

A Guide to Rerecording One's Music: A Taylor Swift Case Study

by

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For my Parents,
who bought me my very first CD, *Fearless*, at the age of five and have supported my
every endeavor. I've had The Best Days with you.

Love, Page

*And now I know why all the trees change in the fall
I know you were on my side, even when I was wrong
And I love you for giving me your eyes
For staying back and watching me shine
And I didn't know if you knew, so I'm taking this chance to say
That I had the best day with you today.
— Taylor Swift, "The Best Day,"*

Abstract

In 2019, Taylor Swift entered a public feud with her former label, Big Machine Records, over the sale of her first six albums without her say. In 2021, Swift began to rerecord her first six albums, starting with *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, and rerelease these albums with new artwork, additional songs, and updated production. Since then, she has rerecorded and released four of these (*Taylor's Version*)s to fantastic critical reception and unprecedented success. The reason Swift is the first artist to rerecord with such success is because of three factors: her marketing prowess, her fanbase of Swifties, and her timing. Not only has Swift given other artists a cautionary tale to recall when signing their first contracts—Taylor Swift has provided a blueprint for other artists looking to take control of their work, while also creating something so grand that it has altered the way the music industry operates.

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I. Just a Girl, Trying to Find a Place in This World: The Background

In 2005, a blossoming country artist caught her big break; a 15-year old singer-songwriter named Taylor Swift signed a thirteen year contract with Nashville-based record label Big Machine Records (Paulson, 2019). Scott Borchetta was starting up his music label when he saw Swift perform in Nashville's The Bluebird Cafe. She was one of the very first artists he signed to the Big Machine label. Over the next thirteen years, Swift produced six albums below the label, headlined five stadium tours, shapeshifted through genre after genre, and won countless awards and accolades.

In 2018, Swift found herself in a dispute over her first six albums after the expiration of her Big Machine contract. She left Big Machine Label Group (BMLG) for Universal Music Group (UMG), but BMLG retained ownership of the work she had created under them. She owned the rights to the songs themselves, but not the master recordings of the songs, as they had been produced under BMLG.

In 2021, Taylor Swift announced her intention to rerecord her entire back catalog in order to regain ownership of her music, beginning with the release of *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* in April of 2021. *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* spent 11 weeks in Billboard's Top 40, peaking at no.1 twice and becoming the first ever re-recorded album to do so (Espada, 2023). Not only were the die-hard fans making the switch, but radio stations and casual listeners were too. It was a success story for Swift.

Swift has since released 3 more (*Taylor's Version*)s as of October of 2024: *Red*, *Speak Now*, and *1989*. All have had huge commercial success, and have made the originals, dubbed the “Stolen Versions” by the Swifties, almost obsolete.

Swift isn't the first to rerecord her music to own it. Prince attempted to rerecord his catalog back in 1999, but stopped due to lack of commercial success (Newman, 2016). Def Leppard rerecorded their biggest hits in 2012 after a feud with their label over unfair compensation (Rolling Stone, 2012). Swift is simply the first to do it to such acclaim and success. But, why? What makes the (*Taylor's Version*)s different than rerecordings of the past?

The success of Taylor Swift's rerecorded albums can be attributed to three key factors: timing, her fan base, and marketing. Understanding what led to the rerecordings and what sowed success for the (*Taylor's Version*)s can both help artists understand how to prevent the loss of ownership of their music and how to replicate Swift's success in the event they need to reclaim their work.

II. He's Got My Past Frozen Behind Glass...: The Fallout

In 2018, Taylor Swift's contract with Big Machine Records expired. She had fulfilled her six album obligation to the label with the release of *reputation*. On November 19th, 2018, Swift announced her new partnership with Universal Music Group's Republic Records on her Instagram, as well as through an official statement on UMG's website. Notably, the statements both label UMG as Swift's "recorded music partner," indicating she will retain ownership of all her music and masters produced under UMG.

The fate of Swift's first six albums, however, was left up to Big Machine Records. In 2019, owner of Big Machine Records, Scott Borchetta, sold the company for a whopping 300 million dollars to Scooter Braun (Neeranjan, 2022). Borchetta was the man who originally signed Swift in 2005. Included in this deal were the masters of Swift's first six albums: *Taylor Swift*, *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *Red*, *1989*, and *reputation*.

Borchetta and Big Machine Records were criticized for this sale, by both Swift and her fans alike. Swift publicly voiced how upset she was by the sale, not only because she wanted to be the one to own her masters, but also because of public issues Swift had with both Braun and his clients. To Swift, ownership of her albums belonging to Scooter Braun was the worst case scenario. She also alleged that she didn't know the masters to her albums were up for sale in the first place.

She released a public statement on the sale of her masters on June 30th, 2019 (Figure 1). She alleged that she was never given a fair opportunity to buy her masters. Instead, when renegotiating her contract in 2018, she claimed she was offered a deal to “earn” them back; for every new album she recorded under Big Machine Records, they would give her the masters for an old one. Stating that she knew that this deal would fall apart once Borchetta sold the company, she “...had to make the excruciating choice to leave behind her past. Music I wrote on my bedroom floor and videos I dreamed up and paid for from the money I earned playing in bars, then clubs, then arenas, then stadiums” (Swift, 2019). She spoke scathingly about the nature of the sale to Braun and emphasized how important owning her work is. Ultimately, she beckoned fans towards the future—her upcoming release, *Lover*— in the statement of bittersweet loss of her past.

Later the same day, Scott Borchetta released his own statement (Figure 2) via the official Big Machine Label Group website. He claimed that upon re-signing with Big Machine, “100% of all Taylor Swift assets were to be transferred to her immediately.... Taylor had every chance in the world to own not just her master recordings, but every video, photograph, everything associated to her career. She chose to leave.” (Borchetta, 2019). Borchetta also wrote in this statement that he had no inkling of a feud between Taylor Swift and Scooter Braun. To conclude his statement, Borchetta included a “screen shot of deal points” pictured below (Figure 3).

Furthering the public feud, Swift posted another statement on Twitter on November 14th, 2019. She had recently been announced Artist of the Decade by the American Music Awards, and thus was tasked with putting on a performance for the

show. Swift planned to perform a medley of her greatest hits. However, she claimed in this new statement that both Scott Borchetta and Scooter Braun were barring her from performing any of her old catalog on television, because that would be re-recording those songs a year before she is allowed to. Additionally, Swift explained that she was in the process of making a documentary on the past few years of her life, and Borchetta and Braun had also barred use of both her old catalog and performance footage for this project (Figure 4). Big Machine Label Group responded the very next day, denying Swift's claims and accusing her of creating a misleading narrative (Figure 5).

Immediately following this response from Big Machine, a spokeswoman for Taylor Swift shared an email her team had received from the Vice President of Rights Management and Business Affairs for BMLG, dated October 28, 2019 with Business Insider (Figure 6). The email stated that BMLG would not be waiving its re-recording restrictions for the documentary or any upcoming performances, confirming Swift's original statement.

On November 18th, 2019, BMLG released the following statement, backtracking and allowing Swift to perform her back catalog at the AMAs:

“The Big Machine Label Group informed Dick Clark Productions today that they have agreed to grant all licenses of their artists’ performances to stream post show and for re-broadcast on mutually approved platforms. It should be noted that recording artists do not need label approval for live performances on television or any other live media. Record label approval is only needed for

contracted artists' audio and visual recordings and in determining how those works are distributed” (BMLG, 2019)

In October of 2020, a private equity group, Shamrock Holdings, purchased the entirety of the Taylor Swift catalog from Scooter Braun for \$300 million dollars. In November of 2020, Taylor Swift released a statement on Twitter (Figure 7) explaining that while Shamrock Holdings had offered to partner with her, the terms of the Braun/Shamrock deal are such that Scooter Braun would continue to receive profits from the masters for “many years.” Because Braun would continue to profit, Swift declined their partnership. In a letter attached to her statement (Figure 8) addressed to Shamrock Holdings, she stated her intentions to rerecord her catalog. She ended the statement by addressing her fans directly:

“I have recently begun re-recording my older music and it has already proven to be both exciting and creatively fulfilling. I have plenty of surprises in store. I want to thank you guys for supporting me through this ongoing stage, and I can't wait for you to hear what I've been dreaming up” (Swift, 2020).

III. What if I Told You I'm a Mastermind?: The Marketing

a. The Statements

The marketing for the *(Taylor's Version)* project started long before the first album release. In Swift and her team's statements, words were chosen carefully in order to shed positive light on Swift and her desire for ownership. In fact, the statements were so well received that Swifties refer to the original versions of the first six albums as the "stolen versions," despite Swift still profiting from (albeit less) those original versions.

The first statement Swift put out (Figure 1) focuses more on her perception of Scooter Braun than upset about the general sale of her masters. She lists times Braun has wronged her, and makes sure to point out that she was only 15 when she signed her contract with Scott Borchetta. She speaks of the "incessant, manipulative bullying" she has received from Braun, and says that "loyalty is clearly just a contractual concept" for Scott Borchetta (Swift, 2019). By painting the two men as bullies, Swift cements her victimhood in this first statement. And what fan, or even neutral member of the public, would side with bullies?

Additionally, in Swift's statement about the AMAs (Figure 2), she mentioned that the two men did not want her to rerecord her music, but that it is something she planned to do anyway. The main purpose of the statement was to urge Big Machine to allow her to perform her old catalog at the AMAs, but Swift was sure to include the rerecording

detail in there. It further proves the men to be the bullies, as well as builds anticipation for a hypothetical future project.

In fact, even after BMLG seemingly caves and allows Swift to perform her back catalog at the AMAs, Swift uses this performance to draw attention to the dispute. Swift began her set with a performance of “The Man,” a song written about how Swift’s experience in the music industry would’ve been different if she were a man (Lipshutz, 2019). While she performs the song, she wears a white button down with the names of her first six “stolen” albums written across it in large black text.

It’s also important to note that even if Swift’s original statement was 100% undisputed by Big Machine, the label was under no obligation to offer Swift the masters to her albums. Similarly, the label was under no obligation to allow Swift’s performance at the AMAs. While it’s unfortunate for Swift, BMLG exercised their legal and contractual rights in both scenarios.

b. Easter Eggs

Easter eggs are little clues, references, or hidden messages hidden within the material that an artist provides. This can be hidden by any artist in their physical media, music videos, song lyrics, or almost any format. Taylor Swift began providing easter eggs to her fans with the release of her very first album. In the lyric booklet that came with the *Taylor Swift* CD, all of the lyrics were in lowercase type, except for seemingly random capitalized letters (Swift, 2021). When fans put all the capitalized letters together, they spelled out a message specific to that song. For example, the capitalized letters in

“Should’ve Said No” spelled out the name “Sam” five times. Or in “Teardrops on My Guitar,” the capitalized letters spelled out “He will never know” (Figure 9).

In a 2021 interview on Jimmy Fallon’s *The Tonight Show*, Taylor Swift addressed the easter eggs with which her career has become synonymous; “Yeah, it’s sort of a tradition that we started a very long time ago... But when it got out of control was when I started to realize that it wasn’t just me that had fun with this, that they had fun with it too. And I should never have learned that because then I couldn’t stop... And look, I think that it is perfectly reasonable for people to be normal music fans and to have a normal relationship to music. But if you *want* to go down a rabbit hole with us, come along” (Swift, 2021)

The easter eggs incentivize Swifties to digest the content Swift puts out over, and over, and over. Swift, following the release of the “Bejeweled” music video in 2022, said in an interview that the new video had the most easter eggs: “We have a PDF file for the easter eggs in this video because there are so many that we could not keep track” (Swift, 2022). This is a contributing factor to the amount of views this video received. As of October 2024, the “Bejeweled” music video has been viewed over 87 million times. A single off the same album, “Lavender Haze,” has 66 million views (Youtube, 2024). This is despite “Lavender Haze” being the more popular of the two songs; “Bejeweled” has almost 582 million streams on Spotify while “Lavender Haze” has been streamed on Spotify over 757 million times (Spotify, 2024). While “Lavender Haze” was the more popular song, it’s clear fans didn’t feel the same need to scour that video for clues as they did with “Bejeweled” following Swift’s statement. The easter eggs in Swift’s content

draw in more initial views and streams and encourage repetition in order to get the complete story.

