

CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHIES

TAYLOR SWIFT

by Blake A. Hoena



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AT A GLANCE

- Taylor Alison Swift was born on December 13, 1989, in West Reading, Pennsylvania.
- When she was 8 years old, Swift received her first guitar as a Christmas present.
- At 12 years old, Swift sang “America the Beautiful” at the US Open tennis tournament in 2002.
- Swift released her first album, *Taylor Swift*, in 2006. By 2025, Swift had released fifteen studio albums.
- Swift won her first Grammy Award in 2010 and by 2025 had won a total of fourteen Grammys.
- Swift has had twelve number-one hits on the *Billboard* Hot 100. “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” was her first song to hit number one.

A METEORIC RISE TO POP STARDOM

Swift's first three albums were classified as country. But she was evolving as a songwriter. Her songs had more hints of pop music to them. She released her fourth album in 2012. It was called *Red*.

Red contained a mix of country songs and pop songs. It reached number one on both the *Billboard* 200 and Top Country Albums charts. It also featured her first number-one single. Two weeks after its

Swift described *Red* as a turning point in her career.

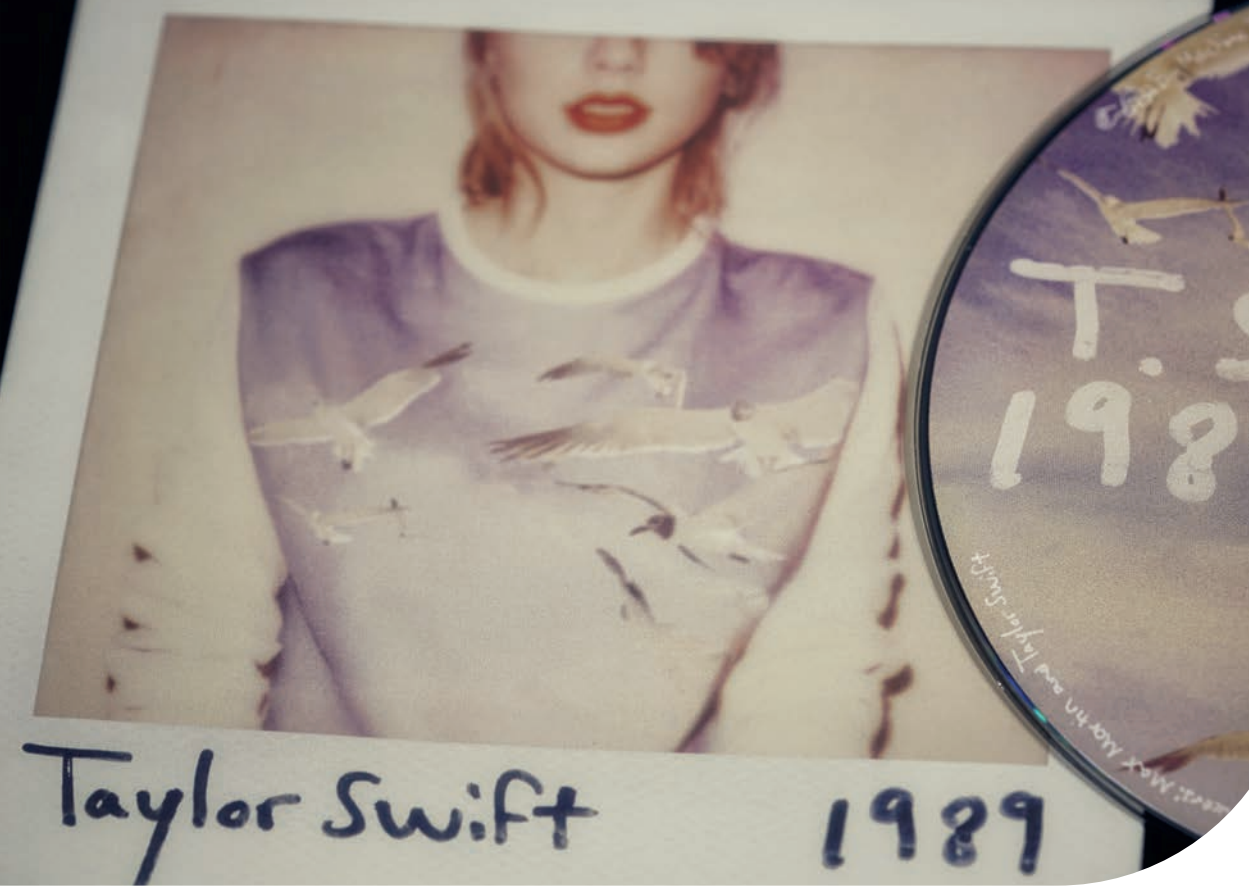


release, “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” rose to number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100.

