



Best albums of Summer 2026

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The summer has come and gone, and while pop music is in a weird place commercially, there have been many great album releases; let's just scratch the surface of the best released this summer.

"You Seem Pretty Sad for a Girl So in Love" by Olivia Rodrigo

Pop superstar Olivia Rodrigo's third studio album was released in June to excellent critical and commercial success. Success is totally understandable, as this is one of the best albums of not only the summer but of the year.

On this album Rodrigo delivers her most mature collection of songs with some of the best songwriting of her career. The penmanship on these tracks is one of one; seemingly every single song comes with an A+ level chorus and melody. I feel the album shines the most on its upbeat jams with the highlight being "u + me = <3." The chorus is anthemic, designed to be screamed at the top of your lungs or played in a montage scene from a romantic comedy. The instrumentation on the track is so lush and full; for all the comparisons and obvious influence from The Cure, this track feels like a modern twist on a song by The Sundays.

The slow burn ballads are nothing to scoff at either. "Less" and "Begged" are more than what we are used to with Rodrigo turned up to 11, "Spinal Tap" style. The biggest surprise is "expectations." The transition from heart wrenching "less" into this disco pop banger offers a wild juxtaposition, but a fabulous one at that. "expectations" feels ripped straight out of the 1980s and is an adventure in a song. I think the best outcome from this album would be Rodrigo's next album focusing on this sound; it would be incredible. This is going to go down as a decade-defining album in



Pop superstar Olivia Rodrigo's third studio album "You Seem Pretty Sad for a Girl So in Love." The record was released on June 12, 2026.

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the pop sphere.

"For Love of Grace & the Hereafter" by Iceage

If you want to talk about excellent choruses, you must mention the newest album from Danish band "Iceage." The band's first album in five years is a nonstop joyride of bliss.

The album kicks off with "Ember" which has this super muddy, gritty baseline and paves the way for lead singer Elias Rønnefelt's fast paced singing. The chorus ditches the grittiness for a sweet melody that is infectious — I find it hard not to sing along each time. It's like being in a dusty old basement, and the chorus is like seeing

the sun again. Another highlight and one of the best on the album is "mother-of-pearl". The opening riff feels like a blues song. It transitions into the opening verse where the band is tight and sounds great, with Rønnefelt describing a woman preparing for her first child. Once the chorus arrives, the song is just impossible not to bounce around to.

With Iceage being from Denmark, but this album being mainly sung in English, Rønnefelt's accent and vocals make the album 10 times more interesting. His vocals are phenomenal, and you get some quirks that would not come with a vocalist whose first language is English. "Tender Blades" and "1835" are two more standout tracks, the former being a lush ride. It's not as fast-paced as some tracks here but gives listeners a needed chance to catch their breath. The latter has excellent musicianship, a stellar chorus and those "la la la"s on the outro are so sweet. "For Love of Grace & the Hereafter" is such an underrated album that deserves more people's attention.

"Lost Weekend" by Phoebe Bridgers

"Lost Weekend" by Phoebe Bridgers was released on Aug. 14 and

is Bridgers' first solo album in six years. Her last release, "Punisher," is a phenomenal and defining album of COVID-19 times for many. "Lost Weekend" is Bridgers' return, and she clearly isn't rusty.

Tracks like "Lost Boys" and "Bobby" are more up-tempo and show that Phoebe can still deliver an upbeat, fun track, the former being the only single for the album and one of Bridgers' best songs. It has a melody that feels simple, with a chorus that you can sing along to after just one listen. It also features some gritty guitar tones deep in the mix. While "Bobby" is a "love at first hookup" song, it shines with a powerful chorus, and Bridgers' yelps on the track and infectious. That's about it with the up-tempo on this album, but that isn't a bad thing in the slightest.

Kill Me" and "The Governor's Waltz" feel timeless, as if they have been around for years. One of the central themes of the album is the death of Bridgers' father. "Kill Me" is about how all these things, including the tragedy she faced, are going to end her, but later in the album we find out everything is not all bad or tragic.

"Haunted" is a nice

pivot to a bluegrass Americana sound. Phoebe is no stranger to this genre, dabbling in it in the past with "Graceland Too," one of the best tracks on "Punisher." The mandolin sounds great and provides a crucial change from the previous tracks.

"Still Standing" is a gut-wrenching song. Bridgers shares her lack of grief after losing her abusive father, and how some days, despite how he was, she still thanks him. It's an absolute gut punch of a song.

"I Can't Wait" is a track that helps the album's theme of disassociation come through. It starts slow, has a nice build up and leads to more Americana, like on "Haunted." This all comes to a penultimate duet with Cameron Winter from "Geese." Bridgers knocks it out of the park once again; this album solidifies her as a core artist of the 2020s, and two albums are all she needs.

Other noteworthy albums

Here's a handful of honorable mentions that are worth a listen: "It Goes On" by Westside Cowboy, "Cry Baby" by Vince Staples, "Music, Fashion, Film" by Charli xcx and "ii" by Denzel Curry & Kenny Beats.

Phoebe Bridgers' first solo album in six years, "Lost Weekend." The folk record was released on August 14, 2026.

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