their talent with a passionate interest in furthering the cause of old time roots music.

The flawless and pure vocals of April graced a string of strong melodic songs such as her father-penned '*No Other Would Do*', '*Sorry*' and the Flat and Scruggs number '*Before I Met You*', the latter in duet format, which all can be found on the new album. Also from this exceptional record we were introduced to instrumentals – '*Jeff Sturgeon*', '*Big Eared Mule*' and the origins of '*Big Eyed Rabbit*', while another memorable step dancing performance added the finesse to '*Sandy River Belle*'.

This was truly an evening not to forget and April closed it in a self- inimitable style of a finale showcasing the best of all her three talents. Amongst the admirers fortunate to be present in this rural location, albeit barely half a dozen miles from the edge of the West Midlands conurbation, was local resident Robert Plant who shares a similar passion for North American roots music as revealed in many of his recent projects. He will have certainly valued and cherished the spirit of April Verch as did no doubt many others present on this special occasion. Hopefully April will become a regular visitor to these shores and her presence is set to grow in the ever increasing select circles of traditional music.