SWIFTIES

Swift’s 2014 album *1989* was her first full pop album. The transition from country to pop music expanded her fanbase. Swift had fans of all ages and genders. But most of them were young women. They related to the experiences Swift sang about.

Starting in the late 2000s, Swift’s fans gave themselves a nickname. “They call themselves ‘Swifties’—it’s adorable,” Swift told a media outlet.⁶ Swifties were extremely loyal. Swift worked hard to earn their devotion. She connected with her fans on social media.



1989 features songs about personal growth, change, and friendship.

KANYE FALLOUT

Beneath these successes, Swift faced challenges. Swift and rapper Kanye West had made up after he had interrupted her speech at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2009. But in 2016, West released a song with insulting lyrics about Swift. He claimed

that he had asked her permission to use the words. But Swift said she had not heard all the lyrics.




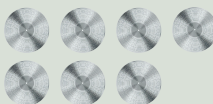
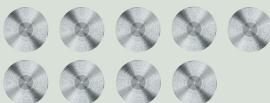





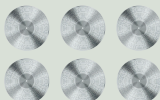
Then West's wife, Kim Kardashian, posted a clip on social media. It was a

Secret Sessions

Before the release of *1989* in 2014, Taylor invited a select group of fans to “secret sessions.” She met with fans, took pictures, and shared stories. She even let them listen to the songs on *1989* before anyone else heard them. She explained, “I decided that I wanted to play this entire album for the fans long before it came out. I wanted it to be this whole secret society gathering in living rooms. And so I decided to have them in my houses.” Her fans rewarded her with sold-out show after sold-out show.

*Quoted in Kelsey Barnes, “An Oral History of Taylor Swift’s ‘1989’ Secret Sessions,” Nylon, October 26, 2023.
www.nylon.com.*

TAYLOR SWIFT'S STUDIO ALBUMS

2006	<i>Taylor Swift</i> — went platinum 7x 
2008	<i>Fearless</i> — went diamond 
2010	<i>Speak Now</i> — went platinum 6x 
2012	<i>Red</i> — went platinum 7x number 1 hit song: “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” 
2014	<i>1989</i> — went platinum 9x number 1 hit songs: “Shake It Off,” “Blank Space,” “Bad Blood” 
2017	<i>Reputation</i> — went platinum 3x number 1 hit song: “Look What You Made Me Do” 
2019	<i>Lover</i> — went platinum 3x number 1 hit song: “Cruel Summer” 
2020	<i>Folklore</i> — went platinum 2x number 1 hit song: “Cardigan” 
	<i>Evermore</i> — went platinum number 1 hit song: “Willow” 
2022	<i>Midnights</i> — went platinum 2x number 1 hit song: “Anti-Hero” 
2024	<i>The Tortured Poets Department</i> — went platinum 6x number 1 hit song: “Fortnight” 

Source: Toni Fitzgerald, “Every Taylor Swift Album in Order of Release,” *Forbes*, January 8, 2024, www.forbes.com.

**Ten of Taylor Swift’s albums have gone platinum.
Fearless went diamond, which means it sold
10 million units.**

GLOSSARY

charisma

qualities of a person's personality that make them appealing and interesting to others

development deal

an agreement in which an entertainment label or studio provides money to support an up-and-coming performer

icon

a person who represents an industry through their achievements and success

opening act

a performer or group that entertains audiences before the main act

phenomenon

a significant event

single

a song on that is released and promoted independently of the record it is on

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CHAPTER TWO: MOVING TO NASHVILLE

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6. Quoted in Alex Hopper, “A Look at the Phenomenon of Taylor Swift’s Fanbase: the Swifties,” *American Songwriter*, January 18, 2024. www.americansongwriter.com.

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