

THE TAYLOR SWIFT EVOLUTION

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The #1 Source for Hit Songwriting Analysis and Trends



Introduction

Taylor Swift is a master at the art of songwriting.

Her lyrics are intriguing yet easy-to-grasp, personal yet universal, and always compelling. Her melodies are irresistibly catchy, featuring expertly crafted, highly infectious vocal and instrumental hooks that linger long after the music stops.

This report takes a deep dive into the songwriting trends behind Taylor Swift's Hot 100 top 10 songs from *Fearless* through *Midnights*.





Between 2008 and 2023, Taylor Swift released nine albums and scored an astounding 51 Hot 100 top 10 hits.

10 51 Hot 100
Top 10 Hits 

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Swift was the performing artist on 49 songs, and a non-performing credited writer on two.

Swift co-wrote 2016's "This Is What You Came For," which was a smash for Calvin Harris and Rihanna (Swift was originally credited as the pseudonym Nils Sjöberg).

Swift received writing credit on Olivia Rodrigo's 2021 hit, "déjà vu," due to the "Cruel Summer" bridge interpolation.



TAYLOR SWIFT ERAS



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Seven Eras

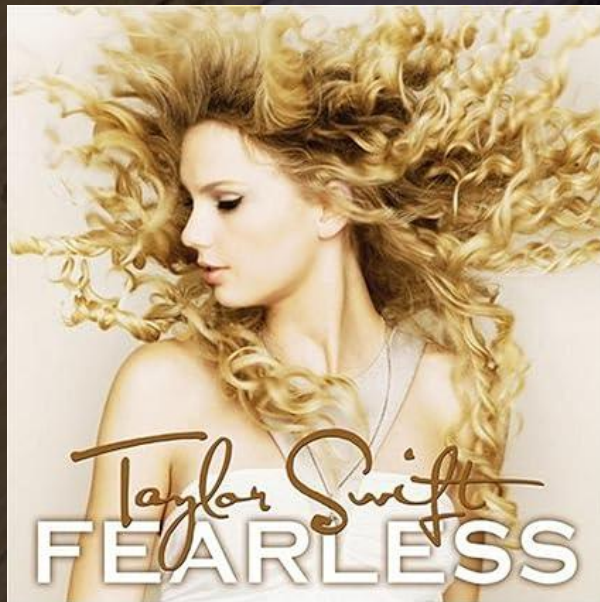
Seven distinct "eras" define Taylor Swift's Hot 100 top 10 career across her nine albums, each possessing specific sounds, styles, and personas.

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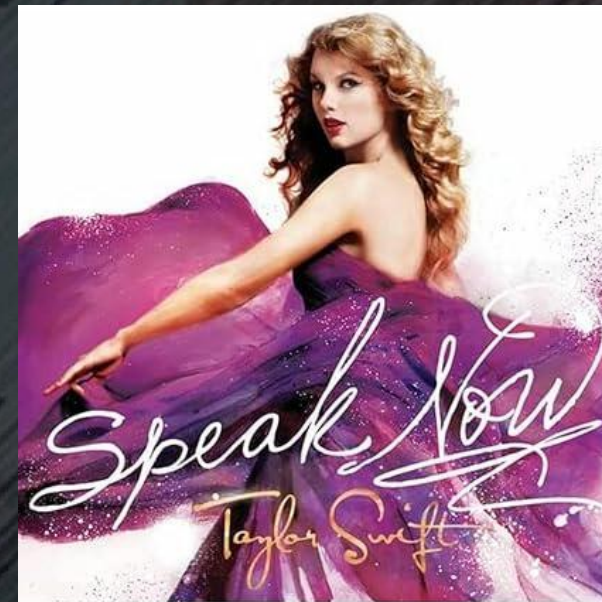
2008 - 2011: Country/Pop/Rock Era

Following Swift's debut album, which was successful but didn't score any Hot 100 top 10s, 2008's *Fearless* thrust her into the limelight with five top 10s. It was directly followed by 2010's *Speak Now*, which landed four. Both albums feature a strong a balance of country, pop and rock qualities.



Top 10s:

- Change* (#10)
- Fearless (#9)
- Jump Then Fall* (#10)
- Love Story* (#4)
- You Belong With Me (#2)



Top 10's:

Mine* (#3)

- And If This Was A Movie (#10)
- Back To December* (#6)
- Speak Now* (#8)

Swift was the sole credited writer on six songs (denoted with *) - the others are collaborations with Liz Rose, Hillary Lindsey, and Tyler Johnson.

