TAYLOR *in* LOVE



Inside Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's Love Story

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Anna Pointer is an author and journalist with more than 25 years' experience writing for the national press and media. She has ghostwritten celebrity memoirs and is the author of *Beyoncé: Running the World – The Biography*, translated into multiple languages globally, as well as *The Essential Beyoncé*. As the former Editor of one of Britain's most popular women's showbiz weeklies, Anna produces celebrity interviews and lifestyle features for a wide range of newspapers and magazines, including the *Telegraph*, the *Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *OK!* and *Fabulous*. She has also authored collectors' magazines focusing on celebrities such as Dua Lipa, Robbie Williams, Billie Eilish, Timothée Chalamet, BLACKPINK and Olivia Rodrigo.

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PROLOGUE

On a perfect midsummer's evening at Wembley Stadium, 90,000 Taylor Swift fans are about to witness one of the defining moments of the singer's record-breaking Eras tour. It's Sunday, 23 June 2024 – the third night of her eight-date London takeover – and even after 15 gruelling months on the road, she is still capable of rewriting the script and finding new ways to surprise her audience.

Though Taylor has shared the stage with plenty of surprise guests before, there has been none quite like this. But there's no need for her to make any announcement; united in sequins and friendship bracelets beneath Wembley's iconic arch, the Swifties never miss a beat. As she comes to the end of a segment of songs from her album *The Tortured Poets Department,* an extended intro begins for 'I Can Do It with a Broken Heart'. Then, from out of the wings, a tall figure appears on stage, wearing a black tuxedo and patent Louboutin dress shoes. In a heartbeat, a chorus of screams and whistles

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erupts around the stadium, as loud as any heard that night. The broad-shouldered, 6ft 5in interloper heel-clicks his way towards Taylor, who is lying gracefully on the stage in a white Vivienne Westwood gown. As the handsome stranger cheekily doffs his glittery top hat, the giant LCD screens zoom in on his face. Then the sound reaches an ear-splitting crescendo. The Wembley faithful can hardly believe what they're seeing, because the man in front of them is none other than Travis Kelce, NFL superstar and Taylor's boyfriend of almost a year.

Instinctively, the fandom knows this is an unprecedented move: not only is it the first time Taylor has put Travis front and centre of her Eras tour, but in nearly two decades of performing live, she has never presented a romantic partner to the world in this way. Looking as if he belongs on stage, the Kansas City Chiefs ace effortlessly gathers Taylor in his arms and carries her to a red sofa, where she theatrically feigns a fainting fit. In a style mimicking a 1920s silent movie, Travis fans her with comedic devotion and uses a brush to apply powder to her face. Once she's back on her feet, two of her dancers whip away her dress to reveal a crystal-studded crop top and hot pants. Travis then hams it up with a few comedy dance steps, and as Taylor blows him a kiss, he waves goodbye and disappears through a hidden trapdoor.

The moment lasts barely two minutes, but it blows up the internet in just seconds. 'Travis Kelce just joined Taylor

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Swift on stage at the Eras tour and the world as we know it has ended,' gasps one fan on X. 'Travis Kelce is on stage and he's wearing Louboutins!' screams another. As wobbly video footage circulates and thousands of amusing memes follow, the news media jump on the story, too. *Vanity Fair* calls it 'a jaw-dropping first' and the *LA Times* declares, 'Taylor Swift puts Travis Kelce where no boyfriend has gone before: on stage'. Later, Taylor gives her own verdict on social media. 'I'm still cracking up/swooning over @killatrav's Eras Tour debut,' she posts on Instagram. 'Never going to forget these shows.'

As the dust settles, Travis reveals that the Wembley skit was his idea. 'She started laughing, she was like, "Would you seriously be up for doing something like that?"' he says on his *New Heights* podcast with brother, Jason Kelce. 'I was like, "What? I would love to do that, are you kidding me?" I've seen the show enough, might as well put me to work.' But proving he's only human, he admits to a few nerves before his big debut. 'The one thing I told myself is, "Do not drop the baby. Do not drop Taylor on your way over [to] this damn couch",' he says, before hinting that his cameo could become a regular occurrence in future. 'Shout-out to Tay for letting me jump on stage with her. Who knows, might not be the last time.' Fourteen months later, the pair reminisce about the same night on another edition of the podcast. 'It was so good.

