

## TAYLOR SWIFT

Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Taylor Swift made a splash in the country music world in 2006 and has gone on to become one of the top acts in popular music.

### Who Is Taylor Swift?

Musician Taylor Swift was earning renown as a country music singer by the age of 16. Early hits like "Love Story" and "You Belong with Me" appealed to country and pop fans alike and helped fuel the multi-platinum success of her albums, including the Grammy-winning *Fearless* (2008). Swift continued to top the charts with her 2014 studio effort *1989*, which featured the No. 1 singles "Shake it Off" and "Blank Space" and won Grammys for Album of the Year and Best Pop Vocal Album. Her follow-up albums *reputation* (2018) and *Lover* (2019) also achieved immense commercial success.

### Early Life

Taylor Alison Swift was born on December 13, 1989, in Reading, Pennsylvania. Swift spent her early years on her family's Christmas tree farm in nearby Wyomissing. Her grandmother had been a professional opera singer, and Swift soon followed in her musical footsteps. By the age of 10, Swift was singing at a variety of local events, including fairs and contests. She sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" at a Philadelphia 76ers basketball game at the age of 11, and began writing her own songs and learning guitar at 12 years old.

To pursue her music career, Swift often visited Nashville, Tennessee, the country music capital. There she co-wrote songs and tried to land a recording contract. Noting her dedication, Swift and her family moved to nearby Hendersonville, Tennessee, in an attempt to further Swift's career.

### Country Music Career

A stellar performance at The Bluebird Café in Nashville helped Swift get a contract with Scott Borchetta's Big Machine Records. She released her first single, "[Tim McGraw](#)," in 2006, and the song became a Top 10 hit on the country charts. It also appeared on her self-titled debut album in October of that same year, which went on to sell more than 5 million copies. More popular singles soon followed, including "Our Song," a No. 1 country music hit. "Teardrops on My Guitar," "Picture to Burn" and "Should've Said No" were also successful tracks.

Swift also received critical praise for her debut effort. She won the Horizon Award from the Country Music Association (CMA) and the Academy of Country Music (ACM) Award for Top New Female Vocalist in 2007. Swift next released *Sounds of the Season: The Taylor Swift Holiday Collection* that year. Her renditions of "Silent Night" and "Santa Baby" were modest hits on the country charts.

## 'Fearless'

In 2008, Swift was nominated for a Grammy in the Best New Artist category and won other accolades, including the ACM's Female Vocalist of the Year Award. Around this same time, Swift released her next album, *Fearless*, which hit the top of both the country and pop charts and stayed there for 11 weeks. By the end of the year, Swift had become the highest-selling country artist of 2008.

## 2009 VMAs and Kanye West

Swift netted several awards for her work on *Fearless*, including Video of the Year and Female Video of the Year for "Love Story" at the 2009 CMT Music Awards. That year Swift also won the MTV Video Music Award's Best Female Video, for "You Belong With Me," making her the first country music star to earn a VMA. The win stirred controversy when rapper [Kanye West](#) leaped to the stage during Swift's speech, took the microphone and declared that R&B singer [Beyoncé](#) should have won Swift's award.

The stunned Swift was unable to make her acceptance speech, and West was removed from the show. When Beyoncé accepted her award for Best Video of the Year later in the show, she called Swift to the stage to finish her speech. West later apologized to Swift privately and made a public apology on *The Jay Leno Show*.

## 'Speak Now' and 'Red'

Swift soon became an even hotter commodity. Her concert tickets began selling out in less than two minutes, and she also made her second appearance on the comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, this time as both the host and musical guest. Additionally, in 2010 she became the youngest artist to win the Grammy Award for Album of the Year, for *Fearless*.

That year Swift released a new album, *Speak Now*, which featured the hit songs "Mean," "Ours" and "Sparks Fly." The album was a success, debuting at No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200 chart and selling more than 1 million copies in its first week. She followed with *Red* (2012), which featured the hit single "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together" and also topped 1 million in its first week of sales.

