

April Varner LONG Bio

“I am music” was one of April’s first proclamations as a very young child and it holds true to this day. Since singing her first notes as a four-year-old, inspired by none other than the Disney Princess movies, her journey toward growing as a musician began. In fact, April has spent the majority of her life performing and competing in the arts.

NYC-based jazz vocalist with the curly red hair from Toledo, Ohio, April Varner is a name you won’t soon forget. She began taking voice lessons at the University of Toledo as a classical vocalist at age 8 and began studying piano from her grandmother at age 6. No stranger to the stage, April began displaying vocal, musical theatre, drama, and piano talents at the local, regional, national, and international levels at a young age. This includes being a guest vocalist at the Toledo Symphony Orchestra Pops Concert, a 2-time All-National Honors Ensemble member in Nashville, TN, and a National Finalist at the Michael Feinstein Great American Songbook Academy in Carmel, IN. By age 16, April had made her Carnegie Hall debut in Weill Hall following a first-place award by the American Protégé International Vocal Competition, and had traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland as part of a drama group to share the stage with world actors at the renowned Edinburgh Arts Fringe Festival. During her freshman year of college, she discovered jazz and fell in love with the genre. At the start of the following year, she changed her major and the rest is history.

April is often described as a “direct, authentic singer...”, demonstrating “vocal dynamism... authentic jazz phrasing... electrifying numbers...” and possessing a “profound command of deep scat and vocalese...” (Marilyn Lester, *The New York City Jazz Record*). Grammy-Nominated jazz and adult contemporary vocalist, Jane Monheit, describes Varner as “an incredibly talented vocalist who has clearly put the work in to understand and express this music on a high level.”

Recognizable by her curly red hair and voice of an “old soul”, April brings her listeners to another place- one long ago when the giants of jazz were still gracing the stage. Amassing several viral videos on her social media of her challenging solo transcriptions, cleverly crafted vocaleses and acapella renditions of the Great American Songbook, April’s voice can fit itself into a myriad of different molds.

April has performed/will be performing at some of the most notable venues in the Northeast, such as Chris’s Jazz Cafe (Philadelphia), Blues Alley (Washington D.C), Con Alma (Pittsburgh), 54 Below (NYC), Birdland Jazz Club (NYC, sold out debut show), and Mezzrow Jazz Club (NYC, sold out debut show). She also recently made her International Debut, headlining the Longjumeau Jazz Festival (Longjumeau, France) in celebration of the great Ella Fitzgerald, along with two full shows at Sunset Sunside in Paris. In October, April will be an invited featured artist in the Jazz For All Ages Festival (Hilton Head, SC), alongside some of the most notable figures in jazz, such as Kurt Elling, Catherine Russell, John Pizzarelli and Emmet Cohen.

At the age of 27, April has immersed herself deeply into the jazz tradition and has performed/studied with a multitude of legendary artists and jazz luminaries such as Tierney Sutton, Russell Malone, Sachal Vasandani, Jane Monheit, Kurt Elling, and others. April graduated in May of 2022 with her Master’s degree in Jazz Voice Performance from the Manhattan School of Music under the guidance of 2-time Grammy© nominated vocalist and teacher Theo Bleckmann. She was awarded the 2023 Winner of the International Ella Fitzgerald Jazz Vocal Competition and most recently received a 2024 Honorable Mention Award in the ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Competition. She just released her Debut Album, “April by April Varner” (Cellar Live Record Label), available on all streaming platforms. This genre-busting collection of all April-titled songs was produced by Grammy-Award winning drummer, producer and educator, Ulysses Owens Jr.