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It was so special,' says Taylor, adding that Travis attracted 'the loudest screams I have ever heard on the tour'.

That was high praise indeed from the world's most prolific performer, but Travis's star turn under the Wembley floodlights revealed more about the Swift–Kelce dynamic than it did about his budding stage credentials. For Taylor, who spent nearly 20 years protecting the boundaries between her private life and her career, the decision to break the pattern seemed deliberate. It was a statement: she was ready to move to the next level with Travis, and wanted the world to know it – and be part of it. Commentators were quick to draw comparisons with her previous six-and-a-half-year union with the actor Joe Alwyn. Though the longest and most serious of all her relationships, it unfolded almost completely out of public view and was never acknowledged on stage in such a way. In stark contrast, Travis was written directly into Taylor's narrative, and his introduction at the end of *The Tortured Poets Department* sequence felt intentional, too. 'There is something extremely poetic about Travis Kelce carrying Taylor Swift away after her heart was shattered,' one fan wrote online. '"I Can Do It with a Broken Heart" tells a story of performing through heartbreak and masking misery,' *TIME* magazine noted. 'But it might be safe to say that Swift is no longer doing her shows with a broken heart.' From a

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star who has built an empire on scattering clues and hidden meanings through her art – commonly known as Easter eggs – the image of Travis lifting her into his arms resonated deeply. On the most primeval level, it felt like he was metaphorically carrying her away from years of hurt and trauma; an unshackling by her very own knight in shining armour.

Decoding the pain at the heart of Taylor's music has always been key to understanding the artist herself. From her earliest songs as a curly-haired teenage hopeful trying her luck in Nashville, her lyrics have continually been permeated with heartbreak and longing. Showing a maturity belying her years, she chronicled the ache of first love and betrayal – as well as imagined fairytale endings that were always just out of reach. Through formative albums such as her self-titled debut *Taylor Swift* and follow-ups *Fearless* and *Speak Now,* she amplified the misery of unrequited love and rejection with diary-like intimacy, mapping the messiness of growing up in the relentless glare of the public eye. 'I think that allowing yourself to feel raw, real emotions in public is something I am never going to be afraid to do,' she told *New York* magazine in 2013. 'Hopefully that's the case, if I can remain a real human.'

As the years passed by, Taylor's songwriting grew more intricate and self-referential, yet her central themes and lyrical tendencies consistently circled back to loss, heartache and the never-ending search for a soulmate. Her inner

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melancholy was laid bare like never before in 2024's *The Tortured Poets Department*, an album which directly followed the demise of her relationship with Joe Alwyn. Songs like 'So Long, London' and 'loml' captured the disillusionment of an all-encompassing love which promised permanence but left only ghosts behind. As a BBC review at the time speculated, 'The singer is bereft and bewildered. Vulnerable in a way we've never heard before. She sings of being so depressed she can't get out of bed, comfort-eating children's cereal, and crying at the gym. You can hear her heart breaking.'

Yet even within the desolate confines of the album, there were small shards of light. A handful of *Tortured Poets* songs – including 'The Alchemy' and 'So High School' – shimmered with the thrill of intoxicating new beginnings, namely her romance with Travis. Taylor herself indicated she was done with all the angst in a social media post coinciding with the album's release. 'This period of the author's life is now over, the chapter closed & boarded up,' she said. 'There is nothing to avenge, no scores to settle once wounds have healed. Once we have spoken our saddest story, we can be free of it.' In that sense, *The Tortured Poets Department* served as a long-overdue farewell to her heartbreak years. Like a bolt from the blue, Travis had upended her world, pursuing her with the kind of old-fashioned romantic bravado she'd long sung about. 'This kinda felt like a 1980s John Hughes movie and he was

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standing outside my window with a boombox, just being like, "I wanna date you!"' she recalled on the *New Heights* podcast in August 2025. 'This is sort of what I've been writing songs about wanting to happen to me since I was a teenager.' For anyone who had been following the twists and turns in her life since then, that statement spoke volumes.

