OLD SONGS THAT WERE NEW TO ME IN MARCH

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As someone who primarily listens to music that was released before I was born, it can be a challenge for "new music" to find its way onto my playlists and into regular rotation. While few and far between, a select gathering of tracks seem to reveal themselves every month through being suggested after playlists finish or shuffling artists.

Here are three songs, all released over 40 years ago, that made it through the cracks and onto my Spotify "On Repeat" playlist in March.

"Southern Girls"

— Cheap Trick (1977)

I heard "Southern Girls" a few times throughout the beginning of this year, but it wasn't until early this month that I found myself seeking out the song. Better late than never, however, as the track has consistently been a go-to for me when opening Spotify over the last few weeks.

Opening with a rollicking, cymbal-driven drum track from Bun E. Carlos, the song never loses steam through the rapid-fire lyrics and well-placed guitar licks. The piano is a subtle but welcome touch, and its combination with the bass pulls the lower end out in the mix.

The up-tempo section in the middle caught me off guard during my first few listens but makes for a satisfying return to a descending final verse.

The lively single may be even better live in concert, as the "BUDOKAN! (30th Anniversary)" version features even more crafty guitar from Rick Nielsen and crowd screams just adds to the song's charm.

"Lawyers in Love"

— Jackson Browne (1983)

"Lawyers in Love" is a peculiar track. As is the case with much of Browne's best work, the production holds up with anything released today. The song slides seamlessly from organ-driven soft rock to extraterrestrial synth, with bending guitar chords and a tom-heavy drum part connecting it throughout.

What does date the song, though, is the lyrical commentary on politics during the Cold War.

As a history buff, the words are half of the fun in hearing the song. For a listener less concerned with the past and more interested in just finding a good tune, the lyrics may fall flat, but the instrumental won't.

"You Got Lucky"

— Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (1982)

"You Got Lucky" is a showcase for the underrated Heartbreakers keyboardist Benmont Tench. The eerie track trades in Petty's prototypical guitars for a synth-based sound to great effect, as it's unlike anything else in the band's catalog.

In the first few listens, it was hard to place what the track was reminiscent of. I landed on Foreigner synths mixed with the blues, though there is definitely some new wave tucked in there. The lyrics are biting and undeniably angry and put the track up there with some of Petty's best breakup songs. The obsessive emotions expressed go hand-in-hand with the piercing piano chords in the chorus that double down on the heaviness of the synths.

Snail Mail bounces back with "Ricochet"

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Lindsey Erin Jordan, the American singer-songwriter behind the solo project Snail Mail, has been relatively absent musically for the past few years. After finding success in 2018 with her debut album "Lush" and in 2021 with the follow-up, "Valentine," Jordan was forced to take a break after undergoing vocal cord surgery.

After retraining her voice and overcoming the ordeal, Jordan came through with her third album, "Ricochet," on Friday, March 27. Musically, Jordan works in the same indie rock and indie pop lanes as before, guided by sentimental songwriting. But her vocals stand out as the most dramatic change, airier than before and with noticeably more restraint.

Jordan sucks the listener into her sound with the opener, "Tractor Beam," a neat package of indie rock fun that sounds like a higher-energy Phoebe Bridgers song. The power of the chorus feels limitless with its busy and dense instrumentation as Jordan moves forward optimistically, singing that "The future looks so bright / Skyward on a tractor beam."

Things get a bit existential on "My Maker," where Jordan sings about life's purpose and what might exist after death. While the uncertainty makes the track a good foil to the positive opener, cliches muddle the message and takes away from its thematic potential.

The first half of each chorus opens with Jordan musing about "Another year gone by / What if nothing matters? / Waitin' 'round to die / To see what happens after." When the bridge comes around, lush with acoustic guitars and fierce electric guitar tapping, what could've been an opportunity for more nuanced reflection passes by with "yeah, yeah, yeah" repeated frequently instead.

"Light On Our Feet" returns to Jordan's concern with the afterlife with lyrics fixating on spending time together with a loved one after death. The title corresponds with the opening, as a soft pattering of drums leads into a slowly drifting chorus, one of the catchiest on the record. The way Jordan spaciously sings the titular phrase and the words, "We're always falling asleep" summons feelings of pleasant dreams and unexpected warmth in early spring. Even prettier and more addictive are the dense strings that later layer the composition and ascend skyward with Jordan's vocals before the bridge slows down.

The following "Cruise" takes on a similar approach to the songs that came before but features a defiant trumpet cutting through the mix. Before Jordan winds things down in the outro, the horn reaches a near-overbearing volume, a nice switch-up compared to the guitars that typically add sonic density throughout the project.

The album's middle stretch struggles to differentiate the tracks from each other. "Agony Freak" and lead single "Dead End" are both heavier on the rock aesthetics and are thematically angsty , and while neither are bad, neither offers something the other doesn't. They're structured similarly, too, both featuring loud intros and choruses, while Jordan pulls back in the verses. "Dead End" has a bit of a euphoric outro with a "na na na" barrage, but even that differentiator feels reminiscent of the ending of "My Maker."

The same sense of likeness can be found in the run from "Butterfly" to "Hell," but each track has a little more going for them. "Butterfly" has a nice jangly energy, while "Nowhere" features a slightly slower paced style with a dissociative narrative as Jordan sings about "The junction of sleeping and being in limbo." "Hell" has more of a bite with aggressive, grunge-like guitars that hammer away at the listener, but the way they come in and out of the song echoes the structure of earlier songs on the album.

But Jordan comes through with the final tracks as a breath of fresh air. The title track brings back the strings from "Cruise," but they serve a more atmospheric role as the drums and guitar rumble with steadily building tension. The song ends in a graceful swell instead of explosive energy, a nice change of pace.

The closer "Reverie" is the calmest track on the album, a fitting way to end things off as Jordan brings back the optimism from "Tractor Beam" and "Light On Our Feet." Jordan sings about rejecting a socialite figure and embracing someone she truly cares for, ending by calling this newfound partner "a lighthouse / In my cold, stormy life."

Jordan's return to Snail Mail with "Ricochet" brings a lot to the table, often bristling with energy and catchy instrumental flourishes, whether in the louder outbursts or subdued moments. But the repetitive song structures and underwhelming lyricism depreciate what could have been, especially with how well Jordan manages to musically stand out from the abundance of indie artists working in similar genres. More nuance in the writing or progression would help, but even as is, the music quality more than speaks for itself.

RATING: ★★★½☆





TOP: Snail Mail has released her third studio album "Ricochet" March 27, 2026. Snail Mail, born Lindsey Erin Jordan is an American artist signed with Matador Records.

BOTTOM: Snail Mail holds up her newest album release "Ricochet" on vinyl. Snail Mail begins touring for her new album April 10, at Turner Hall in Milwaukee, Ill.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF @SNAILMAIL ON INSTAGRAM.