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2012 - 2013: Country/Pop Era

Following *Speak Now* was 2012's *Red*, which marked the arrival of some new Taylor Swift collaborators - Max Martin and Shellback. Along with Swift, they co-wrote her two most successful, pop-leaning hits to date, "I Knew You Were Trouble" and "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together."



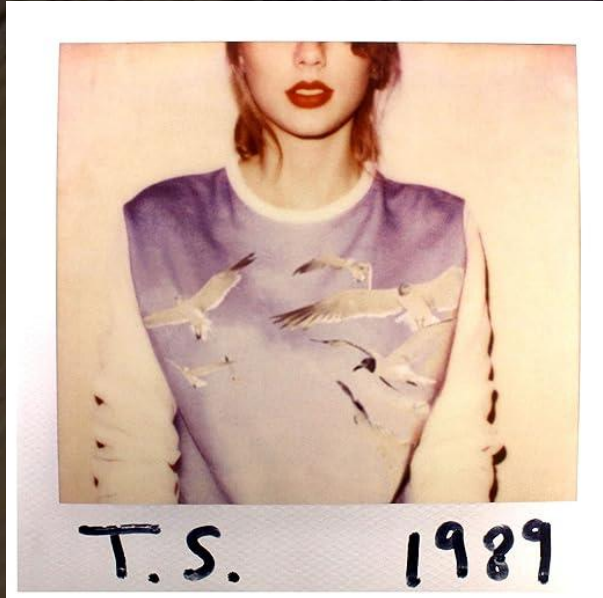
While the album was notably more pop-influenced than her previous efforts, it still retained elements of country and rock to provide continuity across albums and to not completely shock and alienate her core fanbase.

Top 10s:

- Begin Again* (#7)
- I Knew You Were Trouble (#2)
- Red* (#6)
- We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together (#1)

*Swift was the sole credited writer

2014 - 2015: Pop Era #1



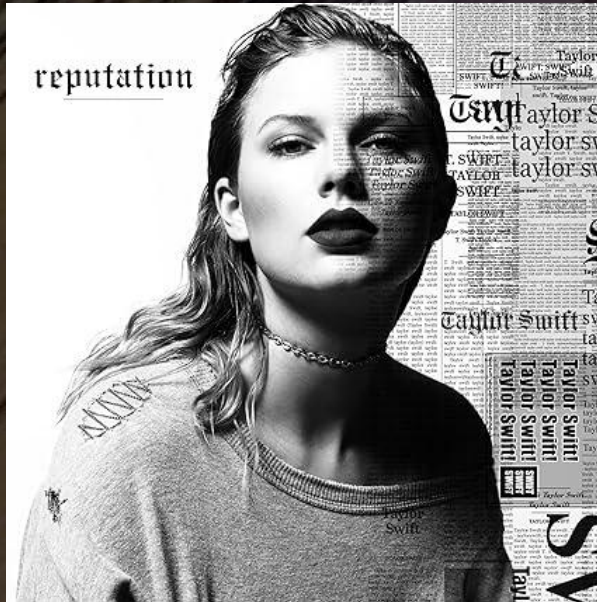
Following *Red* was 2014's *1989*, which saw Swift go all-in on pop.

The album's top 10 hits are all co-writes with Max Martin and Shellback, along Ali Payami on "Style."

Top 10s:

- Bad Blood (#1)
- Blank Space (#1)
- Shake It Off (#1)
- Style (#6)
- Wildest Dreams (#5)

2016-2018: Edgy Pop Era



Swift shook things up on 2017's *Reputation*, which saw her go in a notably edgier direction. Max Martin, Shellback and Payami were her collaborators on "Look What You Made Me Do," while "Ready For It" was co-written with Jack Antonoff.

Top 10s:

- Look What You Made Me Do (#1)
- Ready For It (#4)

2019: Pop Era #2



Top 10s:

- Cruel Summer (#1)
- Lover (#10)
- ME! (*2)
- You Need to Calm Down (#1)

Following *Reputation*, Swift took another turn with 2019's *Lover* - a return to sugary pop.

One of the album's top 10's, "Cruel Summer," was originally slated for single release back in 2019, but was shelved due to the pandemic. However, once it started to gain traction on the 2023 Era's tour, it was finally released and hit the Hot 100 top 10 in July 2023. The song peaked at #1 and remained in the top 10 for over 30 weeks.

Assisting Swift in the crafting of *Lover*'s hits were Jack Antonoff, Joel Little, Brendon Urie and St. Vincent. Taylor Swift was the sole credited writer on "Lover."