At the start, few might have picked Travis as a natural match for Taylor. But any doubts that swirled around the world's most articulate songwriter and the 6ft 5in athlete smacked of cultural snobbery, as eloquently expressed by the *Guardian*. 'A new dream man has dropped – the laid-back, confident beefcake,' it said in a comment piece analysing the cult of Kelce. Pointing out that 'women want something quite different now', it added, 'Cartoonish muscles and the ability to bench-press a grizzly bear can make for a partner who wears his masculinity lightly, with an identity that isn't threatened by a successful, independent woman.' But aside from his physical appeal, the lure of Travis ran far deeper for Taylor, and she found in him a rare combination of swagger, kindness and unflinching support. Friends noticed how secure she seemed in his presence, as if she'd finally met someone who understood both the scale of her world and the woman behind it. 'I love the person that I am with because he loves what I do and he loves how much I am fulfilled by making art and making music,' she said on Radio 2's *Scott Mills*

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Breakfast Show. 'That's the coolest thing about Travis, like he is so passionate about what he does, that me being passionate about what I do, it connects us.' Another big draw was his unashamed sensitivity. Despite the intimidating shoulder pads and helmet worn when rampaging across the football field each week, his coach once called him 'an emotional guy', and he freely admitted 'I'm a crier' on his podcast. 'This is a man who is not afraid to speak openly about his feelings,' an *Elle* editorial said of Travis. 'Nor is he threatened by the archaic rules of traditional masculinity he'd potentially be breaking by being vulnerable online.'

The biggest love story of a generation began in July 2023, when Travis turned up to Taylor's Eras tour in his hometown of Kansas. His initial attempt to meet her backstage – while bearing a friendship bracelet – failed, and when he admitted on his podcast that he'd been 'butthurt' by the rejection, Taylor's curiosity was piqued, and she agreed to meet him. What could have remained a throwaway anecdote developed into something more, and by the time she began showing up at Chiefs' games and the world realised they were an item, they had, in fact, been quietly dating for months. 'We actually had a significant amount of time that no one knew, which I'm grateful for, because we got to get to know each other,' Taylor later revealed. For fans and media

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alike, the combination was irresistible: the stadium queen and Super Bowl king, bridging pop music and sport in an enthralling new way. Their status as a modern power couple was undeniable. The NFL credited Taylor's appearances at Chiefs games with generating an estimated $331 million in brand value; and in a twist nobody saw coming, a whole new audience of jersey-wearing football fans began avidly streaming her music. Yet beyond the economic juggernaut they rode in on, the affection between them was pure and unmistakable. Whether embracing on the pitch or sharing a lingering kiss at an afterparty, the chemistry crackled, and they seemed entirely unfazed by the media circus trailing them. 'Whenever I'm with her, it feels like we're just regular people,' Travis told *GQ*. 'When there is not a camera on us, we're just two people that are in love.'

In August 2025, the couple dubbed 'Tay-vis' made it official, announcing their engagement in a joint Instagram reveal that shattered records as one of the most reposted and liked posts in history. In a gesture that would have left teenage Taylor spellbound, Travis transformed the grounds of his Kansas home into an enchanted garden, filling it with thousands of roses. The moment he got down on one knee was caught by a photographer hiding in the bushes, and the post's playful caption – 'Your English teacher and your gym teacher are getting married' – instantly entered pop-culture lexicon.

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The ring itself had been custom designed by Travis, and when asked later, Taylor gave his proposal efforts a 'ten out of ten'.

