



The 2012 CT Music Awards

Christianity Today picks the top 12 albums of the year.

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Our annual best albums list includes the usual mix of clearly Christian and "secular" music. The loosely defined criteria for making the cut is essentially this: The album should indicate some sort of spiritual search, a quest for life's meaning. Sometimes the music comes from an orthodox Christian worldview, and sometimes not.

This year's winner, curiously, actually straddles a bit of both. **Phil Madeira's *Mercyland: Hymns for the Rest of Us***, a rousing compilation featuring various artists, features songs and artists that would clearly fit the CCM mold, and songs and artists who would not. And Madeira, the braintrust behind the project, is a little bit of both himself.

In an interview with Madeira when the album released in April, we wrote:

[Madeira is] a graduate of the fairly conservative Taylor University, but he wouldn't call himself a conservative—or likely even an "evangelical," for that matter. "My faith in Christ has moved me away from the organization we call 'the Church,' and into what feels like a more intimate and even mystical 'relationship' with the Spirit," Madeira says. He adds that he wouldn't disagree with universalism.

It's this "inclusive" theology, combined with the angry shouting of the 2008 presidential primaries, that prompted Madeira to want to do an album of "hymns for the rest of us," and thus the seeds for *Mercyland* were planted. Four years later, we now have a stirring collection of songs in the Americana tradition, much of it quite "Christian," with a bit of vague spirituality mixed in.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Top Albums of 2012

1. Phil Madeira (*et al.*), *Mercyland: Hymns for the Rest of Us*
2. Bonnie Raitt, *Slipstream*
3. Punch Brothers, *Who's Feeling Young Now?*

4. Bruce Springsteen, *Wrecking Ball*
5. Andrew Peterson, *Light for the Lost Boy*
6. Anais Mitchell, *Young Man in America*
7. Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden*
8. Bob Dylan, *Tempest*
9. Andrew Osenga, *Leonard the Lonely Astronaut*
10. Julie Lee, *Julie Lee & the Baby-Daddies*
11. Rosie Thomas, *With Love*
12. Lecrae, *Gravity*

Honorable Mention

(listed in alphabetical order):

The Avett Brothers, *The Carpenter*; Andrew Bird, *Hands of Glory*; Leonard Cohen, *Old Ideas*;
Rodney Crowell (*et al.*), *Kin: Songs by Mary Carr & Rodney Crowell*; Dr. John, *Locked Down*;
Benjamin Dunn, *Fable*; Jeff Johnson and Phil Keaggy, *WaterSky*; Bill Mallonee, *Amber Waves*;
Mumford & Sons, *Babel*; Kelly Joe Phelps, *Brother Sinner and the Whale*; Rain for Roots, *Big
Stories for Little Ones*; The Welcome Wagon, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*.