2020 - 2021: Alt/Folk Era



folklore Top 10s:

- cardigan (#1)
- exile (#6)
- the 1 (#4)



evermore Top 10

- willow (#1)

Not one to stay with a defining sound for too long, Swift changed course during the pandemic on 2020's *folklore* and *evermore* albums by going in a more organic, folky, singer-songwriter, alternative direction. This is evident on her top 10s “cardigan,” “exile,” “the 1” and “willow.”

Her main collaborator during this period was Aaron Dessner, who was a co-writer on all except for “exile,” which is a co-write with Justin Vernon and Joe Alwyn.

2022 - 2023: Alt/Pop Era



In 2022 Taylor Swift ditched the folk in favor of alt/pop on *Midnights*, which spawned an astounding 10 Hot 100 top 10 hits.

Her main collaborator on these songs was once again Jack Antonoff, who has a credit on every song except for “Vigilante Sh*t.”

Top 10s:

- Anti-Hero
- Bejeweled
- Karma
- Lavender Haze
- Maroon
- Midnight Rain
- Question
- Snow On The Beach
- Vigilante Sh*t
- You're On Your Own Kid

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GENRES & INFLUENCES



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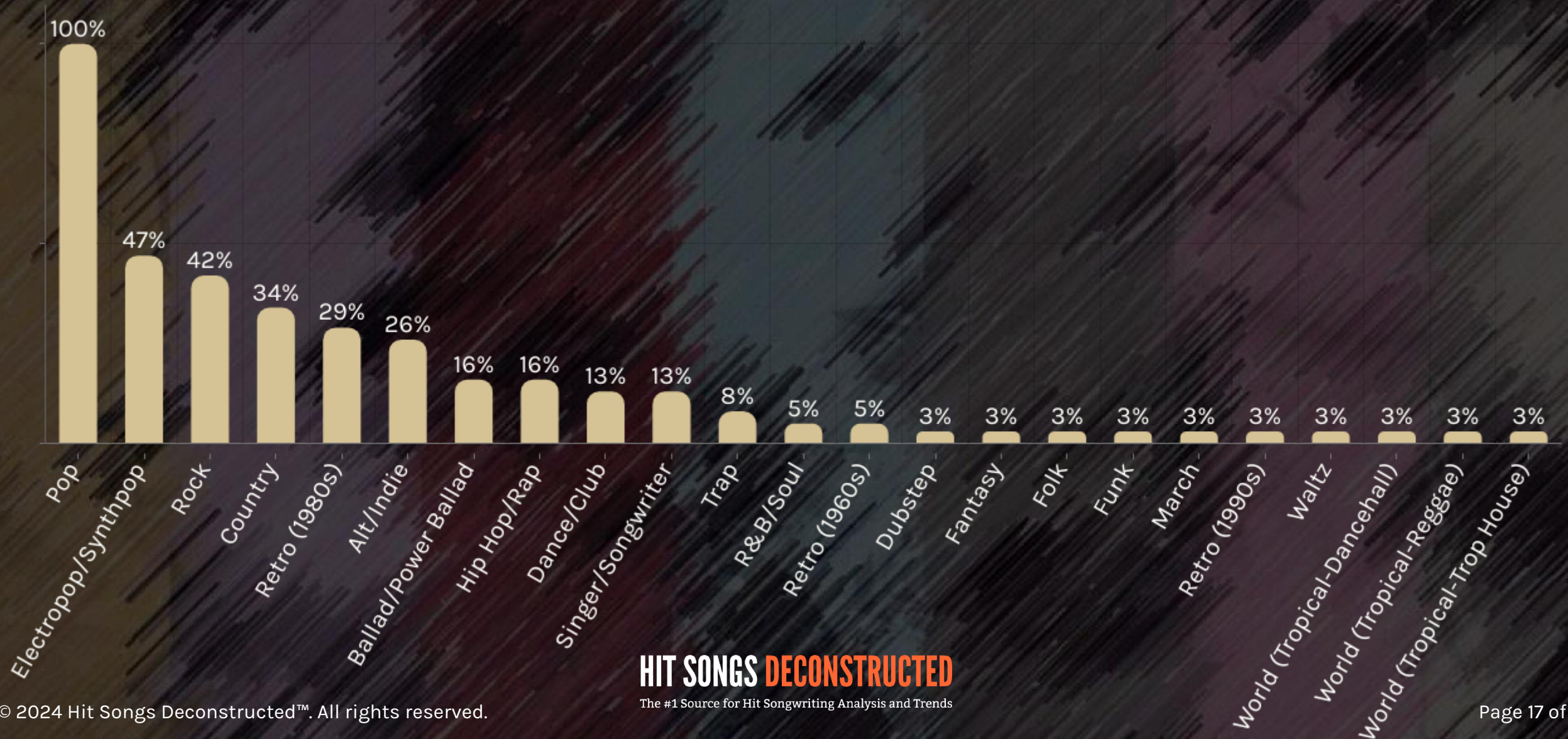
Pop on Top