Just weeks after their engagement, Taylor's 12th album, *The Life of a Showgirl*, swept in like a fist-pumping victory lap. Within seven days, it became the fastest-selling album in United States history, shifting over 3.4 million 'pure copies' in its first week, denoting physical and digital sales. In the UK, it also toppled records, scoring the biggest opening-week sales of any international album this century. Almost instantly, she claimed the top three songs in the UK Top 40, too, courtesy of lead single 'The Fate of Ophelia', followed by 'Opalite' and 'Elizabeth Taylor'. Written amid the whirlwind of her Eras tour, when Travis was an ever-present force, the record thrummed with references to the unfiltered joy she had found with him. In the ridiculously catchy 'The Fate of Ophelia', she flipped a tragic myth to become a woman heroically rescued from drowning. In the innuendo-laden 'Wood', she riffed on the idea of superstition, suggesting it was no longer needed with Travis. And 'Opalite' was about emerging from darkness, with his opal birthstone standing as a symbol of serenity after a passing storm.

In interviews, Taylor described *The Life of a Showgirl* as coming from 'the most infectiously joyful, wild, dramatic place', and the visuals, lyrics and tone celebrated love in all its glory. As music critics across the planet noted, the unbridled

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elation was the polar opposite of the heartbreak that rippled through her earlier albums. '*Showgirl* is everything that *Poets* was not,' said *Business Insider*. 'Was the *Poets* single "Fortnight" too abstract and sombre for you? Did you post on X that Swift should put down the feather quill and make bangers again? Congratulations, she heard you, and now you've got 12 of them.' In a similar vein, *Variety* asked if the world was ready for Taylor the 'untortured poet', calling the light-heartedness of the record 'slightly startling', and stressing that it was 'as close to being an uncomplicated good time as anything she's ever done'. Yet not everyone was quite prepared for this version of her. For a small proportion of fans, the album's sparkle and theatrical abandon felt like a sharp turn away from the aching lyricism and intimacy that defined works like *folklore*, *evermore*, *Midnights* and *The Tortured Poets Department*. Some argued that *The Life of a Showgirl* was verging on overexposure, or even an unnecessary cash grab. But in dividing opinion, it proved Taylor's enduring ability to dictate and reframe the conversation, and to skip just out of reach of all expectations.

Whether the album inspired adulation or lukewarm approval, few could say Taylor hadn't earned the right to the unapologetic happiness it represented. It followed years of trial and error, when her every liaison, near miss and wrong man became an international talking point. Hook-ups and break-ups with celebrities, including Taylor Lautner, Joe

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Jonas, John Mayer and Jake Gyllenhaal, were a cultural fixation; her subsequent pain and disappointment were etched on albums like *Fearless* and the shapeshifting *Red*. 'I look back on this as my true break-up album,' she said of the latter in a *Rolling Stone* interview. 'This was an album that I wrote specifically about pure, absolute, to-the-core heartbreak.' But as she sought to find her way, a nasty undercurrent saw Taylor accused of turning every man she dated into a song. 'People would act like [songwriting] was a weapon I was using. Like a cheap dirty trick,' she told *Vogue* in 2019. 'Be careful, bro, she'll write a song about you. Don't stand near her.' Highlighting the double standards implicit in the music industry while appearing on the Australian radio show *Jules, Merrick and Sophie* in 2014, she said, 'You're going to have people who are going to say, "Oh, you know, like, she just writes songs about her ex-boyfriends." And I think frankly that's a very sexist angle to take. No one says that about Ed Sheeran. No one says that about Bruno Mars. They're all writing songs about their exes, their current girlfriends, their love life, and no one raises the red flag there.'

That same year, the release of *1989* – Taylor's first fully fledged pop album – was seen as a symbolic rebirth following her move to New York. Still her bestselling work to date, it catapulted her to new levels of fame that only manifested further obsession with her personal life. Lyrically, the album's

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story was inextricably linked to her experience of dating one of the world's biggest boyband stars, Harry Styles, leading to much-dissected tracks like 'Style' and 'Out of the Woods'. But it was, perhaps, her long-term partnership with Joe Alwyn that impacted Taylor most profoundly, with later albums *reputation* and *Lover* steeped in giddying love, and subsequent releases *folklore, evermore, Midnights* and *The Tortured Poets Department* conveying contentment, sorrow and resentment in equal measure.