There is a feeling amongst Swifties that they'll never *fully* crack all of the clues. This makes any new content (especially the rereleases) Swift puts out highly desirable to fans. The vault tracks—songs that were written for the original album but for one reason or another didn't make the cut— add context to stories they already know. New easter eggs in the physical albums could maybe clue them into who a song they've loved for a decade was about. For example, in “Mr. Perfectly Fine,” a vault song from *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, Swift says “Mr.” 27 times (Genius, 2021). Fans were quick to connect that to an interview Swift gave in 2008, where she spoke about an ex who broke up with her over a “27-second phone call” (Nesvig, 2019). So now, the fans know who that song is about, and now know that more of the songs on that album could be about the same person. Swifties are hungry for more context, more of the story surrounding the music they already love. The easter eggs in these new (*Taylor's Version*)s, or the assumptions that there are some, cause Swifties to flock to the new versions with fervor.

c. *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*

On February 11th, 2021, Swift announced the first of her rerecords, dubbed *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* (Swift, 2021). The announcement (Figure 10) was written in all lowercase letters, with random capital letters spelling out “APRIL NINTH,” clueing Swifties in to the official release date. In this announcement, Swift also reveals that the

rerelease will include six songs “from the vault.” The new album, as well as all subsequent rerecordings, would include new album art as well (Figure 11).

It is notable that *Fearless* was the first album to be rerecorded. Swift has not been rerecording her albums in chronological order. *Fearless* was most likely the first choice because it was a real launching point for her career. *Fearless* won Swift her first Grammy Awards, as well as her first Album of the Year award.

On April 2, 2021, Swift posted a video on her Instagram, with the caption “Happy Decoding!” (Swift, 2021). The official track list for *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)* hadn’t been released yet, and fans were anxious to know what these new songs would be. The video contained a gold vault, and random series of letters came out of the vault at quick succession. When the letters were unscrambled, they spelled out the names of the new vault tracks. This built even more anticipation among fans for the new songs. Swifties decoded the track titles quickly, and Swift posted the official track list the next day as a reward.

The support from other artists for *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)* helped to market the album as well. Unrelated artists were posting messages of support. Artists who had been featured on the original album were more than happy to come back and rerecord their parts as well, like Colbie Caillat on track five of the album, “Breathe.” Multiple of the newly released vault songs also had features from artists like Keith Urban and Maren Morris.

Otherwise, the *Fearless* rerelease had the most minimal marketing of the rereleases thus far. Swift let *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)* release quietly, with the

exception of a few social media posts. For the most part, this rerelease felt like an experiment to see if this was something that could be done for the next five albums.

The *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* test run went better for Swift than anyone could have hoped. "Mr. Perfectly Fine," a song that had been previously deemed not good enough to make the album, reached no. 30 on the Billboard charts (Lipshutz, 2022). *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*'s first year of existence garnered over 1 million equivalent album units. *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* spent 11 weeks in Billboard's Top 40, peaking at no.1 twice and becoming the first ever re-recorded album to do so (Espada, 2023).

Fearless (Taylor's Version) was such a success story that Swifties immediately began to request more. In the time between the release of *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* and the next re-recording announcement, fans began to post on social media and flood comment sections begging for the next *(Taylor's Version)* project and speculating on which album Swift would choose to rerelease next.

d. *Red (Taylor's Version)*

Swift announced (Figure 12) the release date for *Red (Taylor's Version)* via social media on June 18, 2021— a little over two months from the release of *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*. *Red (Taylor's Version)* would come out on November 19th, 2021, and would have 30 tracks. Swift ended her announcement referring to one of the new vault songs, "And hey, one of them is even ten minutes long" (Swift, 2021).

For the *Red (Taylor's Version)* release, Swift used a marketing tactic unique to only this rerelease. She marketed and built anticipation for something her fans had already been requesting from her.

When Taylor Swift originally released *Red* in 2012, there was one track that was never a single or heavily promoted, but Swifties clung to immediately: “All Too Well.” The song was the longest track on the album at over five minutes, and received massive critical acclaim. In a 2024 Rolling Stone article ranking every Taylor Swift song, they decreed “All Too Well” to be number one: “This towering ballad is Swift’s zenith, building peak to peak... On the best day of your life you will never inspire a song as great as ‘All Too Well.’ Or write one” (Sheffield, 2024). In 2018, Swift herself posted a video of her singing the song at the *reputation* Stadium Tour, acknowledging the love for the song with the caption “‘All Too Well’ was never a single, and it always blows my mind that it is consistently one of the loudest songs the crowd sings when I play it” (Swift, 2018).

In 2020, Swift spoke on the creation of the song on a podcast for Rolling Stone. She revealed that the song was a compilation of ad-libs, and when she was finished writing the song it was over ten minutes long (Boucher, 2020). Swifties *lunged* at this reveal. They had just learned that the song that is widely regarded as Swift’s best is only half of its original state. Immediately fans began requesting, or begging, that the song be released in its entirety. As a result, when Swift ended her *Red (Taylor's Version)* announcement by saying one of the vault tracks was ten minutes long, Swifties immediately knew what that meant. Sure enough, when Swift posted another video

containing a red vault and more codes to be unscrambled on August 5, 2021, fans unscrambled the title of Track 30: “All Too Well (Ten Minute Version) (Taylor’s Version) (From the Vault)” (Swift, 2021). On November 5, 2021, Swift posted a teaser for the All Too Well Short Film— a double purpose music video and accompanying film for the new ten minute song— further building anticipation for the album’s release (Swift, 2021).

The other vault tracks also helped to make *Red (Taylor’s Version)* highly anticipated. Swift announced that “Babe,” a track she had written for country act Sugarland in 2012, would be a vault track on the album, making it her first recording of the song. This set of vault tracks also included features from artists like Ed Sheeran, Chris Stapleton, and Phoebe Bridgers.

In addition, Swift went on a press tour for *Red (Taylor’s Version)*, which was new in comparison to *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)*. Swift even altered the release date of *Red (Taylor’s Version)* to be one week earlier: November 12, 2021. This made it so she could appear on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon and perform on Saturday Night Live during the release week for the album.

e. The Eras Tour

In March of 2023, Swift kicked off The Eras Tour in Glendale, Arizona. The tour is still ongoing, with its expected end being later this year. The Eras Tour was significant for multiple reasons. All five of Swift’s headlining tours prior had been named after the album she had just released, and the show itself was themed almost completely around that specific album. The Eras Tour would have performances from all of Swift’s albums,

separated into acts by album. Additionally, at the conclusion of Swift's last tour, the *reputation* Stadium Tour, Swift didn't own the masters to any of her work. But at the beginning of the Eras Tour, Swift had released four albums under UMG and reclaimed two of her old ones. This meant she was kicking off the Eras tour by *owning* 60% of her catalog.

The Eras Tour was an instant hit, selling out before the tickets could even post for the general public. A whopping 44 songs long, the show itself was comprised of ten sets: eight sets each based on a different album, an acoustic set, and then a *Midnights* set (her most recent album at the time). The acoustic set was a different set every night, with Swift singing two random songs: one on guitar and then one on the piano. Swifties have dubbed these the "surprise songs."

The Eras Tour had a huge impact on Swift's streaming statistics. By the 10th week of The Eras Tour, all 42 of the songs on the regular setlist had doubled in weekly streams (Unterberger, 2023). Additionally, when Swift performs a song as a surprise song, that song increases in streams as well. For example, in the week following her performance of "Tim McGraw," weekly streams rose from 450k to 1.06 million. The song performed on only one night of the Eras Tour saw a over 130% rise in streams (Unterberger, 2023).

Because of the impact The Eras Tour has on streams, Swift is strategic when choosing which songs to perform. The show notably does not have a set for her debut album, *Taylor Swift*. Swift's first album is consistently the lowest performer on streaming platforms, so its inclusion in the show would send more fans to songs that she doesn't own yet. The *Speak Now* set started off as just one song as well, presumably for similar

reasons. On the other hand, both *1989* and *reputation* have lengthy sets, and she didn't own either of those albums at the beginning of the tour. However, these albums were top performers on streaming sites already, so their inclusion most likely wouldn't have driven too many additional fans to those albums.

Swift also exercises similar strategy when it comes to the acoustic surprise songs set. Of the 16 shows preceding the May 5th, 2023 *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* announcement, 11 of the total 32 surprise songs were from either *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* or *Red (Taylor's Version)*. Of those first 16 shows, there were zero nights where Swift performed two songs she didn't own; Swift always made sure to perform at least one song during each acoustic set that she owned the masters to. In fact, of the 83 shows that comprised the first full year of The Eras Tour, only 5 had surprise song sets where she didn't own at least one of the songs (Figure 13).

f. *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)*

After the release of *Midnights* in 2022, the aforementioned music video for "Bejeweled" was released. This video had an easter egg that marketed for the next *(Taylor's Version)*. In the video, Swift steps into an elevator, and the viewer gets a look at the elevator buttons. The buttons, numbered 1 to 13 were all different colors. Buttons 1 through 11 were color coded in order, with the color of the button corresponding to an album Swift had released. For example, button 4 was red and corresponded to the original *Red*, and button 11 was also red and corresponded to *Red (Taylor's Version)*. Button 12 was navy for *Midnights*, and then button 13 was purple. Swift hadn't had a 13th release

yet, so this button was a clue to fans that *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* would be next, as purple had always been associated with the original. To confirm this theory, button 3—the one that corresponded to the original *Speak Now*—was the same shade of purple. Swifties began to beg for the release of *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* in droves.

On March 17th, 2023, Taylor Nation, the official account for Swift's team, posted on Instagram that four new songs were releasing that day; three rerecorded songs and one new song, (Taylor Nation, 2023). One of the rerecorded songs was "If This Was A Movie (*Taylor's Version*).” The original "If This Was A Movie" was a bonus track on *Speak Now*, but the new (*Taylor's Version*) of the song was released as a single from *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*. Swifties were initially confused, but eventually put it together. "If This Was A Movie" was the only track from the original *Speak Now* that featured a cowriter alongside Swift. Moving the song to *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* meant that the entirety of *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* would be self-written by Taylor Swift. Swifties took this move as another sign that *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* would be the next rerecording project from Swift, and that an announcement was soon to follow.

As expected, on May 5th, 2023, Taylor Swift revealed that *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* would be released on July 7th while on stage at The Eras Tour in Nashville, TN. In her subsequent Instagram post, Swift says "I first made *Speak Now*, completely self-written, between the ages of 18 and 20. The songs that came from this time in my life were marked by their brutal honesty, unfiltered diaristic confessions and wild wistfulness." (Swift, 2023).

Swift maintained a minimal marketing strategy for *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)*, abstaining from a traditional press tour and the cryptic videos for fans to decode like the prior *(Taylor's Version)*s. She released the track list on her social medias on June 5th, 2023. The album would have six vault tracks, including features from Fall Out Boy and Hayley Williams.

Upon the album's release, she debuted a music video for vault track "I Can See You" while on stage at The Eras Tour. The music video was a gift to the longtime fans; The video featured actresses Presley Cash and Joey King, both of whom were in the music video for the original version of "Mean" in 2010, and actor Taylor Lautner, who famously dated Swift during the writing of the original *Speak Now* (Legaspi, 2023). The video also served as promotion for the *(Taylor's Version)* project as a whole. The video was heist themed, with the actors working together to bust out Swift— dressed in all throwback 2010 gear—of an oversized vault. Swift explained to the crowd at the Eras Tour, "Ever since I started re-recording, I wanted to show a story visually that portrayed the ways that you guys have helped me get my music back" during the debut of the video (Camp, 2023).

Additionally, Swift leveraged the surprise song section of the show to draw more attention to the album's release. At the four shows immediately following the release of *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)*, five of the eight total surprise songs were from *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)*.

Swift also used the release of *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* to make a correction. A song off the original album, "Better Than Revenge," featured a lyric many called

misogynistic: “She’s not a saint and she’s not what you think, she’s an actress— she’s better known for the things that she does on the mattress” (Genius, 2010). Swift appeared to later regret the lyric. In an interview with *The Guardian* in 2014, Swift said “I was 18 when I wrote that. That’s the age you are when you think someone can actually take your boyfriend. Then you grow up and realize no one can take someone from you if they don’t want to leave” (Hoby, 2014). In “Better Than Revenge (*Taylor’s Version*),” she changed the lyric: “She’s not a saint and she’s not what you think, she’s an actress— he was a moth to the flame, she was holding the matches” (Genius, 2023). This was the only (*Taylor’s Version*) of a song to alter something about the original. While some fans were upset at the change, most fans as well as media outlets applauded Swift for the correction. Although she never directly addressed the change, the new lyrics garnered even more press for the album’s release.

g. 1989 (*Taylor’s Version*)

On August 9, 2023, Swift revealed to a sold-out crowd for The Eras Tour in Los Angeles that *1989 (Taylor’s Version)* would be released—exactly nine years after the original album— on October 27, 2023 (Grow, 2023). This version of the album would contain five new tracks from the vault. Although none of the new tracks had features like the previous (*Taylor’s Version*)s, Kendrick Lamar would be rerecording his part in the hit, “Bad Blood” (Swift, 2023).