## Philanthropic Efforts and More Accolades

Swift was ranked *Forbes* magazine's highest-paid celebrity under 30 in 2012, beating out [Justin Bieber](#), [Rihanna](#) and [Lady Gaga](#) with earnings of \$57 million. The following year, the musician shared some of her fortune to help others, funding the \$4 million Taylor Swift Education Center at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. The facility opened with three classrooms, a learning lab and a space dedicated to exhibits for children. In an interview with *CMT Hot 20*

*Countdown*, she explained that "music education is really such an important part of my life. My life changed so completely when I discovered writing my own songs and playing guitar, and that can't necessarily all be taught to you in school because there aren't enough hours in the day."

In 2013, Swift was also honored with the CMA Pinnacle Award for her achievements as a country music performer and for her "positive impact" on country music, according to the CMA website. She picked up two other wins for her collaboration with Tim McGraw and [Keith Urban](#) at the CMA Awards ceremony held that November. Swift's winning streak continued at the American Music Awards, as she picked up the AMA Award for Artist of the Year for the third consecutive time, among other wins.

## '1989'

With her next effort, Swift seemed to step further away from her country music roots. She released *1989* in October 2014. "Shake It Off" proved to be one of the catchiest tracks of the year, reaching the top of the pop charts, and she immediately followed with a second chart-topping single, "Blank Space." In an age of low album sales, *1989* moved more than 1.2 million copies in its first week, making Swift the first artist to top the 1 million mark in opening-week sales for three albums.

Swift continued to play with her public persona with the track "Bad Blood," which features [Kendrick Lamar](#). In the video for the song, which debuted at the 2015 Billboard Music Awards and doubles as a noir action short, she appears as a tough, cutthroat character called "Catastrophe." Swift recruited other celebrities to appear in the video as well, including Karlie Kloss, [Cindy Crawford](#) and Lena Dunham.

In February 2016, Swift opened up the 58th Annual Grammy Awards with another track from *1989*, "Out of the Woods." Having received pre-telecast awards for Best Music Video and Best Pop Vocal Album, later in the evening, Swift won another Grammy for Album of the Year, making music history as the first woman to win the award twice.

In what was seen as a sharp rebuke to a new West song in which he took credit for her fame, Swift used her acceptance speech to issue an empowerment statement. "I wanna say to all the young women out there, there are going to be people along the way who will try to undercut your success or take credit for your accomplishments or your fame," she said. "But if you just focus on the work, and you don't let those people sidetrack you, someday when you get where you're going, you'll look around and you will know that it was you and the people who loved you who put you there. And that will be the greatest feeling in the world."

## Feud With Katy Perry

Swift and [Katy Perry](#), who both dated [John Mayer](#), ended their friendship with Perry allegedly tried to poach some of Swift's tour dancers. Her feud with Perry was her muse for "Bad Blood." "For years, I was never sure if we were friends or not," Swift told *Rolling Stone* in 2014. "She would come up to me at awards shows and say something and walk away, and I would think, 'Are we friends, or did she just give me the harshest insult of my life?'"

Then, according to Swift, Perry crossed a line. "She did something so horrible," Swift says. "I was like, 'Oh, we're just straight-up enemies.' And it wasn't even about a guy! It had to do with business. She basically tried to sabotage an entire arena tour. She tried to hire a bunch of people out from under me. And I'm surprisingly non-confrontational — you would not believe how much I hate conflict. So now I have to avoid her. It's awkward, and I don't like it."

On May 8, 2018, Perry put an end to their feud by extending an olive branch — literally, she sent Swift an actual olive branch — with a note that said, "I've been doing some reflecting on past miscommunication and hurt feelings between us."

### **Sexual Assault Trial and Copyright Lawsuit**

Swift took a break from the spotlight after the massive success of *1989*. However, she resurfaced in August 2017 when she testified in a trial against David Mueller, a former radio DJ she had accused of groping her in 2013. Mueller denied Swift's allegations and said the incident cost him his job, which led him to sue Swift, her mother and a radio station employee in 2015. Swift countersued him for alleged assault and battery, and a jury ruled in her favor in 2017, awarding her \$1 in damages as a symbolic gesture.