The acres of coverage that shadowed her every relationship often said more about how society viewed women than about Taylor herself. Speaking at a ceremony at New York University in 2022, she said, 'Having the world treat my love life like a spectator sport in which I lose every single game was not a great way to date in my teens and twenties, but it taught me to protect my private life fiercely. Being publicly humiliated over and over again at a young age was excruciatingly painful, but it forced me to devalue the ridiculous notion of minute-by-minute, ever-fluctuating social relevance and likeability.'

In some ways, the perpetual fascination around her love life is a direct consequence of her unique craftsmanship. By writing and singing so honestly about matters of the heart, Taylor has always invited listeners into her innermost thoughts – simultaneously turning them into something millions can relate to. 'I don't talk about my personal life in

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great detail. I write about it in my songs,' she told *Glamour* in 2012. 'I feel like you can share enough about your life in your music to let people know what you're going through.' In that way, the Swiftie phenomenon has grown beyond fandom into a global community, with connections built not just on music, but also deep emotional investment in her storytelling. Fans don't simply listen to her songs – they inhabit them. It's a symbiosis, and as Taylor once revealingly said at a *Billboard* awards ceremony, 'To the fans who come to the shows, who buy the albums, I just want you to know this one thing – you are the longest and best relationship I have ever had.'

Showing a distinct pride in the way Swifties have so avidly decoded her hidden Easter eggs through her career, Taylor once told *Entertainment Weekly*: 'I've trained them to be that way. I love that they like the cryptic hint-dropping. Because as long as they like it, I'll keep doing it. It's fun. It feels mischievous and playful.' Each single and album release has accordingly brought a new treasure hunt; her lyrics shelling out tiny breadcrumbs that led back to a significant other. 'I let people fill in the blanks on their own,' she told *TIME*. 'If they want to think about their ex, that's fine. If they want to think about maybe who one of my exes is, then that's fine. And it might not be right, because I'm the only one who knows what these songs are really about. It's the one shred of privacy I have in the matter.' But here lies the great paradox bound up

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in Taylor's work: the more authentic and truthful her songwriting has been, the more blurred the line between art and autobiography. Her efforts to protect what is hers alone have only intensified the scrutiny – and in that context, it is little wonder so many of her romances have previously struggled to go the distance.

But with Travis, things seem altogether different. For once, there has been no tug of war between privacy and performance, and no need to hide one from the other. His bit part on the Wembley stage felt like the perfect metaphor for that shift, and after years of translating her love life into imagery and metaphor, Taylor no longer had to disguise the real thing. With Travis, she has simply been able to live it. As she said when promoting *The Life of a Showgirl* on SiriusXM's *Morning Mash Up* in October 2025, 'It's all turned out great. He's one of those people where as soon as you meet him, you know he's the best. And you know there's no one else on the planet that's ever been even remotely similar to him. He's one of one.' All of a sudden, a fleeting comment dropped into her album notes for *Red* seems more apt than ever. 'Real love shines golden like starlight, and doesn't fade or spontaneously combust,' she said. 'Maybe I'll write a whole album about that kind of love if I ever find it.'

With Travis, she finally seems to have done just that.

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CHAPTER ONE

With more than 280 million Instagram followers, Taylor Swift commands a digital audience larger than most nations. In 2024 alone, her music was streamed over 26 billion times on Spotify; she was crowned the world's bestselling recording artist for a record-breaking fifth time and her Eras tour became the highest-grossing tour in history, surpassing the 2-billion-dollar mark and solidifying her status as the most powerful entertainer on the planet. Yet amid the towering statistics, it's easy to forget where it all began. How she was once just a teenage girl with a guitar, turning the random scribbles in her school notebooks into stories and songs that would soundtrack an entire generation.