For this rerelease, Swift returned to having fans decode the vault track titles from a puzzle, but on a much larger scale. In September of 2023, Swift partnered with Google

to create a new riddle for Swifties. When typing “Taylor Swift” into the search bar, fans were presented with a word to unscramble. In order to move to the next of 89 different puzzles, fans had to type the unscrambled word into the search bar. After 33 million puzzles were completed, Swift would release the track list. The tactic was so popular that the platform crashed temporarily, causing Google to put out a (Swift-themed, of course) statement: “Swifties! The vault is jammed! But don’t worry, there are no blank spaces inside. We’re in our fix-it era and will be out of the woods soon” (Denis, 2023).

The original release of *1989* in 2014 included exclusive photo cards made to look like polaroid pictures in the deluxe CDs. Each CD included 5 polaroids, and there were 65 total to collect. Each of the polaroids exhibited an exclusive photo of Swift and a different lyric from the album printed in Swift’s handwriting. For *1989 (Taylor’s Version)*, Swift paid homage to the original polaroids. She released four variants of the new album, and each variant came with a different set of polaroids. Paralleling the vault tracks, the *1989 (Taylor’s Version)* polaroids featured photos from the original 2014 photoshoot that didn’t make the cut originally. Each variant also had different cover art and an exclusive colorway. In both cases, many fans bought multiple copies of the album in order to get a complete set.

IV. Time, Mystical Time, Cuttin' Me Open Then Healin' Me Fine: The Timing

a. Age of Social Media

The advent of social media allows for music artists to speak and market directly to their fans in a way artists pre-2010 could not. Artists can completely bypass music labels, radio, and television and get their work directly to the consumer. Before social media, artists who re-recorded had to bank on consumers finding out they were rerecording through the news, if it was covered. Music labels obviously didn't want to promote an artist's attempt to circumvent them, and people couldn't switch to something they didn't know existed.

The age of social media allowed for Swift to get her dispute with Big Machine out to the masses immediately. Even if her new label didn't want to promote the rerecordings for some reason, she could've personally promoted the project to her audience directly. She didn't have to bank on her audience being informed consumers; she could inform them herself.

b. Streaming

The age of music streaming has had a large impact on the success of the (*Taylor's Version*) project for one large reason: accessibility. Namely, *legal* accessibility. Before music streaming services like Spotify or Apple Music, if one wanted to hear an album, one could purchase the physical or digital album, hope the radio played it, or download the album illegally. With streaming services, one doesn't have to own the album to hear

it; they get unlimited access to music for a monthly fee. Because of streaming, the general public has more choice in what they listen to. They are no longer limited by the version that the radio plays, the version carried in their local store, or the version that is available to be shipped to them.

There is an argument that streams draw from physical album sales. The original release of *Fearless* was in 2008, before streaming, and sold 592,000 hard copies in its first week (Neeranjan, 2023). *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* released in 2021, in the age of streaming and sold only 179,000 hard copies in its first week (Neeranjan, 2023). However, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* had 142.98 million streams during its first week (Neeranjan, 2023). It's difficult to know if *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* would have had more physical sales if streaming were not an option, or if it was simply destined to have fewer physical sales because it was a rerecorded album.

However, the accessibility of streaming allowed for many Swifties to make the switch in a way that Swift could profit from, but wouldn't cost them any additional funds. If the only option was still owning the album in order to hear it, how many fans would buy a new version of an album they've already paid for? But with streaming, it's much simpler for fans to make the switch. It's the same monthly fee no matter which version of *Fearless* one listens to, so if one wanted to switch to *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, it's not money out of their wallet— it's just money in hers.

Additionally, streaming made it so listening to the older versions of the albums was a kind of detraction from Swift. If you were listening to the old versions in a physical format, no one is profiting based off of how many times you spin that album. But if you

stream the old albums, royalties (however small) per stream are paid to Big Machine Label Group. The idea that BMLG or Scooter Braun was profiting from streams caused many Swifties to boycott the original albums, which further drew attention and anticipation to the *(Taylor's Version)s*.

c. Swift v. Spotify

Although the age of music streaming would eventually pave the way for the success of the *(Taylor's Version)* project, Swift herself has a complicated history with streaming services. In July of 2014, Swift wrote an opinion article for the Wall Street Journal, where she criticized streaming services like Spotify; “In my opinion, the value of an album is, and will continue to be, based on the amount of heart and soul an artist has bled into a body of work, and the financial value that artists (and their labels) place on their music when it goes out into the marketplace...Music is art, and art is important and rare. Important, rare things are valuable. Valuable things should be paid for. It’s my opinion that music should not be free...” (Swift, 2014).

Spotify in particular as a streaming service was just starting up, and had a free option that was ad-supported for consumers. Because of these factors, Spotify was—and still is, to an extent— notorious for paying artists extremely little for each stream. In November of 2014, Swift removed her entire back catalog from Spotify, despite estimates that an artist as successful as Swift could have made millions off of Spotify royalties based on how popular her music was. However, Swift wasn’t speaking for only herself, but was calling for other “artists to reject services that devalue their work through low

payouts” (Linshi, 2014). She ended her op-ed by saying “My hope for the future, not just in the music industry, but in every young girl I meet... is that they all realize their worth and ask for it” (Swift, 2014).

Swift kept her music on other streaming platforms like Apple Music, but not without requests. When Apple Music announced that they would not pay any royalties to artists if their songs were listened to by someone on a free trial for their service, Swift voiced her opposition: “I’m sure you are aware that Apple Music will be offering a free 3 month trial to anyone who signs up for the service. I’m not sure you know that Apple Music will not be paying writers, producers, or artists for those three months. I find it to be shocking, disappointing, and completely unlike this historically progressive and generous company... This is about the new artist or band that has just released their first single and will not be paid for its success. This is about the young songwriter who just got his or her first cut and thought that the royalties from that would get them out of debt” (Swift, 2015). Within a week, Apple Music announced they had changed their policy, and would be paying artists for their streams even during free trial periods.

In June of 2017, Swift announced that her entire catalog would be back on all streaming services, including Spotify. The Twitter account for Taylor Nation posted “In celebration of *1989* selling over 10 Million Albums Worldwide and the RIAA’s 100 Million Song Certification announcement, Taylor wants to thank her fans by making her entire back catalog available to all streaming services tonight at midnight” (Taylor Nation, 2017). The announcement came as a surprise to many. Notably, it did follow a April 2017 policy change from Spotify that new music releases would only be available

for paid subscribers for the first two weeks (Grady, 2017). In addition, Swift surprise released her sixth album, *reputation*, five months after putting her music on all streaming services.

Regardless of the reason for the return to streaming, the move was a good one for Swift. The *(Taylor's Version)s* would eventually break all kinds of streaming records. She also continued to fight for artist's rights after the return; When she resigned with UMG in 2018, she notably requested "that any sale of their Spotify shares result in a distribution of money to their artists," to which UMG agreed (Swift, 2018).

V. Long Live All The Magic We Made: The Fanbase

a. The Swifties

Taylor Swift's carefully curated relationship with her fanbase, the Swifties, has been at the forefront of her career since the very beginning. Thus, the Swifties have toed the line between being die-hard fans and overzealous groupies from the start. They are thanked in every acceptance speech and mentioned lovingly in every interview. The fanbase as a whole, namely the relationship Taylor Swift herself built, is one of the main causes of the (*Taylor's Version*) success story. By a combination of the factors listed below, Swift has built a fanbase willing to action on her behalf, defend her without her asking, and loyally follow every new endeavor.

b. Curation of Fan Interactions

Taylor Swift has always taken the time to make sure she can interact with the people who have supported her work. In 2006, following the release of her first album, Swift was an opener for many country artists. After her sets, you wouldn't find her backstage or in a greenroom; you'd find her off to the side, signing autographs for everyone that lined up for one. When asked why her first ever tour for her debut album was so long, Swift remarked, "Radio tours for most artists last six weeks. Mine lasted six months. That's because I wanted it to. I wanted to meet every single one of the people that was helping me out" (Morris 2006). Even at the beginning, Swift wanted to ensure a special moment with her supporters.

When Swift began headlining her own tours, she still made sure to create special moments with select fans. During the 2008 *Fearless* World Tour, Swift had a “T-Party” room situated in every backstage area. During the show, Taylor’s team would pick fans from the audience who were invited to the T-Party room immediately following the show. There, Swift would do signings, take pictures, and hang out with fans and her band (Collier 2012). In all four of her subsequent tours, the Swift team would have some variation of this system in order for Taylor Swift to come face to face with as many fans as possible.

Swift retired the after show meet and greets for her most recent tour, the Eras Tour (2023-2024), presumably because of how large both the shows and the crowds had become. Instead, she created a new tradition in order to connect with one supporter every night. Her team picks one member of the audience to go up to the front of the stage and meet Swift during a performance of “22” during the *Red* portion of the show. The lucky fan receives a hug and a signed hat from Swift.

In one famous instance, Swift hosted a meet and greet for fans in June of 2010 (Leon, 2010). Admission to the event was free, and lines wrapped around Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena all day. The event was originally planned to be 13 hours, but got extended to 14.5 hours in order for Swift to meet everyone in line to see her. The only break she took was to grab her guitar for an exclusive acoustic performance.

Swift also hosts fans outside of live events. For her *1989* album release, Swift hosted “Secret Sessions” (Barnes, 2023). Weeks before the album released publicly, Swift’s team tracked down longtime fans on social media and invited them to a party in

one of five locations. At each event, Swift baked cookies, poured drinks, and then announced to the fans that they would be listening to the album before anyone else. Fans were encouraged to take pictures and mingle, as long as they didn't leak any information before the album's official release. For *1989*, Swift hosted five of these listening parties, four of which were at her personal residences. She continued this tradition for fans for the next two albums; *reputation* and *Lover*.

c. Philanthropy

Another habit Swift has maintained throughout her career: philanthropy. Swift has donated to struggling fans and causes alike too many times to count. In 2011, Swift donated \$250,000 to tornado relief funds in Alabama, and her "Speak Now... Help Now" fund helped to raise an additional \$750,000 (Gould, 2011). Following the release of her *1989* album, Swift donated all the proceeds from the single, "Welcome to New York" to New York City Public Schools as well as all the proceeds from the "Wildest Dreams" music video to the African Parks Foundation of America (Phillip, 2020). On every stop of her famous "Eras Tour" from 2023-2024, Swift is reported to have donated to the local food banks in the area (Hughes, 2024).

While Swift donates to broad causes, she donates to the causes close to her as well. In 2010, she donated \$500,000 to flood relief in her local Nashville (Finan 2010). In 2016, a year after filing her own sexual assault lawsuit, Swift donated \$250,000 to singer Kesha to help with her legal fees following her long battle with her accused abuser and producer Dr. Luke (Leopold, 2016). During the 2020 pandemic, Swift found numerous

Swifties on twitter struggling to pay bills and sent them \$3000 each (Tenbarga, 2020). A detailed timeline of Swift's significant philanthropic efforts spanning 2008-2023 can be found in Figure 14.

d. Ronan

In 2010, young three-year old Ronan Thompson was diagnosed with a type of childhood cancer called a neuroblastoma. Ronan's mother, Maya Thompson, wrote updates throughout Ronan's cancer journey on her blog. Shortly before his fourth birthday, in May of 2011, Ronan passed away, and Maya Thompson turned the blog into an open letter to her son (Parker-Pope, 2012). She spoke of how she hated the flowers that piled up after his death, and how she missed Halloween with Ronan the most. In October of 2011, Thompson wrote about the call she received from Taylor Swift, who had been following the blog for over a year. Swift invited Thompson to meet her at her next show in Phoenix (Thompson, 2011).

In September of 2012, Swift called Thompson again, and let her know that she had written a song about Ronan (Figure 17) based on the blog posts Thompson had written. Swift put herself and Maya Thompson as co-writers of the song. All of Swift's proceeds from the song go to cancer charities, and all of Thompson's go to the Ronan Thompson Foundation. Swift debuted the song, aptly titled "Ronan," at a Stand Up to Cancer telethon on September 7, 2012 (Parker-Pope, 2012).

