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## TAYLOR SWIFT

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Taylor  
Swift

"what  
else is  
there  
other than"

love?"



# The art of Love

Meeting Taylor Swift is a LOT like FALLING in love, Kathryn Hudson learns.

PHOTOS BY ANDREW MACPHERSON

**t**aylor Swift is talking about love. And her new album, *Red*. The two concepts seem indivisible. "Most of the songs are about very tumultuous relationships that I encountered over the past couple of years—none of them were anything mundane or normal. It was always just amazingly great or amazingly awful or just frustrating and confusing or incredible and exciting and wonderful and magnificent and magical or terrible. Nothing in between."

That's one of the first things the 22-year-old phenom said to me in our interview, and yet it stuck in my head even more than the catchy chorus of one of her latest singles, "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together." It stuck in my head because that's also the perfect way to describe meeting Taylor Swift.

Let me explain.

**MAGICAL** Let's start with the magic. When she breezes into the Los Angeles studio for our photo shoot, wearing a patterned sundress and oxfords, she is all smiles and hand shaking.

It's impossible not to be struck by her beauty and easy charm. Her frame, at five feet 11 inches, is lithe and graceful. Her voice lilts, and her feline eyes crinkle up at the corners when she laughs—which is often. I suspect that she ▷

"All's fair in music and songwriting."

"I learned a lot from Ethel Kennedy." Dress (Marchesa), bracelet (Barneys New York), ring (Le Vian), earrings (Tiffany & Co.) and shoes (Giuseppe Zanotti). Shot on location at Siren Orange Studios in Los Angeles



*“My album is actually a little bit of a life justification for me at this point, you know?”*

“I’m emotionally driven, feminine, spontaneous.” Dress (Jenny Packham), bracelet (Norman Silverman), earrings (Tiffany & Co.) and shoes (Elie Saab)

wakes up looking like this, with no need to put on her face before she leaves home. Her face is just on.

It’s suddenly so clear that some people are just born to glitter onstage.

**INCREDIBLE** It’s incredible to think about where she started, though: a self-described nerd who was raised in Pennsylvania and moved to Nashville when she was an awkward teen to “make it.” Now Swift tops the *Forbes* highest earners list (purportedly raking in \$57 million last year alone) and is practically in need of a wheelbarrow to collect her various award statuettes onstage.

And yet Swift seems intent on living a “normal” life. She talks about going to the grocery store or a park with the dreaminess most of us would reserve for, well, any of the stuff Swift does day to day (photo shoots! Famous boyfriends! Makeup and glitter!)—even if she has to walk

wearing headphones so she “can’t hear the clicking” of the paparazzi.

“I’m always analyzing everything, so I thought a lot about what my life might be like if this actually happened to me,” she says. “I didn’t think I’d get to still be the same person. I would watch all these *True Hollywood Stories*, and it seemed like a lot of people didn’t get to live the life they loved once they’d made it.”

Swift seems to have been able to bring the best of her “old life” into the frenzy of fame. “When you can still just call your best friend that you had in high school and talk about the same things you used to talk about, that’s when you know it’s okay.” Or when you can call up fellow stars like pal Selena Gomez, I add. “A lot of my friends now are stylists or actresses,” she admits. “But we never end up talking shop. We’re always just talking about our lives and our feelings and our relationships and our constant, never-ending, perpetual mini-dramas that happen on a daily basis.”


I’ve already seen that for myself.

**EXCITING** Swift is sitting in the makeup chair, talking into her phone at such speed that I know instantly what it is: It’s boy problems, man. “Shut up right now. Did he really say that?” she asks incredulously before launching into a pep talk to the likely teary chick on the other end of the line. Is it Emma Stone, I wonder? Or Selena? Or some girl from Pennsylvania? Swift flits her eyes up at me and I suddenly understand how my mom must have felt when she’d accidentally pick up the phone I monopolized throughout my teen years. *Mo-ommm, go awayyyyyy.*

Later, though, I can’t resist talking relationships with Swift, who at this point is known as much for her ▷

# ELLE CELEBRITY

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"It would be so much easier if there were rules to follow, but there aren't." Dress (Marchesa). Stylist, Jonas Hallberg; stylist's assistant, Stephanie Braun; hair, Jemma Muradian; makeup, Lorrie Turk; manicure, Stephanie Stone; art direction and illustrated typography, Beatriz Juarez.



*"I don't really have in-your-face moments.  
I'm always terrified of regretting  
something afterwards."*

"I can't wait for people to hear the whole record!"  
Dress (Zuhair Murad) and earrings (Norman Silverman)

write this (27 million. No, wait, 31 million. Wait. 43 million!). But Swift doesn't care if I think it's odd. "When you're little," she explains, "you have so much fun, and it's like, how do we lose that over the years? I think it's by forgetting to do stuff like face painting."

**AMAZINGLY GREAT** For the first time, Swift has been able to focus on recording an album, rather than squeezing writing and studio sessions into an already crammed touring schedule. "It's been the most fun summer I've ever had," she says. (Sure, we're talking about her time spent making *Red*, but I can't help but wonder if she's also thinking of her time spent with the Kennedys.)

It's easy to forget that she was the youngest songwriter Sony ever signed or that she wrote her last album entirely by herself or that she's sold a gazillion albums. But listening to her talk about writing and collaborating for

*Red*, I'm dazzled by her true enthusiasm for music. She riffs about Jeff Bhasker's finesse with drum sounds, Max Martin's gift for counter hooks and post hooks, Ed Sheeran's brilliant understanding of chords and Gary Lightbody's flair for ad libbing. "I wanted what they do to rub off on me," she says unselfconsciously. "This record just kind of came together. There was less kicking and screaming and pacing."

**CONFUSING** We're talking now about the cool girls who used to torment her in school—the ones who left her out and made her hate going to class. I'm expecting her to spike the conversation with a description of a justifiable eat-shit kind of showdown (she told me that those nasty girls lined up to get T-shirts signed at a concert after Swift put out her first album), but instead Swift launches into an explanation about how everyone is a victim in his or her own way, how everyone is full of fear. I tell her I don't agree—especially when it comes to bullies. She forges on. "I don't really have in-your-face moments. I'm always terrified of regretting something afterwards," she explains. "I haven't had an 'Oh, snap' moment, like running into someone who really hurt me and saying something really witty that really cuts them off at the knees. Then I'm horrible—then they'd walk away and be like 'Wow, she was just super-mean to me; let's go talk about her the whole car ride home.'"

But wait...

Isn't her song "Dear John" a total public "Oh, snap" to John Mayer, who reportedly broke her heart? (A lyrical sampling: "Dear John, I see it all now, it was wrong / Don't you think 19's too young / To be played by your dark, twisted games?")

Mayer thought so at least, telling *Rolling Stone* magazine that he was▷