Nearly two decades before meeting NFL star Travis Kelce, she sat in a seventh-grade maths class, her mind drifting aimlessly past equations and algebra. A simple melody began forming in her head, soft enough to hum under her breath. It was shaped by her first experience of heartbreak – and would become the breakthrough that set her extraordinary career

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in motion. 'The concept for this song hit me because I was dating a guy who moved away, and it was going to be over for us,' she later recalled. 'I started thinking of things that I knew would remind him of me.' After school finished for the day in Hendersonville, Tennessee, Taylor sat down at the piano with Liz Rose, the professional songwriter paired with Taylor, who would go on to become her long-term writing partner, and it took the pair just a quarter of an hour to compose the track 'Tim McGraw'. 'It may be the best 15 minutes I've ever experienced,' Taylor said. The curious title was inspired by the name of one of her favourite country artists, who she had listened to on loop with the boy in question, who had now left town for college. Nursing the sting of their break-up, she told *SongwriterUniverse* magazine, 'The song is based on true events – it happened in real life ... After the break-up, I wanted him to be reminded of me.' Though it's hard to grasp the speed at which she wrote the song, it has never been Taylor's style to agonise over her work. 'I didn't have time to complicate it or overthink it. I just wrote it,' she told the *LA Times*.

Several months later, in June 2006, 'Tim McGraw' was chosen as her debut single, and it's fair to say it changed the trajectory of her life. Peaking at No. 40 on America's *Billboard* Hot 100, the mid-tempo ballad hit No. 3 on the Hot Country Songs chart and went on to sell over 1.6 million copies in America. The song not only introduced listeners to Taylor's

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acoustic harmonies and lilting vocals, but also showcased a deeply personal, confessional style of songwriting that would characterise her career. 'I like to write songs about boys. I like to write songs about relationships,' she once told E! 'It's really, really fun for me to tell stories that have actually happened.'

Since the beginning, Taylor's music has been anchored in relationships and emotional truths, with her hopes of one day finding the right man an ever-present theme. 'I have always been fascinated with fairytales, and the idea that Prince Charming is just one castle away,' she told *Allure* magazine in 2010. 'And you're gonna run across a field and meet each other in the middle, and have an amazing, perfect movie kiss. And it's gonna be happily ever after.' Years later, she quite literally found herself running across a field toward Kansas City Chiefs star Travis. Yet such romantic ideals were formed long before fame came knocking, and even as a toddler she could recite all the words to the Righteous Brothers' classic 'Unchained Melody'. As her father Scott Swift told the student newspaper *UDaily* in 2009, 'She was always singing music when she was three, five, six, seven years old.'

With her quest for the definitive happy ending permeating her music, Taylor's journey has often felt like a shared experience, creating an unbreakable bond with millions across the world. 'There is an element to my fanbase where we feel like we grew up together,' she said in her 2020 *Miss Americana*

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documentary on Netflix. 'I'll be going through something, write the album about it and then it'll come out, and sometimes it'll just coincide with what they're going through. Kind of like they're reading my diary.'

That precedent was firmly set by 'Tim McGraw', with its wistful memories widely thought to have referred to Drew Dunlap, a freshman from school who was Taylor's first love. The track saw her reflect on a month's worth of tears as she lamented the end of the relationship, although in a fashion that would continue throughout her career, Taylor chose not to publicly confirm his identity. As *Vanity Fair* once stated, 'Swift writes songs about the guys she dates and then sends her fans on scavenger hunts to find out who they are.' Offering up a few more clues to listeners, she did tell the music channel Great American Country, 'The guy I wrote "Tim McGraw" about, I dated him for about a year and we are still friends, but we don't talk that much because his new girlfriend isn't too much of a fan. He really thought it was cool that, even though we weren't going out anymore, I remembered our relationship nicely.' It was a classic Swiftian strategy: presenting the bare bones of a real-life love story, but keeping it shrouded in mystery.