Following the release of "Ronan," Swift has created a habit out of one philanthropic act in particular: hospital visits. Swift has visited countless children's

hospitals since 2013. In 2013, Swift visited patients in Omaha's Children's Hospital and Philadelphia Children's Hospital. In 2014, she visited Boston Children's Hospital and put on a mini-performance for cancer patients there (Schlosser, 2014). In 2016, she visited the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital (Hoffman, 2016) and Hasbro Children's Hospital (Levin, 2016). The visits were not publicized by Swift or her team; both hospitals issued statements after the visits thanking Taylor Swift for coming to speak and sing to the kids. In 2018, Swift visited eight-year-old Isabella McCune in the Arizona Burn Center after Isabella recorded a video "explaining how she had hoped to go to Swift's concert in Glendale... but that she couldn't leave the hospital" (Bland, 2018). Swift surprised the young girl with a visit, a bag of merchandise from her *reputation* Stadium Tour, and autographed CDs.

e. Personalized Gifts

Taylor Swift has earned a reputation as a generous gift giver when it comes to her fans. Swift is never hesitant to send a gift, a baked good, or a handwritten note no matter the reason. .

Swift has been documented helping fans in need on multiple occasions. In 2012, the family of a fallen Marine, Sgt. Wade Wilson, received a bouquet of flowers and a handwritten note from Swift after the family made public statements about the Sergeant's love for Taylor Swift (Pacella, 2012). In 2013, an 8 year old girl made headlines after Taylor Swift sent her a care package and a handwritten note during her hospital stay after the girl had stated publicly that she calmed herself in the ambulance by singing Swift's

songs (CBS, 2013). In 2015, Swift sent a fan a care package, which included a painting (and a photo of Swift herself creating the painting), a necklace, and \$1,989 in an envelope with a tag that said “Rebekah, now you’re \$1,989 closer to paying off those student loans” (Bortniker, 2015).

While some chalk these gifts up to PR stunts, Swift often gives gifts behind the scenes. In 2017, Swiftie Stephanie revealed an act of kindness the singer had done for her two years prior. In 2015, Stephanie met Taylor Swift backstage after a Manchester, UK show of her *1989* tour. Stephanie had spent 8 months of her pregnancy homeless after her partner lost his job and their apartment was condemned. Stephanie writes that Taylor Swift “told me she wanted to give me the money back for my ticket that night. What she actually did was help us buy a home and all I needed for my baby. She told me, ‘I want you to be able to enjoy your little girl, not have to worry about all this stuff’” (Atkinson, 2018).

Swift doesn’t always wait until fans are in need to let them know she appreciates them. In 2014, she created “Swiftmas,” a tradition where Taylor herself chose fans, picked out a gift (or gifts) curated to each specific fan, and wrote them a handwritten note to go with it. She continued the “Swiftmas” tradition through the end of the decade. One fan, Rebecca Cox, recalled the picture frames Swift sent her for Christmas in 2014, and the handwritten note attached that said “To Becca— I thought you could put Polaroids of you, me, and V—(a reference to Victor, Rebecca’s friend and fellow Swiftie)—in here” (Wang, 2014).

In 2017, Swiftie Ashley Silvers sent Swift an invitation to her graduation party. Swift responded with a bouquet of flowers and a handwritten card, apologizing for having to miss the party (Verhoeven, 2017). However, Swift doesn't miss every party, and she isn't shy to gift her time either. In 2014, when fan Gena invited Taylor Swift to her bridal party, she flew to Ohio to surprise Gena as a guest. Of course, Swift made sure to bring a trunkful of gifts for Gena as well.

f. Social Media Presence

Throughout her career, Swift has made sure to remain very active on social media and often sends personalized messages to fans. She uses social media in both the traditional way—to promote and market—but often uses the tool as a way to have genuine interactions with her fans. As of 2024, Swift has an account on almost every major social media site.

The account most emblematic of this is Swift's Tumblr. While it was started initially by her team, Swift herself took the account over in 2014 in order to connect better with her fanbase (Strecker, 2014). Within the first week of running her own Tumblr account, she had reblogged viral gifs of herself, posted selfies with her cats, and commented on multiple fan's jokes and art pieces. In one instance, she commented "My new phone lock screen, nbd" in reaction to fan art of her cats (Strecker 2014).

Taylor Swift is never afraid to participate in her fanbase's inside jokes and memes, even the ones at her expense. In one viral post (Figure 15), a Tumblr user claims a photo of Taylor Swift is her friend Becky, and uses "Becky" as a cautionary tale against

marijuana use. When one commenter says that the photo is of Taylor Swift, another commenter simply responds, “No it’s Becky.” The post had acquired over 30,000 notes by the time Swift reblogged the post herself on Tumblr. On September 24, 2014, Taylor Swift is photographed in a yellow cropped t-shirt with the words, “No it’s Becky” printed on the front (Boardman, 2014). In a post from 2019, a Tumblr user posts (Figure 16) a photo of a cat in a party hat and captions it, “Taylor, after 1 and a half mojito.” Swift reblogged the post, commenting in all caps, “WHERE DID U GET THAT PICTURE OF ME” (Swift, 2019).

Within her first three years on the platform, she had liked over 27,000 posts and followed over 5,000 accounts, maxing out the amount Tumblr allows (Coscarelli, 2017). Swift has remained active on the platform for over ten years now.

Lately, Swift has been using Tiktok as well to connect on a more personal level with fans. Swift joined the platform in August of 2021, posting her first video: a video of her cats (Strecker, 2021). Since then, the Taylor Swift Tiktok account has kept busy liking and commenting on fans posts. Her Tiktok likes are full of videos fans filmed at her Eras Tour concerts and reactions from fans to her album releases. Once again, Swift isn’t hesitant to poke fun at herself on a social media platform. When a Tiktok user posted a video of a stage malfunction—one that resulted in her having to run off the stage for a quick change—from one of Swift’s Eras Tour shows, Swift commented “Still swift af boi” (Young, 2023).

Recently, Swift has used Tiktok as a way to gift fans tickets to her sold-out Eras Tour shows. In March of 2024, Tiktok and Taylor Swift partnered to create an 11 week

challenge for fans where there would be a new challenge each week, each related to one of Swift's albums. Following the completion of each challenge, Tiktok users would receive a digital bead and badge for their profile. At the end of all 11 weeks, those beads would form a digital friendship bracelet badge for the user's profile. After the completion of the entire 11-week challenge, multiple users got comments on their most recent video from the Taylor Nation Tiktok account telling them to check their inbox for tickets to an upcoming concert (Bellusci, 2024).

g. The Swiftie Effect

All of the aforementioned factors have helped to strengthen the Swifties into what they are: a formidable, loyal force. The Swifties have such a close relationship with Taylor Swift that they feel like they owe her for all she's done. After all, people want to support someone they believe to be a good person, and they *especially* want to support someone they believe to be their friend.

Some of these factors can't even be proven to be Swift herself. For example, the social media posts or some of the philanthropic efforts could have been done on behalf of Swift rather than by her. Swift isn't necessarily the one personally writing checks or comments. However, the argument on whether it is Taylor Swift herself is a moot one. What matters is that the Swifties believe that it's her. They believe they are interacting with Taylor Swift herself, and that strengthens the fan bond.

The efforts that we know for sure to be Taylor Swift herself, such as the hospital visits and creation of the song for Ronan, further bolster Taylor Swift's general reputation

as well as the bond between her and her fans. To the Swifties, they help support that the above actions—the ones we don't know for sure to be her—must be her as well. She has shown that she cares enough to do the things they physically see her do, so why *wouldn't* she be doing her own charity work, sending her own gifts, and writing her own comments on social media?

In addition, Swift's participation in jokes at her own expense and relatable word choices on her social medias further humanizes her to fans. The Taylor Swift social media accounts use the same slang, the same memes, and the same gifs as 'normal' users of the site. These aspects of her social media further strengthen the relationship between her and the Swifties. They see her as somebody just like them, as opposed to a detached billionaire.

All of these factors have convinced Swifties and the public that Swift truly cares about her fans. As far as the public is aware, Swift cares about global issues, she cares about their personal problems, and she cares about their happiness. This is what led to much of the success behind the (*Taylor's Version*)s. If Swift hadn't had a history of *caring*, she would have received a much different reaction to the masters dispute than she did. After all, she does still receive a part of the revenue from the original albums. Her desire for full ownership could have been seen by many as an extremely privileged problem. But, to the Swifties and much of the general public, a person who had (in a well-documented manner) cared about their problems for a long time now had one of her own. They felt they owed her their sympathy and their support. The Swifties flocked to

abandon the versions they call stolen, and switched to *Taylor's Version* of each new album that came out.

In multiple of Taylor Swift's public statements regarding the sale of her old catalog, Swift included language directed to her fans. She spoke directly to them, sending them messages of love and telling them they deserve to know what's going on, when informing them of her side of the masters dispute. In her November 14, 2019 statement, she ended the letter discussing the dispute she was having with Big Machine about performing at the AMAs and using her old catalog in a documentary with "I love you guys and I thought you should know what's going on" (Swift, 2019). While Swift did not explicitly include a call to action in her statement, Swifties flocked to the comment sections and private messages of Big Machine Records, Scooter Braun, and Scott Borchetta. In Big Machine's initial response to this statement, they claim that "Taylor made a unilateral decision last night to enlist her fanbase in a calculated manner that greatly affects the safety of our employees and their families" (Big Machine, 2019). Within the next week, Big Machine had caved and allowed Swift's performance. Whether the decision was because of Swift's publicist's statement (Figure 5), or the backlash from the Swifties is up for debate.

In Swift's November 16, 2020 statement (Figure 7) regarding the acquisition of her old catalog by Shamrock Holdings, Swift both began and ended the statement by addressing the fans. She started off with "I wanted to check in and update you guys" and finished the statement with "I want to thank you guys for supporting me through this ongoing saga, and I can't wait for you to hear what I've been dreaming up. I love you

guys and I'm just gonna keep cruising, as they say" (Swift, 2020). Notably, in all three of Swift's statements (Figures 1, 4, and 7) regarding her side of the dispute, Swift made sure to sign off with just her first name. This further reinforces the idea that she is coming to her fans as a friend asking for help, not a celebrity.

The relationship Swift has with her fanbase cannot be replicated. It has been carefully and masterfully curated for almost two decades. The willingness of the Swifties to follow Taylor Swift through any endeavor is one of the primary reasons for the unprecedented success of the (*Taylor's Version*) project, and it can all be traced back to the intense effort and time she committed to creating a fanbase. The fans not only adopted, but embraced and anticipated each new version. They purchased the physical albums, collected then new merchandise, and switched to the new versions on streaming platforms.

VI. ...But I've Got Me: The Aftermath

a. Critical Reception

The response to the (*Taylor's Version*)s have been monumental. During the first year of *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, the album earned over 1 million equivalent album units. In the same time, the original version of *Fearless* earned 242,000 equivalent album units, a milestone that *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* surpassed in its first week (Lipshutz, 2022). That wasn't just a boom at release either. Over the first two years of *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, the new release consistently earned three times the equivalent album units its original version received (Lipshutz, 2023). As of October 2024, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* has well over 4.3 billion streams on Spotify, and receives an average of over 2.7 million streams daily (Spotify, 2024). The original versions (*Fearless*, *Fearless Platinum Edition*, and *Fearless - International Version*) all receive less than 700,000 daily streams (Spotify, 2024). At the 2022 Billboard Music Awards, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* was nominated for Top Country Album, but beaten out by none other than *Red (Taylor's Version)* for the win (Atkinson, 2022).

Red (Taylor's Version) furthered the lead. *Red (Taylor's Version)* has now sold over ten times the equivalent album units than its original ever did (Lipshutz, 2023). It receives an average of 3.4 million Spotify streams daily, while its original counterparts (*Red* and *Red (Deluxe Edition)*) receive less than 800,000 each. *Red (Taylor's Version)* broke the Guinness World Record for the most day-one streams of an album by a female artist on Spotify. The album also received an NME Award for Best Reissue, a Billboard Award for Top Country Album, an AMA for Favorite Pop/Rock Album, and an AMA for

Favorite Country Album (Shafer, 2022) (Atkinson, 2022). The album was nominated for three Grammy Awards, with the All Too Well short film taking home the Grammy for Best Music Video (Wetherby, 2023).

Speak Now (Taylor's Version) debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 albums chart, and officially made Swift the female artist with the most No. 1 albums ever (Caulfield, 2023). All 22 tracks from the album debuted on the Hot 100 chart (Zellner, 2023). *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* earned 716,000 equivalent album units in its first week of release (Caulfield, 2023). *Speak Now (Taylor's Version)* earns an average of 2.2 million daily Spotify streams, while the originals (*Speak Now* and *Speak Now (Deluxe)*) earn less than 750,000 daily Spotify streams (Spotify, 2024).

