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April Verch: Bright Like Gold

Posted by [John \(Biscuits and Gravy\) Davy](#) on September 1, 2013 at 10:19

Growing up as a public performer can only be regarded as an awkward experience; your entire audience is made up of people who remember you as a charming child prodigy and somehow you have to find a way of getting them to accept the adult person now performing for them. A Youtube clip I saw suggests there's still something of the child performer in April Verch, all bright-eyed and eager to please, but listen to what she does with her band and you'll be blown away by a musician who covers all the ground folk music has to offer. Rooted in the Canadian folk tradition (which goes back to the time of the first Queen Elizabeth and encompasses a mass of French input as well as the more familiar British folk styles), April is a virtuoso fiddle player, switching styles as easily you can imagine – playing smooth and sweet one moment, with an easy swing at another or with the raw-edged imperative of the bandleader getting everyone up and bouncing at a barn dance. On top of that, she'll break into a stepdance in the middle of a tune (and, yes, you can hear that on record, but best check it out on youtube for the full effect), she sings sweetly and she also contributes some original material of her own.

April's band are Cody Walters on bass, banjo and vocals and Hayes Griffin on guitar and vocals. Both gentlemen contribute material of their own and take a turn at lead vocal as this sprawling album (an hour of music over twenty tracks) takes us on a nicely paced trawl through a variety of styles and moods. They're a proper band, too, not just "April Verch and some guys"; listen to the set of traditional tunes, *Davy, Davy/Folding Down The Sheets* and you can just revel in the quiet joy of first-class musicians working in harmony with each other. The very next song on the album demonstrates the range and virtuosity of both band and album as Hayes Griffin takes the lead vocal on his own western swing tune, *Foolish Heart*. This track is so much fun that I wouldn't mind hearing them doing a whole album of this sort of stuff – maybe that'll happen one day. In the meantime, we're taken straight back into the tradition with a couple of more introspective tunes, *All Young/John Riley The Shepherd*. Really, *Bright Like Gold* is a primer in the wealth of material in the folk tradition and, as if to demonstrate one of the places that this all led to, we get a cover of Loretta Lynn's *Don't Come Home A Drinkin'* – it feels like quite a surprise in the context of all the other material, but a happy surprise.

There's a homeliness about this music which is impressive; these guys sound like a bunch of (particularly talented) neighbours who've got up to play for a ceilidh one evening. In other words, the hard gloss of professionalism is well buried by three musicians playing with warmth, feeling and heartfelt enthusiasm, and it warms my own heart to hear it.