

Critics' Choice 2013

It's been a good year for jazz. Hundreds of CDs released over the last 12 months attest to the music's continuing vitality and growth. As we do every year, we've asked our editors and critics to take stock of what they've heard during the past year — from roughly September 1, 2012 to September 1, 2013 — and send us a list of the 10 best recordings they've encountered. In each of the following lists, the first title is the author's top pick. The nine titles that follow are listed in no particular order of preference.



John Abercrombie Quartet 39 Steps (ECM)

Based in New York City and produced by Manfred Eicher, the uncompromising owner of Munich-based ECM Records, *39 Steps* highlights one of the world's most gifted guitarists in the company of his top-shelf quartet: pianist Marc Copland, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Joey Baron. Here the group functions in respectful, democratic fashion on an album that leans toward modern chamber music and that stands as a shining exemplar of the beautifully put-together music that ECM has championed since the late 1960s. —**Michael Fagan**
Gerry Gibbs *Trampler Dream* (The Whaling City)
Michael Webster *Allegretto* (OKA)
Ethan Farmer *Time & Change* (Good People Club Music)
Isabel Freeman *Three Quartet Project* (Organic)
His Skibinsky *The Passage* (self-released)
Chuck Owen & The Jazz Surge *Four Kings* (Dieruff)
Andrew Mau *Swing Along* (Again for a Reason) (CDB)
Troy Roberts *No. One 5* (self-released)
Al Di Meola *All Your Life* (Volume)