All 21 songs from *1989 (Taylor's Version)* debuted on the Hot 100 chart, with eight of them taking spots in the Top 10 (Zellner, 2023). In its opening week, *1989 (Taylor's Version)* earned 1.653 million equivalent album units, making it the biggest week for *any* album since November of 2015, and beating out its original counterpart's first week of 1.28 million equivalent album units (Zellner, 2023) (Millman, 2023). It receives an average of 4.16 million daily Spotify streams, and the original receives 2.45 million daily Spotify streams (Spotify, 2024).

b. Music Labels

Major music labels are less enthusiastic about the success of Taylor Swift's rerecordings. Her *(Taylor's Version)s* render the originals almost worthless in comparison, and music labels are now working to prevent another Taylor Swift success story.

It's clear that in Swift's original contract, there was some type of clause against rerecording. In her 2019 statement regarding her AMA performance (Figure 2), Swift mentions how she won't be able to rerecord her music until the following year. Because Swift didn't go in chronological order, it can be extrapolated that the clause was most likely a number of years from either the signing of the contract or the termination of the contract, rather than a specific amount of time from each album's release. An amount of years from the termination of the contract is most typical, so in Swift's case, she would've had a two year waiting period (O'Bier 2023).

Labels are now increasing this length of time in their new contracts to prevent another (*Taylor's Version*) fiasco. Music attorneys report seeing contracts "demanding artists wait an unprecedented 10, 15, or even 30 years to re-record releases after departing their record companies" (Knopper, 2023).

VII. Now That We're Done and It's Over: The

Conclusion

The success of the rerecordings have been so extraordinary that they have become an excellent business move for Swift, rather than a bandaid over a mistake. *Red* never won a Grammy when it was first released, but now *Red (Taylor's Version)* has one under its belt. All four currently released (*Taylor's Version*)s have been received so well that Swifties speculate on when *reputation* and *Taylor Swift* will be rereleased. Swift doesn't have to convince fans to make the switch; they're *begging* for the option.

The Eras Tour has only increased the anticipation for the next (*Taylor's Version*)s; On October 18, 2024, Swift debuted a new outfit for the *reputation* set of The Eras Tour, and fans immediately began speculating about a possible announcement (Tannenbaum, 2024). It is a safe bet to say that *reputation (Taylor's Version)* and *Taylor Swift (Taylor's Version)* will meet if not surpass the success seen thus far. The first and last albums recorded under Big Machine Label Group will be the final venture for Swift in the pursuit of owning her entire catalog.

Not only was the Taylor Swift rerecording project a success story, but it helped launch her career further. The unprecedented success of the (*Taylor's Version*)s cannot be replicated in full. The main contributors to her success—her fanbase, marketing, and timing—have all been in the works for her entire career. However, artists looking to rerecord can extract strategies from Swift.

Swift could have owned her masters from the beginning if her contract had been scrutinized more carefully— by herself or her parents, as Swift was a minor at the time. It’s hard to say if Swift would still have been signed or have had the same level of success had she demanded her masters from the beginning. However, within Swift’s long stint at BMLG, she most likely would have had the opportunity to renegotiate her contract, and that time would have come after she had made a name for herself. She could have used that time to leverage her masters.

However, Swift handled the dispute the best way she could have. The marketing for the rerecordings began long before *Fearless (Taylor’s Version)* was announced. Her statements on the rights of artists, as well as feelings of bullying, got the public on her side when the true situation was that Big Machine Records was enforcing a contract that she herself signed. She was even able to action the public and her fans on her behalf during the dispute.

Swift and her teams’ marketing genius continued when each of the rerecordings was announced. They listened extremely carefully to what fans loved about those first iterations of her albums and what they would want out of a rerecord. The fans wanted more material, so Swift added vault tracks. Swifties didn’t like a lyric in one of the original versions, so Swift changed it in the *(Taylor’s Version)*. Fans loved “All Too Well,” so Swift released a 10-minute version. Swifties wanted these new versions to feel the same as the old ones, so Swift was meticulous in making sure every word, every high note, every *breath* in the original versions was transposed to the new versions. Having a grasp on what the fans wanted was a crucial aspect of the rerecordings’ success.

Her carefully cultivated relationship with her fanbase created support from both the Swifties and the general public. Taylor Swift has given back to her fans and the general public for her entire career, long before rerecording was even on her mind. She has been dropping easter eggs and drawing attention to her music before she had something to direct all that attention to. When the masters dispute erupted, Swift had a project where all of her years (decades, even) of hard work nurturing her fanbase would pay off.

Swift humanized herself in a way other celebrities haven't. When the dispute finally broke out, Swifties saw her as a friend in need rather than someone they follow. This is the root of the *(Taylor's Version)* success. They truly empathize with Swift, because they have seen how she has cared for and interacted with them for years.

In contrast to the planned marketing and Swift's massive following, the timing of the *(Taylor's Version)s* was a bit more up to fate. Even then, Swift got in at the perfect time: at the height of streaming and social media, and a few years after putting her music back on streaming services. However, While Swift's timing was excellent, other artists may have trouble rerecording in the age following the *(Taylor's Version)s*. Artists may have trouble replicating the same success *because* of Swift's success. Music labels have grown wiser in the aftermath, and now throw in longer rerecording clauses. This once again shows how important it is for artists to truly scrutinize the contracts they are signing.

One would hope to never be in the position to have to rerecord their music in the first place. Taylor Swift, one of the biggest artists in the world, got into a very

preventable mess when she signed her ownership of her masters away in the first place. Artists can learn how this can be prevented in their own deals from her mistakes. And, in the case where an artist is needing to reclaim ownership of their work, they now have a blueprint of a rerecording that actually worked. From this, any artist looking to embark on a rerecording project can extrapolate ways to get their audience to switch over to their versions.

As of now, Swift owns all but two of her albums, and is on the way to reclaiming all of them. She has rendered her original versions almost irrelevant, making the music that was sold out from under her a bad investment. Her rerecordings have better numbers than the originals ever did. The *(Taylor's Version)* project both heightened her career and the music from the original albums, inspiring confidence in any artist who may one day want to do the same.

*...Sometimes, walkin' out is the one thing
That will find you the right thing
Sometimes, givin' up is the strong thing
Sometimes, to run is the brave thing
Sometimes, walkin' out is the one thing
That will find you the right thing
... Fifteen years, fifteen million tears
Begging 'til my knees bled
I gave it my all, he gave me nothin' at all
Then wondered why I left
... Now he sits on his throne in his palace of bones
Praying to his greed
He's got my past frozen behind glass
But I've got me*

—Taylor Swift, “it’s time to go”

VIII. Feeling Like There's Nothin' to Figure Out:

Figures

Figure 1 [Taylor Swift's Tumblr Statement]

For years I asked, pleaded for a chance to own my work. Instead I was given an opportunity to sign back up to Big Machine Records and 'earn' one album back at a time, one for every new one I turned in. I walked away because I knew once I signed that contract, Scott Borchetta would sell the label, thereby selling me and my future. I had to make the excruciating choice to leave behind my past. Music I wrote on my bedroom floor and videos I dreamed up and paid for from the money I earned playing in bars, then clubs, then arenas, then stadiums.

Some fun facts about today's news: I learned about Scooter Braun's purchase of my masters as it was announced to the world. All I could think about was the incessant, manipulative bullying I've received at his hands for years.

Like when Kim Kardashian orchestrated an illegally recorded snippet of a phone call to be leaked and then Scooter got his two clients together to bully me online about it. (See photo) Or when his client, Kanye West, organized a revenge porn music video which strips my body naked. Now Scooter has stripped me of my life's work, that I wasn't given an opportunity to buy. Essentially, my musical legacy is about to lie in the hands of someone who tried to dismantle it.

This is my worst case scenario. This is what happens when you sign a deal at fifteen to someone for whom the term 'loyalty' is clearly just a contractual concept. And when that man says 'Music has value', he means its value is beholden to men who had no part in creating it.

When I left my masters in Scott's hands, I made peace with the fact that eventually he would sell them. Never in my worst nightmares did I imagine the buyer would be Scooter. Any time Scott Borchetta has heard the words 'Scooter Braun' escape my lips, it was when I was either crying or trying not to. He knew what he was doing; they both did. Controlling a woman who didn't want to be associated with them. In perpetuity. That means forever.

Thankfully, I am now signed to a label that believes I should own anything I create. Thankfully, I left my past in Scott's hands and not my future. And hopefully, young artists or kids with musical dreams will read this and learn about how to better protect themselves in a negotiation. You deserve to own the art you make.

I will always be proud of my past work. But for a healthier option, Lover will be out August 23.

Sad and grossed out, 

Taylor

Fig. 1. Taylor Swift's Tumblr Statement.; tumblr.com, 30 June. 2019, <https://www.tumblr.com/taylorswift/185958366550/for-years-i-asked-pleaded-for-a-chance-to-own-my>

Figure 2 [Scott Borchetta's BMLG Statement]

So, it's time for some truth...

In regard to a post earlier today from Taylor, it's time to set some things straight.

Taylor's dad, Scott Swift, was a shareholder in Big Machine Records, LLC. We first alerted all of the shareholders on Thursday, June 20th for an official shareholder's call scheduled for Tuesday, June 25th. On the 6/25 call the shareholders were made aware of the pending deal with Ithaca Holdings and had 3 days to go over all of the details of the proposed transaction. We then had a final call on Friday, June 28th in which the transaction passed with a majority vote and 3 of the 5 shareholders voting 'yes' with 92% of the shareholder's vote.

Out of courtesy, I personally texted Taylor at 9:06pm, Saturday, June 29th to inform her prior to the story breaking on the morning of Sunday, June 30th so she could hear it directly from me.

I guess it might somehow be possible that her dad Scott, 13 Management lawyer Jay Schaudies (who represented Scott Swift on the shareholder calls) or 13 Management executive and Big Machine LLC shareholder Frank Bell (who was on the shareholder calls) didn't say anything to Taylor over the prior 5 days. I guess it's possible that she might not have seen my text. But, I truly doubt that she "woke up to the news when everyone else did".

I am attaching a few very important deal points in what was part of our official last offer to Taylor Swift to remain at Big Machine Records. Her 13 Management team and attorney Don Passman went over this document in great detail and reported the terms to her in great detail.

Taylor and I then talked through the deal together.

As you will read, 100% of all Taylor Swift assets were to be transferred to her immediately upon signing the new agreement. We were working together on a new type of deal for our new streaming world that was not necessarily tied to 'albums' but more of a length of time.

We are an independent record company. We do not have tens of thousands of artists and recordings. My offer to Taylor, for the size of our company, was extraordinary. But it was also all I could offer as I am responsible for dozens of artists' careers and over 120 executives and their families.

Taylor and I remained on very good terms when she told me she wanted to speak with other record companies and see what was out there for her. I never got in her way and wished her well.

The morning that the new Taylor/UMG announcement was going to be made, she texted me shortly before letting me know that the announcement was coming in a few minutes.

As we both posted on our socials, we saluted each other and cheered each other on.

Taylor had every chance in the world to own not just her master recordings, but every video, photograph, everything associated to her career. She chose to leave.

As to her comments about 'being in tears or close to it' anytime my new partner Scooter Braun's name was brought up, I certainly never experienced that. Was I aware of some prior issues between Taylor and Justin Bieber? Yes. But there were also times where Taylor knew that I was close to Scooter and that Scooter was a very good source of

Fig. 2. Scott Borchetta's BMLG Statement.; bigmachinelabelgroup.com, 30 June. 2019, <https://www.bigmachinelabelgroup.com/so-its-time-some-truth/>

information for upcoming album releases, tours, etc, and I'd reach out to him for information on our behalf. Scooter was never anything but positive about Taylor. He called me directly about Manchester to see if Taylor would participate (she declined).

He called me directly to see if Taylor wanted to participate in the Parkland March (she declined). Scooter has always been and will continue to be a supporter and honest custodian for Taylor and her music.

This is the text Taylor sent to me on Monday, November 19th at 8:57am:

*“Scott,
I hope this finds you well. Since communication ran dry on our negotiations, I've done what I told you I would do and gone out exploring other options. Owning my masters was very important to me, but I've since realized that there are things that mean even more to me in the bigger picture. I had a choice whether to bet on my past or to bet on the future and I think knowing me, you can guess which one I chose. I also saw a rare opportunity to effect positive change for a lot of other artists with the leverage I have right now. I know you believe in the same things I do and I'd like to think you would be proud of what I've negotiated for in my deal. I wanted to tell you first that I'll be signing with Lucian. I honestly truly cherish everything you and I have built together and I plan on saying so in my announcement of the new deal. What we accomplished together will be a lasting legacy and a case study on excellent partnerships, and may it continue. I still view you as a partner and friend and I hope you feel the same. Sending you a hug and my most sincere gratitude.
And SO much love,
Taylor”*

Here is the text I sent on the evening of June 29 at 9:05pm:

Dear Taylor,

Hope all is well and congratulations on the success of your first two singles from “Lover”! I can't wait to hear the entire album...