Music critics were instantly drawn to 'Tim McGraw', with *PopMatters* declaring that its 'suitably twangy and atmospheric' qualities were on a par with 'some of the best country singles of recent years'. As *Pitchfork* also championed the

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fresh-faced 16-year-old who had 'crash-landed into this landscape', Taylor's arrival certainly seemed like a blast of fresh air in the mid-2000s, when the country scene was heavily dominated by older male artists who stuck to well-established formulas. But while she incorporated traditional instruments like the banjo, mandolin, fiddle and guitar into her songs, cowboy-boot wearing Taylor embellished them with a glossy pop sheen, so they transcended genres and brought a whole new audience to country. No wonder, then, that the *New York Times* called her both 'revolutionary' and 'the most remarkable country music breakthrough artist of the decade'.

Hot on the heels of 'Tim McGraw', her self-titled debut album *Taylor Swift* was released in October 2006. Co-produced by musician Nathan Chapman – a key figure in the early stages of Taylor's career – it received widespread acclaim and shot to No. 1 in the US country album charts. It also reached No. 5 on the *Billboard* 200 and spent a total of 157 weeks on the chart – the longest for any album in the 2000s. Adapted from the restless doodles that filled her notebooks, the album's 11 songs navigated adolescent desire and heartache, enticing fans to try to unearth the concealed Easter eggs. The track 'Should've Said No' was a case in point, coming in response to a betrayal by a school crush called Sam. In the lyrics, Taylor repeatedly capitalised the letters S, A and M, later admitting to *Women's Health*: 'I like to encode capital letters in the printed lyrics,

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so they spell out phrases. I encoded the "Should've Said No" guy's name over and over. It was only his first name, but everyone figured it out. I'd get texts from him. He was scared out of his mind I'd crucify him on a talk show. All I could think was, "Well, you should've said no. That's what the song is about."'

The album's second single, 'Teardrops on My Guitar', was another tale of romantic angst, dealing with Taylor's unrequited feelings for an unnamed classmate. '[He] would sit there every day talking to me about ... another girl: how beautiful she was, how nice and smart and perfect she was,' she wrote on her website at the time. 'And I sat there and listened, never meaning it any of the times I said, "Oh, I'm so happy for you."' Unafraid to wear her heart on her sleeve from day one, she added, 'I guess this is a good example of how I let my feelings out in songs, and sometimes no other way.' Divulging the cathartic nature of her songwriting back in 2007, Taylor told *Unrated Magazine*, 'If it's a heartbreak song or something like it, it usually helps me get through it, and I've actually gotten a few missed calls from Mr. Teardrops on My Guitar. And I'm not going back, because he's still got a girlfriend.' Despite its less-than-cheery sentiment, the song fared even better than her debut single, peaking at No. 2 in the Hot Country Songs chart and reaching No. 13 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, too. Then came her third single, 'Our Song', which she originally wrote on a napkin for a high-school talent

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show. 'The song was finished in like 20 minutes,' she told music channel Great American Country. 'I wrote it about this guy I was dating, and how we didn't have a song. So I went ahead and wrote us one.' It led to her first Hot Country Songs No. 1, occupying the top spot for six weeks, and made her, at just 17, the youngest person to write and sing a chart-topping country hit. Slowly but surely, she was beginning to carve out a name for herself in mainstream music circles, too, and she was nominated for her first ever Grammy in February 2008. In the end, the Best New Artist award went to Amy Winehouse, but it signalled the start of a long and productive Grammy association for Taylor.

With her career now firing on all cylinders, 'Picture to Burn', the fourth single from her album, landed the same month. 'She's a genius, coming in with ideas and a melody,' said Liz Rose, who co-wrote the track with Taylor. 'She'd come in and write with this old lady, and I never second-guessed her.' 'Picture to Burn' showed Taylor's gutsier side, dissing a boyfriend for dumping her and plotting a revenge that included setting fire to old photos and, amusingly, dating his friends. Rumour has it that during one of their after-school songwriting sessions, Taylor told Liz: 'I hate his stupid truck that he doesn't let me drive. He's such a redneck! Oh my God!' It was said the subject of her wrath was a boy called Jordan Alford, who was in her year group at Hendersonville

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