

Mark Ambor

Rockwood



photo credit: Ryan Falco

You wouldn't know it from his hundreds of millions of song streams, sold-out debut tour, or chart-climbing singles, but Mark Ambor was nearly in college before he really let anyone hear him sing—including his family.

"I wrote my first song, and about an hour and a half later I'd recorded it on voice memos," says the Pleasantville, New York native. Just before heading out for work, he texted the clip to his parents, asking them to check it out. "A few hours later my mom responds and says, 'Dad and I really like this. Who's the artist?' I was just like, 'Mom,'" he says with a laugh, "'It's me.'"

A lot happened in between that voice memo and Mark's forthcoming debut full-length, *Rockwood*. Mark still went off to college as planned, earning a degree in marketing and business analytics while toying around with new instruments and finding his voice as a singer songwriter. By graduation, though, he'd committed to giving his music career a real shot—right as the world shut down in 2020. After some

dead-end outreach to record execs and industry leads over the summer, Ambor reluctantly took things into his own hands, uploading cover songs and snippets of originals to TikTok on a regular cadence. Before long, he went from playing mostly alone in his room to charming millions of fans across the world, garnering enough online momentum for a slew of high-profile co-writes and the release of debut EP *Hello World* in 2022. By the time he hit the road for his first-ever live shows earlier this year, Ambor was playing his songs to sold-out rooms belting back every lyric.



album artwork

“I dove in and wrote true music, and then it resonated more than anything I’ve ever made,” explains Ambor. To immediately sell out his first tour was a massive confidence boost—and a sign he was headed in the right direction. “I wasn’t as scared as I thought I’d be,” he says. “I was overjoyed because I was in a room of people that appreciated the things I make and just wanted to have fun and live it with me.”

To write and record the songs that would ultimately become *Rockwood*, Ambor took a step back from the collaborations and the hype. Drawing inspiration from Coldplay, Vance Joy, the Lumineers, and Zach Bryan—artists whose work and distinct sense of self greatly influenced his own work—Ambor took a month at home to record as many demos as he could. “When it’s just me alone in my room, there is no one judging me other than myself. The vision of what

I wanted this album to be about, what I wanted people to feel when they listened to it, became clear to me,” he explains. “When I let go of that need for success, I tapped into this vulnerability that I’d never shown before. And it feels really good.”

Listeners clearly agree: singles “I Hope It All Works Out” and “Good To Be,” both of which appear on *Rockwood*, allowed the 26-year-old singer-songwriter to reach new heights in 2023. And “Belong Together,” out earlier this year, has already racked up hundreds of millions of streams, topping the charts in more than 20 countries.

Every part of *Rockwood* is quintessentially Mark, from the songwriting and production right down to the title—named after the public park on the Hudson River near his small hometown. “Rockwood is a place you’d go to watch the sunset, to drink, to smoke, first date, maybe a picnic. When you’re there, it’s an escape. And everyone has a version of that, no matter where you grow up,” he explains. “I want this album to be an escape for people. I want them to feel good when they listen to these songs. I want them to feel heard. I want them to feel like part of a community, to feel a certain togetherness, to feel like they’re part of something bigger than themselves. That’s how I fell in love with music, and I want to give that to someone else in my own unique way.”

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