I wanted to pass along to you the same courtesy that you passed along to me in regard to my future.

Tomorrow morning (Sunday, June 30th) at 10a central, the Wall Street Journal will announce that I am entering into a merger/acquisition with Scooter Braun and Ithaca Holdings. This move will give us more pop culture super-power than ever before and I'm so excited about the future.

I want you to know that I will continue to be the proud custodian of your previous works and will continue to keep you and your team abreast of all future plans for releases of you work.

*Nothing but the best,
Scott*

Fig. 2. Scott Borchetta's BMLG Statement (cont.); bigmachinelabelgroup.com, 30 June. 2019, <https://www.bigmachinelabelgroup.com/so-its-time-some-truth/>

Figure 3 [Attachment from Scott Borchetta’s BMLG Statement]

BMLG Response to TS 8/15/18 Proposal

(This is a proposal for discussion purposes only; any agreement is subject to the complete execution of a formal contract.)

Paragraph of TS Proposal	Subparagraph	BMLG Response
1. Term: From execution for a period of seven years.		1. Term: From execution for a period of 10 years.
<p>2. Upon execution, BMLG shall assign to TS all recordings (audio and/or audio-visual), artwork, photographs, and any other materials relating to TS which BMLG owns or controls.</p> <p>Such assignment shall be on a quitclaim basis, except for a warranty that there are no liens, encumbrances, or prior transfers, that BMLG has not breached any agreement between BMLG and a third party who granted rights or performed services with respect to the assigned materials, and that there are no other claims or restrictions that would affect ownership or control of such materials except as may be disclosed.</p>		<p>2. Agreed.</p> <p>Agreed, provided that the TS Materials would be subject to the terms and conditions of any license or other contract BMLG has entered into to-date with regard to them, including, without limitation, mechanical licenses, master licenses, union agreements, manufacturing agreements, distribution agreements and agreements with creators of content or their affiliates.</p>
<p>3. During the Term, BMLG would have the exclusive license of all "Rights" to the "TS Materials" in the Territory.</p> <p>TS shall have the right to direct and/or approve all matters with respect to same, including, without limitation, direction or approval of all distribution agreements, licenses, marketing, promotion, and so forth, and the right to require licenses of the TS Materials to such parties and on such terms as she directs, all in her sole discretion, provided that all such agreements shall be in BMLG's name and will be executed by BMLG. [TS is open to discussing control of the distribution agreement as and when all other issues are resolved.]</p>		<p>3. Agreed as to the Delivered Existing TS Materials & the New TS Materials (subject to the definitions of "Rights," "TS Materials" and "Territory" that BMLG proposes below).</p> <p>TS would retain the exclusive right to exploit the Undelivered Existing TS Materials, provided that no phonorecord uses may be made of them by any entity other than BMLG.</p> <p>BMLG agrees to the concept of TS control with regard to material, substantive issues (thresholds TDB) other than the choice of distributor(s) and manufacturers and the terms and conditions of the agreement(s) with them.</p>

Fig. 3. Attachment from Scott Borchetta’s BMLG Statement.; bigmachinelabelgroup.com, 30 June. 2019, <https://www.bigmachinelabelgroup.com/so-its-time-some-truth/>

Figure 4 [Taylor Swift's Twitter Statement]

Guys- It's been announced recently that the American Music Awards will be honoring me with the Artist of the Decade Award at this year's ceremony. I've been planning to perform a medley of my hits throughout the decade on the show. Scott Borchetta and Scooter Braun have now said that I'm not allowed to perform my old songs on television because they claim that would be rerecording my music before I'm allowed to next year. Additionally - and this isn't the way I had planned on telling you this news - Netflix has created a documentary about me life for the past few years. Scott and Scooter have declined the use of my older music or performance footage for this project, even though there is no mention of either of them or Big Machine Records anywhere in the film.

Scott Borchetta told my team that they'll allow me to use my music only if I do these things: If I agree to not re-record copycat versions of my songs next year (which is something I'm both legally allowed to do and looking forward to) and also told my team that I need to stop talking about him and Scooter Braun.

I feel very strongly that sharing what is happening to me could change the awareness level for other artists and potentially help them avoid a similar fate. The message being sent to me is very clear. Basically, be a good little girl and shut up. Or you'll be punished.

This is WRONG. Neither of these men had a hand in the writing of those songs. They did nothing to create the relationship I have with my fans. So this is where I'm asking for your help.

Please let Scott Borchetta and Scooter Braun know how you feel about this. Scooter also manages several artists who I really believe care about other artists and their work. Please ask them for help with this - I'm hoping that maybe they can talk some sense into the men who are exercising tyrannical control over someone who just wants to play the music she wrote. I'm especially asking for help from the Carlyle Group, who put up money for the sale of my music to these two men.

I just want to be able to perform MY OWN music. That's it. I've tried to work this out privately through my team but have not been able to resolve anything. Right now my performance at the AMA's, the Netflix documentary, and any other recorded events I am planning to play until November of 2020 are a question mark. I love you guys and I thought you should know what's been going on.

Taylor

Fig. 4. Taylor Swift's Twitter Statement.; x.com, 14 Nov. 2019, <https://x.com/taylorswift13/status/1195123215657508867>

Figure 5 [Big Machine's Response Statement]

As Taylor Swift's partner for over a decade, we were shocked to see her tumblr statements yesterday based on false information. At no point did we say Taylor could not perform on the AMAs or block her Netflix special. In fact, we do not have the right to keep her from performing live anywhere. Since Taylor's decision to leave Big Machine last fall, we have continued to honor all of her requests to license her catalog to third parties as she promotes her current record in which we do not financially participate.

The truth is, Taylor has admitted to contractually owing millions of dollars and multiple assets to our company, which is responsible for 120 hardworking employees who helped build her career. We have worked diligently to have a conversation about these matters with Taylor and her team to productively move forward. We started to see progress over the past two weeks and were optimistic as recently as yesterday that this may get resolved. However, despite our persistent efforts to find a private and mutually satisfactory solution, Taylor made a unilateral decision last night to enlist her fanbase in a calculated manner that greatly affects the safety of our employees and their families.

Taylor, the narrative you have created does not exist. All we ask is to have a direct and honest conversation. When that happens, you will see there is nothing but respect, kindness and support waiting for you on the other side. To date, not one of the invitations to speak with us and work through this has been accepted. Rumors fester in the absence of communication. Let's not have that continue here. We share the collective goal of giving your fans the entertainment they both want and deserve.

–Big Machine Label Group

Fig. 5. Big Machine's Response Statement.; bigmachinelabelgroup.com, 15 Nov. 2019, <https://www.bigmachinelabelgroup.com/taylor-swifts-partner-over-decade-we-were-shocked-see-her-tumblr-statements-yesterday-based/>

Figure 6 [Taylor Swift's Spokeswoman Statement to Business Insider]

The truth is, on October 28, 2019, at 5:17 p.m. the Vice President, Rights Management and Business Affairs from Big Machine Labe Group sent Taylor Swift's team the following: 'Please be advised that BMLG will not agree to issue licenses for existing recordings or waivers of its re-recording restrictions in connection with these two projects: The Netflix documentary and The Alibaba "Double Eleven" Event.

To avoid an argument over rights, Taylor performed three songs off her new album 'Lover' at the Double Eleven event as it was clear that Big Machine Label Group felt any televised performance of catalog songs violated her agreement.

In addition, yesterday Scott Borchetta, CEO and founder of Big Machine Label Group, flatly denied the request for both American Music Awards and Netflix. Please notice in Big Machine's statement, they never actually deny either claim Taylor said last night in her post.

Lastly, Big Machine is trying to deflect and make this about money by saying she owes them but, an independent, professional auditor has determined that Big Machine owes Taylor \$7.9 million dollars of unpaid royalties over several years.

Fig. 6. Taylor Swift's Spokeswoman Statement to Business Insider.; businessinsider.com, 15 Nov. 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/taylor-swift-team-email-response-big-machine-music-recorded-performances-2019-11>

Figure 7 [Taylor Swift's Twitter Statement Regarding Shamrock Holdings]

I wanted to check in and update you guys. As you know, for the past year I've been actively trying to regain ownership of my master recordings. With that goal in mind, my team attempted to reenter into negotiations with Scooter Braun.

Scooter's team wanted me to sign an ironclad NDA stating I would never say another word about Scooter Braun unless it was positive, before we could even look at the financial records of BMLG (which is always the first step in a purchase of this nature). So, I would have to sign a document that would silence me forever before I could even have a chance to bid on my own work. My legal team said that this is absolutely NOT normal, and they've never seen an NDA like this presented unless it was to silence an assault accuser by paying them off 😬 He would never even quote my team a price. These master recordings were not for sale to me.

A few weeks ago my team received a letter from a private equity company called Shamrock Holdings, letting us know that they had bought 100% of my music, videos, and album art from Scooter Braun. This was the second time my music had been sold without my knowledge. The letter told me that they wanted to reach out before the sale to let me know, but that Scooter Braun had required that they make no contact with me or my team, or the deal would be off.

As soon as we started communication with Shamrock, I learned that under their terms Scooter Braun will continue to profit off my old musical catalog for many years. I was hopeful and open to the possibility of a partnership with Shamrock, but Scooter's participation is a non-starter for me.

I have recently begun re-recording my older music and it has already proven to be both exciting and creatively fulfilling. I have plenty of surprises in store 😎 I want to thank you guys for supporting me through this ongoing saga, and I can't wait for you to hear what I've been dreaming up.

I love you guys and I'm just gonna keep cruising, as they say.

Taylor

PS: For transparency and clarification, I have included the letter of response I sent on October 28, 2020 to the private equity group who purchased my music.

Fig. 7. Taylor Swift's Twitter Statement Regarding Shamrock Holdings.; x.com, 16 Nov. 2020, <https://x.com/taylorswift13/status/1328471874318311425/photo/1>

Figure 8 [Attachment from Swift's Shamrock Holdings Twitter Statement]

October 28, 2020

Letter from Taylor Swift

Dear Patrick, Jason, and Laura,

Thank you so very much for your letter. Upon reading your kind words I was thrilled with the idea of working with people who value art and understand how much my life's work means to me. I immediately began to plan all the ways we could work together on expanding and protecting my music while maximizing the outcomes for all involved, especially my fans. So, regardless of the fact that it was the second time my masters have been sold without my knowledge while I was actively trying to purchase them, your letter brought me a great deal of hope for my musical legacy and our possible future together.

This is why I was so disappointed when I learned that under the terms of your acquisition, Scooter Braun and Ithaca Holdings would continue to receive many years of future financial reward from my music masters, music videos, and album artwork. If I support you, as you request, I will be contributing to these future payments to Scooter Braun and Ithaca Holdings. I simply cannot in good conscience bring myself to be involved in benefitting Scooter Braun's interests directly or indirectly. As a result, I cannot currently entertain being partners with you. It's a shame to know that I will now be unable to help grow the future of these past works and it pains me very deeply to remain separated from the music I spent over a decade creating, but this is a sacrifice I will have to make to keep Scooter Braun out of my life. I'm very sorry he has put you in this position. I wish this could have had a better outcome and please do let me know if your firm is ever completely independent from Scooter Braun and his associates.

I feel the need to be very transparent with you. I will be going forward with my original re-recording schedule and will be embarking on that effort soon. I know this will diminish the value of my old masters, but I hope you will understand that this is my only way of regaining the sense of pride I once had when hearing songs from my first six albums and also allowing my fans to listen to those albums without feelings of guilt for benefitting Scooter.

