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[Home](#) > Fresh Sounds in the World of Bluegrass: First Quarter 2013

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Mary Beth Cross, *Beyond Good and Evil*: Singer-songwriter Mary Beth Cross weaves bluegrass, folk, and Americana on this album, featuring original tunes, an African spiritual, and some covers like The Gershwin's "Love Is Here to Stay." Inspired by the spirit and grit of the pioneers, *Beyond Good and Evil* is a tribute to the melting pot America has become and what we treasure.

(Produced by Dave Bechtel & Mary Beth Cross, www.marybethcross.com ^[2])

Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, *Roads Well Traveled*: Bluegrass Hall of Honor inductee Doyle Lawson has no shortage of the industry's biggest accolades under his belt. On *Roads Well Traveled* the seasoned mandolinist, singer, and songwriter showcases his ability to maintain his signature sound, blending in his passionate innovation. Lawson and his faithful Quicksilver tell stories that touch the soul deep down, proving his longevity and influence in music.

(Crossroads, www.crossroadsmusic.com ^[3])

John Lowell, *I Am Going To The West*: Critically acclaimed bluegrass guitarist and singer-songwriter, John Lowell's first solo project proves to be engaging and inspired. *I Am Going* shows how nature has inspired Lowell in his songwriting and influenced the melodies. A favorite track is his version of "Eight More Miles to Louisville," as well as the original (and title track) "I Am Going To The West."

(John Lowell, www.johnlowell.com ^[4])

Mountain Faith, *Battlefield*: With female lead vocalist Summer Brooke McMahan at the helm of Mountain Faith, *Battlefield* shows off the Christian bluegrass group's originality and versatile arrangements. Singing stories from the Bible, and harmonious hymns, Mountain Faith proves it's got a winner with *Battlefield*.

(Crossroads, www.crossroadsmusic.com ^[3])

Aaron Ramsey, *Gathering*: Aaron Ramsey finely displays his breadth of talent on his first solo album. He plays mandolin, guitar, upright bass, banjo, and sings. With an all-star group of musicians like Tony Rice, Stuart Duncan, Ron Block, and Ricky Wasson featured on the album, Ramsey is sure to gain recognition as a prominent multi-skilled artist.

(Aaron Ramsey, www.aaronramseyonline.com ^[5])

Marty Raybon & Full Circle, *The Back Forty*: Industry legend Marty Raybon is back with Full

Circle for *The Back Forty*, a collection of heartfelt, soulfully-sung, and upbeat bluegrass tunes. Sweet ballads like "Look For Me (For I Will Be There Too)," toe-tappers like opener "That Janie Baker," and heartbreaker "Hurt Me All the Time" show Raybon's love and talent for storytelling through song and fine musicianship. The album celebrates 40 years in the music business for Raybon.

(Rural Rhythm Records, www.ruralrhythm.com [6])

Sleepy Man Banjo Boys, *The Farthest Horizon*: One listen to this album, and you'll ask out loud: "These boys are HOW old??" The Mizzone brothers from New Jersey and are made up of 10-year-old banjoist Jonny, 13-year-old Robbie on the fiddle, and 14-year-old Tommy on guitar. This is the first album they've released that showcases their own songs, with some old favorites (Monroe and Scruggs) thrown in. The Sleepy Man Banjo Boys are as fun to listen to as they are prodigious.

(Sleepy Man Banjo Boys LLC, www.sleepymanbanjoboys.com [7])

Kenny and Amanda Smith, *Catch Me If I Try*: IBMA award winners (Emerging Artist of the Year 2003) Kenny and Amanda Smith play with some new musicians on their newest release since 2008. Cory Piatt joins the Smiths on mandolin and Austin Ward on bass. Special guests are Alan Bartram on harmony vocals and Ron Stewart on banjo. Heartfelt vocals and inventive instrumentation make this album another hit for Kenny and Amanda.

(Farm Boy Records, www.farmboyrecords.com [8])

Swing 42, *Déboucher*: This Spanish quartet knows how to have fun while remaining focused and inventive. *Déboucher* means "to uncork" which is fitting for this album, because once the album begins it releases a flood of intrigue. From David Grisman, to Django Reinhardt and Mozart, Swing 42 expertly cover familiar and fresh songs in traditional bluegrass and gypsy jazz styles.

(Red Pig Recordings, infoswing42@gmail.com [9])

The Earl Brothers, *Outlaw Hillbilly*: With gritty lyrics and upbeat banjo-driven tempos, Robert Earl Davis heads The Earl Brothers on their 5th album release. Dark material covers most of the album, and is played out with convincing emotion heard both through the instruments and the voice. Backed by James Touzel, Tom Lucas, Thomas Wille, Bill Foss, and Jody Richardson, Davis proves his chops as a songwriter and outlaw hillbilly indeed.

(Robert Earl Davis, Big Hen Music, www.earlbrothers.com [10])

The Gibson Brothers, *They Called It Music*: IBMA Entertainers of the Year The Gibson Brothers (Eric and Leigh) incorporate various influences on their most honest, anticipated record yet. With poignant material, their third album *They Called It Music* allows the Brothers to accentuate their already tight-knit harmonies. Enthralling songwriting and fine instrumentation make this album worthy of heavy rotation.

(Compass Records, www.compassrecords.com [11])

The Hillbenders, *Can You Hear Me?:* These bluegrass boys from Missouri show passion and

pride in bluegrass's traditional roots while bringing in their own alluring attitude. The Hillbenders look for freedom, identity, answers, and love in *Can You Hear Me?* in songs like "Train Whistle," "Game Over," and "Concrete Ribbon." With creative imagery in their lyrics and great harmonic hooks in their melodies, The Hillbenders prove they've got a promising repertoire to add to the industry's arsenal.

(Compass Records, www.compassrecords.com [12])

Tim Smith, *Fiddler Tim Smith & Friends*: Industry veteran Tim Smith shows off his latest cache of self-penned fiddle tunes (except for a couple familiar favorites). With style and versatility, Smith shows off his seasoned skills in rhythm and playing out of the bluegrass box with some blues and folk tastes blended in.

(TRS Records, www.fiddlertimsmith.com [13])

Toshio Watanabe, *The Fiction Twins*: Japanese artist Toshio Watanabe plays mandolin and guitar and sings to some old favorites like "In My Dear Old Southern Home," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" and "You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone." In the '60s Watanabe heard live recordings of Bill and Charlie Monroe on the radio in Japan and started learning what would be his favorite songs. Toshio was an original member of The Bluegrass 45, the second international bluegrass band to tour the U.S. back in 1971.

(Red Clay Records, www.redclayrecords.com [14])

Wood & Wire, *Wood & Wire*: Tony Kamel (guitar), Matt Slusher (Mandolin), Trevor Smith (banjo), and Dom Fisher (bass) make up Wood & Wire. They bring an unabashed, yet humble confidence to their music that is rooted in tradition and homespun into something that the younger crowd can get behind. They wear their influences on their sleeve, and they're not just blue. The material ranges from humorous to heartbreaking and all that's familiar in between.

(Wood & Wire, www.woodandwireband.com [15])

Tags:

[Fresh Sounds](#) [16]

[Music Reviews](#) [17]

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- [17] <https://ibma.org/tags/music-reviews>