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The Subversive Balladeer



**TAYLOR SWIFT**

CONQUERS THE WORLD FOR COUNTRY

BACKSTAGE ACTION AT "CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL: COUNTRY'S NIGHT TO ROCK"

FOCUS

## TAYLOR SWIFT SEES RED AND STAYS COUNTRY

by KIP KIRBY



TAYLOR SWIFT

In just seven years, Taylor Swift has become a household name and a global phenomenon. She has won CMA's Entertainer of the Year twice (2009 and 2011), been named *Billboard's* Top Artist of the Year (2013) and taken home Album of the Year honors at the 2010 Grammy Awards - not an easy thing to do. She's one of the very few who can do it successfully in multiple markets. The demand for Taylor is absolutely coming from the fans, and you cannot fake demand. It's either there or it isn't. Her audience wants to see her, and they don't mind going to a stadium to do it.

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**RED TOUR DIRECTOR BAZ HALPIN TURNS SWIFT'S DREAMS INTO STAGE REALITY. FIND OUT HOW ON CMA CLOSEUP.COM.**

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She's also just 23 years old — and having the time of her life. Whether sharing the stage with Tim McGraw and Keith Urban on "Highway Don't Care" at this year's CMA Music Festival, playing for 80,000 screaming fans at London's Wembley Stadium or harmonizing onstage with Mick Jagger at a June Rolling Stones concert in Chicago, Swift sees her success as an opportunity to promote Nashville and the music she loves. In fact, that's one of the reasons she makes overseas touring a priority.

"Going outside of your comfort zone geographically is not an easy thing, you know," she explained during a break in a typically busy day. "It's something a lot of artists

don't like to do. You can be at one stage of your career in America and then have to start over in another territory. But we started doing that about five years ago, and I'm so thankful we did because now we can go over there, and we play arenas in Europe and we play stadiums in Australia. It's been amazing to see how my music has thankfully worked in Europe and Asia and the places we've gone and that we've gone out of our way to go. It's amazing to look out into a sold-out crowd of people who don't speak English yet they're singing along to every word of your songs. The fact that it's paid off in that way makes me so proud to be from Nashville. It's an investment I'm so happy we made."

Swift also sees evidence of Nashville Music's International reach much closer to her Nashville home. "Last time I was at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, I noticed that almost everyone walking through was from Europe or Australia or New Zealand," she said. "And that made me so happy. It makes me so proud to see people in other countries curious about Nashville and singer/songwriter music and Country Music."

She'll see many more very soon. In November, "The RED Tour" heads to Australia and New Zealand, where she will become

**CMA BOARD CHAIRMAN TROY TOMLINSON REFLECTS ON SWIFT'S PRETERNATURAL SONGWRITING GIFTS AT CMA CLOSEUP.COM.**

the first solo female artist in 20 years to headline stadium dates there. Taking the risk to play stadiums whenever possible, rather than multi-night arena dates, was a calculated decision.

"Taylor is an incredibly important client of The Messina Group, one of our subsidiaries," said Randy Phillips, President and CEO, AEG Live, which handles Swift's domestic and overseas concert promotions. "And she's an anomaly, because selling out stadiums is not an easy thing to do. She's one of the very few who can do it successfully in multiple markets. The demand for Taylor is absolutely coming from the fans, and you cannot fake demand. It's either there or it isn't. Her audience wants to see her, and they don't mind going to a stadium to do it."

"She's the ultimate hyphenate," he continued. "She genre-crosses like no other artist. She wants to experiment and look at different markets. Obviously her roots are Country, but her success is crossing over into pop. No artist in Country Music has managed to break internationally the way Taylor has in so many markets. She's unique. If you want to call her an ambassador for Nashville, then she's certainly the first real international ambassador Nashville's ever had. That's a huge statement for Country Music."

"Her connection with the audience is incredible," Phillips summed up. "Very few performers can achieve that thing where the wall between them and the audience disappears. But she's one of them. That's an important part of the story, that at this stage of her career, Taylor is able to sell out stadiums. Who would have predicted that just six years ago?"

Share this with Swift, and she will agree. "I've been really lucky with my other tours," she allowed. "But being on this tour, the screaming and passion level with the fans has hit a fever pitch. My fans have always been amazing and emotional, but this is something completely new for me. It's more than it's ever been before. Every single night when I'm about to get on the elevator lift and walk out onstage, it's a feeling of, 'I can't wait to get out there and do my job.' I've always known I wanted to work constantly until I could make a career in music, but even when I dreamed about having a career in music, I don't think I ever envisioned the crowds being larger than theaters or possibly arenas."

"In my wildest dreams, I don't think I ever saw anything like this!"

TaylorSwift.com; @TaylorSwift13

TAYLOR SWIFT



TAYLOR SWIFT AND SURPRISE GUEST TIM MCGRAW PERFORM AT LP FIELD DURING THE 2013 CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL.

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-Randy Phillips, President and CEO, AEG Live