*Sincerely,
Taylor Swift*

Fig. 8. Attachment from Swift's Shamrock Holdings Twitter Statement.; x.com, 16 Nov. 2020, <https://https://x.com/taylorswift13/status/1328471874318311425/photo/1>

Figure 9 [Taylor Swift Debut CD Booklet]

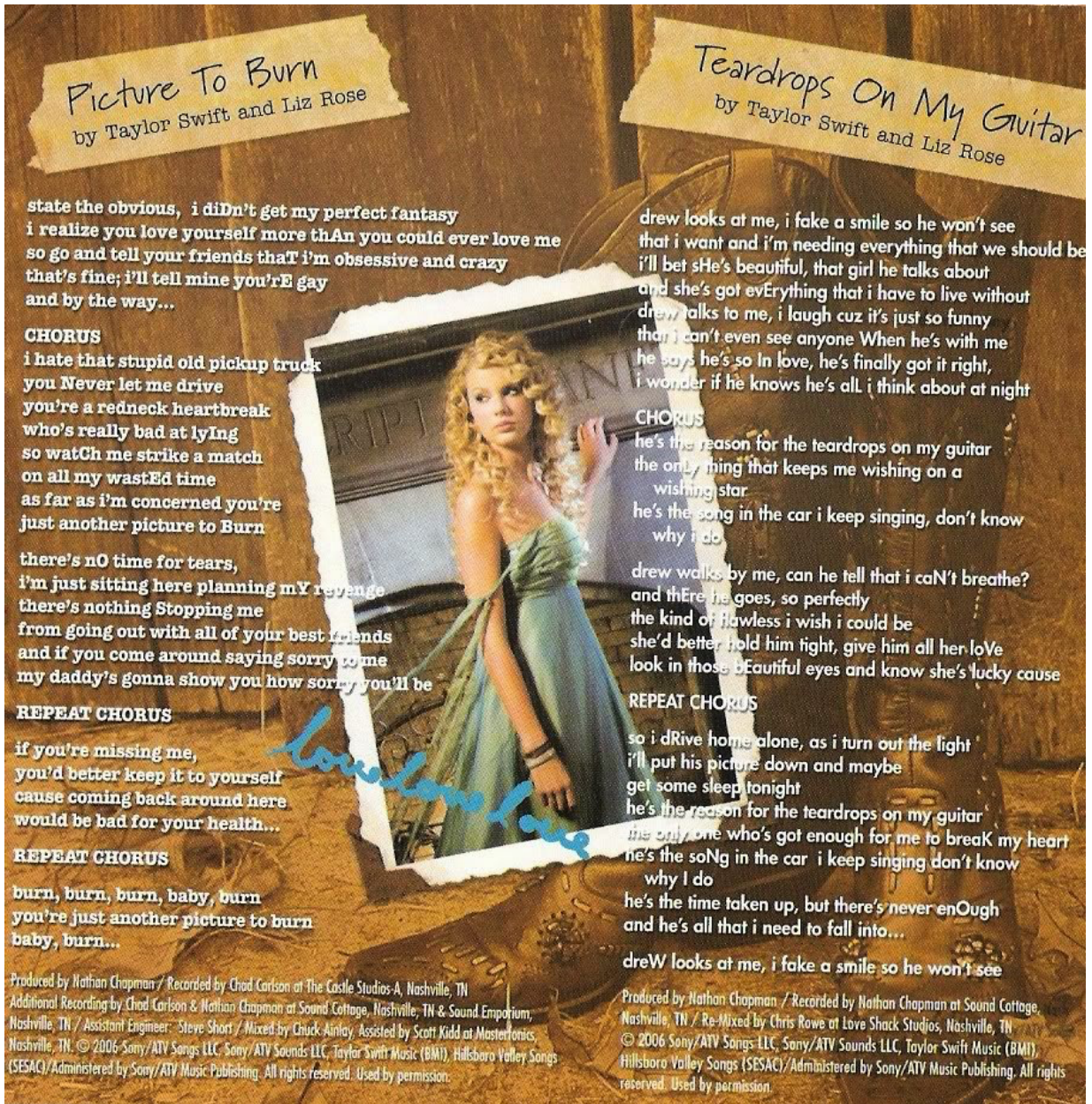


Fig. 9. Taylor Swift Debut CD Booklet.; musica.elrincondetaylor.com, 24 Oct. 2006,
<http://musica.elrincondetaylor.com/2015/03/booklet-taylor-swift-deluxe.html>

Figure 10 [Fearless (Taylor's Version) Announcement]

when i think bAck on the fearless album and all that you turned it into, a completely involuntary smile creeps across my face. this was the musical era in which so many inside jokes were created between us, so many hugs exchanged and hands touched, so many unbreakable bonds formed. so before i say anything else, let me just say that it was a real honor to get to be a teenager alongside you. and for those of you i've come to know more recently than 2008, i am ecstatic that i'll get to exPerience a bit of that feeling with you in the very near future. now that i can fully appreciate it in its whimsical, effervescent, chaotic entirety.

fearless was an album full of magic and curiosity, the bliss and devastation of youth. it was the diaRy of the adventures and explorations of a teenage girl who was learning tiny lessons with every new crack in the facade of the faIrytale ending she'd been shown in the movies. i'm thrilled to tell you that my new version of fearless is done and will be with you soon. it's called fearless (taylor's version) and it includes 26 songs.

*i've spoken a lot about why i'm remaking my first six albums, but the way i've chose to do this will hopefuLly help illuminate where i'm coming from. artists should own their own work for so many reasons, but the most screamingly obvious one is that the artist is the only one who really *knows* that body of work. for example, only i know which songs i wrote that almost made the fearless album. songs i absolutely adored, but were held back for different reasons (don't want too many breakup songs, don't want too maNy down tempo songs, can't fit that many songs on a physical cd).*

those reasons seem unnecessary now. i've decIded i want you to have the whole story, see the entire vivid picture, and let you into the entire dreamscape that is my fearless album. that's why i've chose to include 6 never before released songs on my version of this album. written when i was betweeN the ages of 16 and 18, these were the ones it killed me to leave behind.

this process has been more fulfilling and emoTional than i could've imagines and has made me even more determined to re-record all of my music. i Hope you'll like this first outing as much as i liked traveling back in time to recreate it. love story (taylor's version) will be out tonight.

*sincerely and fearlessly,
taylor*

Fig. 10. *Fearless (Taylor's Version) Announcement.*; [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/taylorswift/p/CLJzk9MjcCe/?hl=en&img_index=1), 11 Feb. 2021, https://www.instagram.com/taylorswift/p/CLJzk9MjcCe/?hl=en&img_index=1

Figure 11 [Original Album Art vs. Taylor's Versions]



Fig. 11. Original Album Art vs. Taylor's Versions.; cosmopolitan.com, 27 Oct. 2023, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/music/a44925877/taylor-swift-original-album-covers-vs-taylors-version/>

Figure 12 [Red (Taylor's Version) Announcement]

I've always said that the world is a different place for the heartbroken. It moves on a different axis, at a different speed. Time skips backwards and forwards fleetingly. The heartbroken might go through thousands of micro-emotions a day trying to figure out how to get through it without picking up the phone to hear that old familiar voice. In the land of heartbreak, moments of strength, independence, and devil-may-care rebellion are intricately woven together with grief, paralyzing vulnerability and hopelessness. Imagining your future might always take you on a detour back to the past. And this is all to say, that the next album I'll be releasing is my version of Red.

Musically and lyrically, Red resembled a heartbroken person. It was all over the place, a fractured mosaic of feelings that somehow all fit together in the end. Happy, free, confused, lonely, devastated, euphoric, wild, and tortured by memories past. Like trying on pieces of a new life, I went into the studio and experimented with different sounds and collaborators. And I'm not sure if it was pouring my thoughts into this album, hearing thousands of your voices sing the lyrics back to me in passionate solidarity, or if it was simply time, but something was healed along the way.

Sometimes you need to talk it over (over and over and over) for it to ever really be... over. Like your friend who calls you in the middle of the night going on and on about their ex, I just couldn't stop writing. This will be the first time you hear all 30 songs that were meant to go on Red. And hey, one of them is even ten minutes long.

Red (Taylor's Version) will be out November 19th.

Fig. 12. *Red (Taylor's Version) Announcement.*; [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/taylorswift/p/CQRUBXtjZXT/?img_index=2), 18 Jun. 2021, https://www.instagram.com/taylorswift/p/CQRUBXtjZXT/?img_index=2

Figure 13 [Eras Tour Surprise Song Table]

Date	Surprise Song 1	Surprise Song 2
03/17/23	Mirrorball	<i>Tim McGraw</i>
03/18/23	This Is Me Trying	State of Grace
03/24/23	<i>Our Song</i>	Snow on the Beach
03/25/23	Cowboy Like Me	White Horse
03/31/23	Sad Beautiful Tragic	<i>Ours</i>
04/01/23	Death By A Thousand Cuts	<i>Clean</i>
04/02/23	Jump then Fall	The Lucky One
04/13/23	<i>Speak Now</i>	Treacherous
04/14/23	The Great War	You're on Your Own, Kid
04/15/23	Mad Woman	<i>Mean</i>
04/21/23	<i>Wonderland</i>	You're Not Sorry
04/22/23	<i>A Place in This World</i>	Today Was a Fairytale
04/23/23	Begin Again	<i>Cold as You</i>
04/28/23	The Other Side of the Door	Coney Island
04/29/23	High Infidelity	<i>Gorgeous</i>
04/30/23	I Bet You Think About Me	<i>How You Get the Girl</i>
05/05/23 - Speak Now Announcement Night	<i>Sparks Fly</i>	<i>Teardrops on My Guitar</i>
05/06/23	<i>Out of the Woods</i>	Fifteen
05/07/23	Would've, Could've, Should've	<i>Mine</i>
05/12/23	Gold Rush	Come Back... Be Here
05/13/23	Forever and Always	<i>This Love</i>
05/14/23	Hey Stephen	The Best Day
05/19/13	<i>Should've Said No</i>	Better Man
05/20/23	Question...?	<i>Invisible</i>
05/21/23	I Think He Knows	Red
05/26/23	<i>Getaway Car</i>	Maroon
05/27/23	Holy Ground	False God

Fig. 13. Eras Tour Surprise Song Table.; 21 Oct. 2024

Date	Surprise Song 1	Surprise Song 2
05/28/23	<i>Welcome to New York</i>	<i>Clean</i>
06/02/23	<i>I Wish You Would</i>	The Lakes
06/03/23	You All Over Me	I Don't Wanna Live Forever
06/04/23	Hits Different	The Moment I Knew
06/09/23	<i>Haunted</i>	I Almost Do
06/10/23	<i>All You Had to Do Was Stay</i>	Breathe
06/16/23	Mr. Perfectly Fine	The Last Time
06/17/23	Seven	<i>The Story of Us</i>
06/23/23	Paper Rings	If This Was a Movie
06/24/23	<i>Dear John</i>	Daylight
06/30/23	<i>I'm Only Me When I'm With You</i>	Evermore
07/01/23	Ivy	<i>Call It What You Want</i>
07/07/23 - Speak Now Release Night	Never Grow Up	When Emma Falls in Love
07/08/23	Last Kiss	Dorothea
07/14/23	<i>Picture to Burn</i>	Timeless
07/15/23	Starlight	Back to December
07/22/23	<i>This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things</i>	Everything Has Changed
07/23/23	Message in a Bottle	<i>Tied Together with a Smile</i>
07/28/23	Right Where You Left Me	Castles Crumbling
07/29/23	Stay Stay Stay	All of the Girls You Loved Before
08/03/23	I Can See You	Maroon
08/04/23	<i>Our Song</i>	<i>You Are in Love</i>
08/05/23	Death By A Thousand Cuts	You're on Your Own, Kid
08/07/23	<i>Dress</i>	Exile
08/08/23	<i>I Know Places</i>	<i>King of My Heart</i>
08/09/23 - 1989 Announcement Night	<i>New Romantics</i>	<i>New Year's Day</i>

Fig. 13 (cont.). Eras Tour Surprise Song Table.; 21 Oct. 2024

Date	Surprise Song 1	Surprise Song 2
08/24/23	I Forgot That You Existed	Sweet Nothing
08/25/23	Tell Me Why	Snow on the Beach
08/26/23	Cornelia Street	You're on Your Own, Kid
08/27/23	Afterglow	Maroon
11/09/23 - First Show Following 1989 Release	The Very First Night	Labyrinth
11/11/23	Is It Over Now? / Out of the Woods	<i>End Game</i>
11/12/23	Better than Revenge	Slut!
11/17/23	<i>Stay Beautiful</i>	Suburban Legends
11/19/23	<i>Dancing With Our Hands Tied</i>	Bigger Than the Whole Sky
11/20/23	Me!	<i>So It Goes...</i>
11/24/23	Now That We Don't Talk	Innocent
11/25/23	Safe and Sound	Untouchable
11/26/23	Say Don't Go	It's Time to Go
02/07/24	Dear Reader	Holy Ground
02/08/24	Eyes Open	Electric Touch
02/09/24	Superman	<i>The Outside</i>
02/10/24	Come In with the Rain	You're on Your Own, Kid
02/16/24	Red	You're Losing Me
02/17/24	<i>Getaway Car / August / The Other Side of the Door</i>	This Is Me Trying
02/18/24	Come Back... Be Here / Daylight	<i>Teardrops on My Guitar</i>
02/23/24	How You Get The Girl	White Horse / Coney Island
02/24/24	<i>Should've Said No / You're Not Sorry</i>	<i>New Year's Day / Peace</i>
02/25/24	Is It Over Now? / I Wish You Would	Haunted / Exile
02/26/24	Would've, Could've, Should've / Ivy	Forever and Always / Maroon

Fig. 13 (cont.). Eras Tour Surprise Song Table.; 21 Oct. 2024

Date	Surprise Song 1	Surprise Song 2
03/02/24	Mine / Starlight	I Don't Wanna Live Forever / Dress
03/03/24	Long Story Short / The Story of Us	Clean / Evermore
03/04/24	Foolish One / Tell Me Why	This Love / Call It What You Want
03/07/24	Death By A Thousand Cuts / Babe	Fifteen / You're on Your Own, Kid
03/08/24	Sparks Fly / Gold Rush	False God / Slut!
03/09/24	<i>Tim McGraw</i> / Cowboy Like Me	Mirrorball / Epiphany

key:

Songs produced under UMG

Songs unowned by Swift at the time

Songs from a (Taylor's Version) at the time

Nights Swift sung zero songs she owned the masters to

statistics:

total songs sung : 177

songs produced under UMG sung : 54 ——— 30.5%

songs unowned by swift at the time sung : 48 ——— 27.1 %

songs from a (Taylor's Version) at the time : 75 ——— 42.4%

Fig. 13 (cont.). Eras Tour Surprise Song Table.; 21 Oct. 2024

Figure 14 [Timeline of Taylor Swift’s Major Philanthropic Efforts]

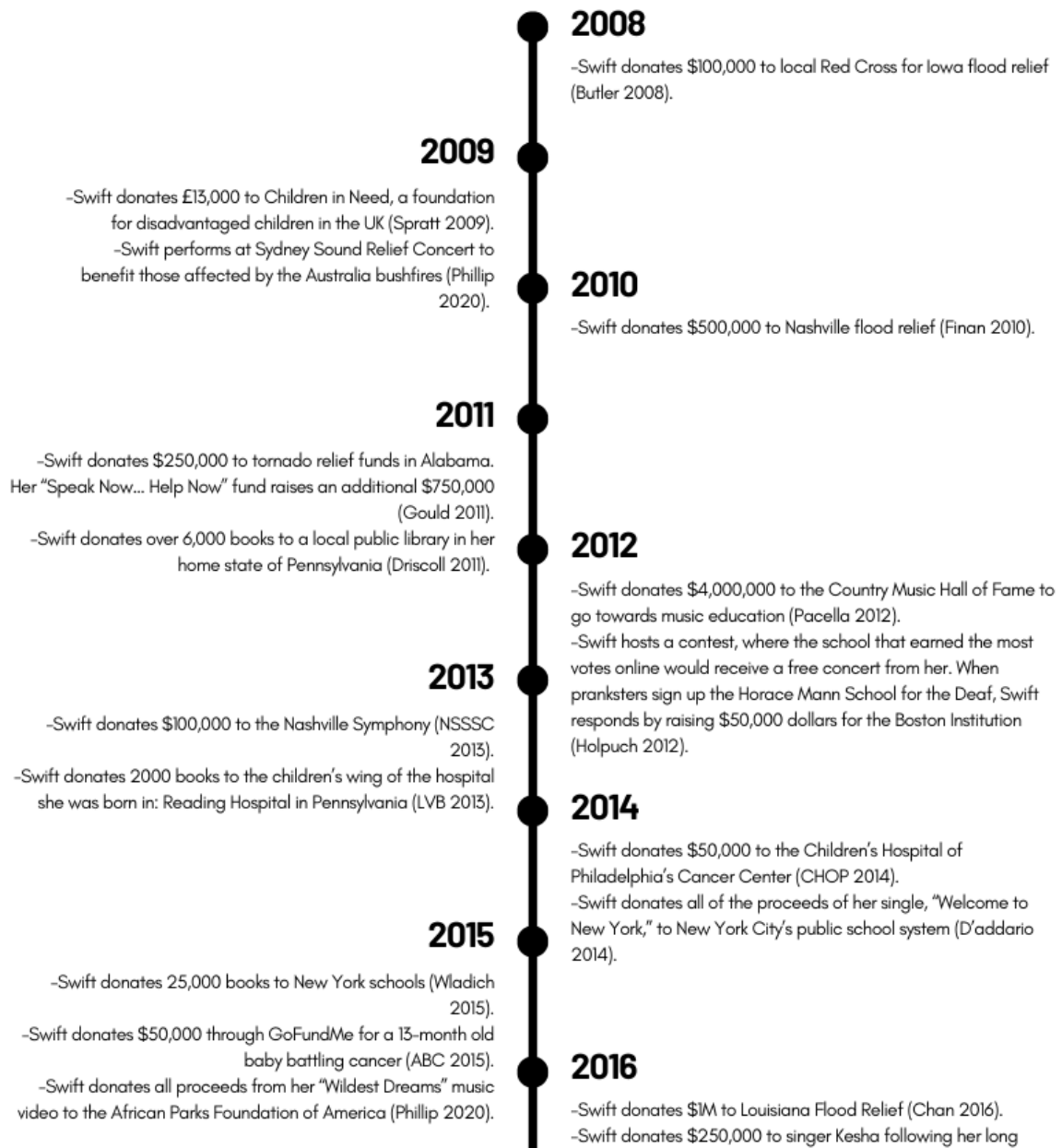


Fig. 14. Timeline of Swift’s Major Philanthropic Endeavors.; 02 Oct. 2024

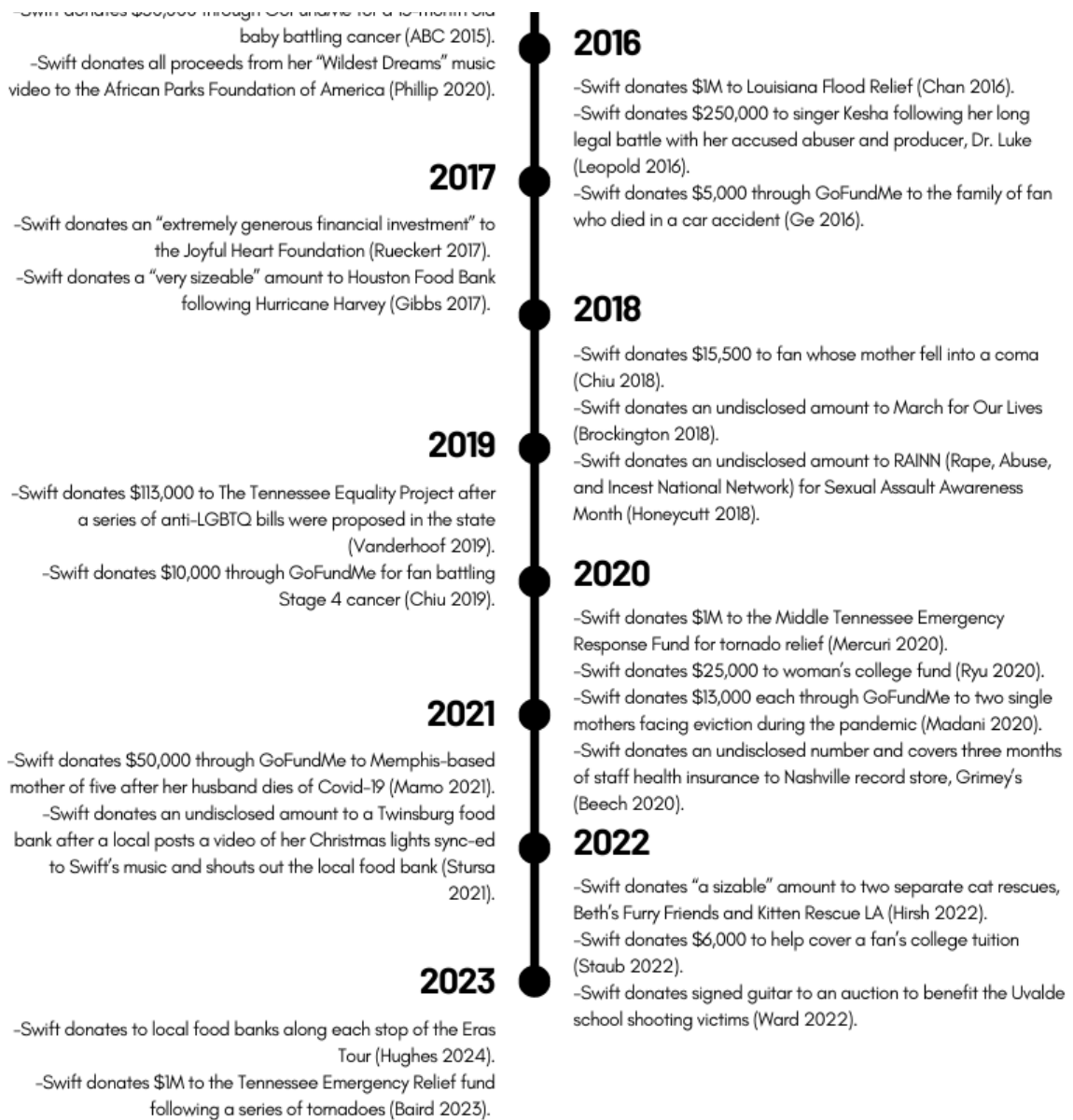


Fig. 14 (cont). Timeline of Swift's Major Philanthropic Endeavors.; 02 Oct. 2024

Figure 15 [No, It's Becky Tumblr Post]



dundermilfflin:

bitch-pudding:

yallarebrutalizingme:

This is a picture of my friend Becky. She used to be a happy, popular girl until one night she snorted marijuana at a party. She died instantly. Please, don't do marijuana. It's the most dangerous drug out there. Please don't wind up like Becky.

pretty sure that's Taylor Swift

no its becky

Fig. 15. No, It's Becky Tumblr Post.; usmagazine.com, 24 Sept. 2014, <https://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/news/taylor-swift-wears-hilarious-no-its-becky-shirt-referencing-meme-2014259/>

Figure 16 [Cat Tumblr Post]

↻ itwasntasingle

 **itwasntasingle**
Taylor, after 1 and a half mojito :



 **taylorswift**
WHERE DID U GET THAT PICTURE OF ME

 **itwasntasingle**
YOUR MOM SEND IT TO ME TAYLOR

 **taylorswift**
Send help I just got dragged
#touché #impressive
20,015 notes Oct 10th, 2019

⋮ ↻ ❤

Fig. 16. Cat Tumblr Post.; tumblr.com, 20 Oct. 2019, <https://taylorswift.tumblr.com/post/188261648140/send-help-i-just-got-dragged>

Figure 17 [“Ronan” Lyrics]

I remember your bare feet down the hallway
I remember your little laugh
Race cars on the kitchen floor, plastic dinosaurs
I love you to the moon and back

I remember your blue eyes looking into mine
Like we had our own secret club
I remember you dancing before bed time
Then jumpin' on me, wakin' me up

I can still feel you hold my hand, little man
And even the moment I knew
You fought it hard like an army guy
Remember I leaned in and whispered to you

Come on baby with me, we're gonna fly away from here
You were my best four years

I remember the drive home
When the blind hope turned to crying and screaming "Why?"
Flowers pile up in the worst way, no one knows what to say
About a beautiful boy who died

And it's about to be Halloween
You could be anything you wanted if you were still here
I remember the last day when I kissed your face
And whispered in your ear

Come on baby with me, we're gonna fly away from here
Out of this curtained room in this hospital grey, we'll just disappear
Come on baby with me, we're gonna fly away from here
You were my best four years

What if I'm standing in your closet trying to talk to you?
What if I kept the hand-me-downs you won't grow into?
And what if I really thought some miracle would see us through?
What if the miracle was even getting one moment with you?

Come on baby with me, we're gonna fly away from here
Come on baby with me, we're gonna fly away from here
You were my best four years

I remember your bare feet down the hallway
I love you to the moon and back

Fig. 17. “Ronan” Lyrics.; genius.com, 07 Sept. 2012, <https://genius.com/Taylor-swift-ronan-lyrics>

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[over-decade-we-were-shocked-see-her-tumblr-statements-yesterday-based/](http://www.bigmachinelabelgroup.com/taylor-swifts-partner-over-decade-we-were-shocked-see-her-tumblr-statements-yesterday-based/).

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