Twenty-three distinct genres, sub-genres, and influences shape the sound and vibe of Taylor Swift's Hot 100 top 10 hits.

Pop is a primary influence in all her songs, followed by electropop/synthpop, rock, country and retro 1980s rounding out the top five.

Some of the more atypical one-off influences that kept her body of work sounding fresh and interesting include dubstep ("I Knew You Were Trouble"), march ("ME!"), and waltz ("Lover"), among others.

Genres & Influences: 2008 - 2023

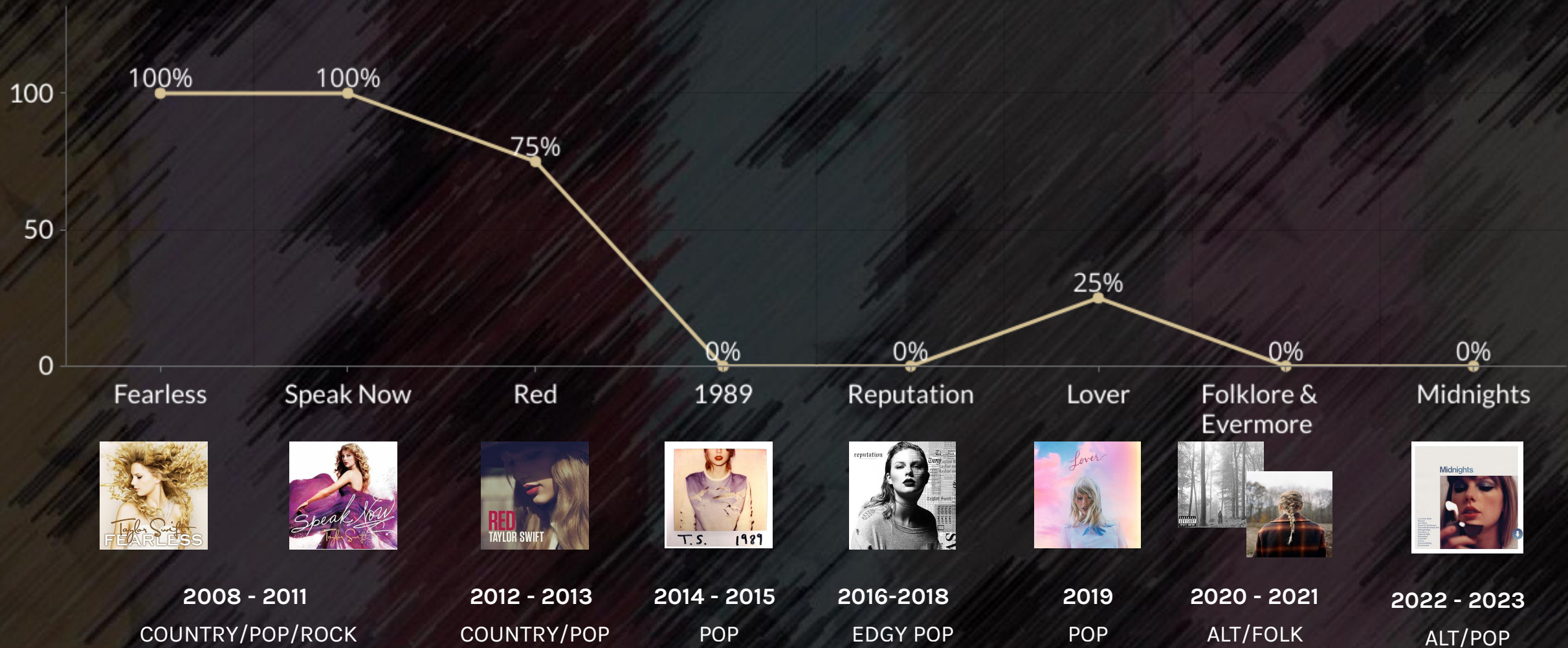




Country

Country is a key influence in Swift's early hits, prevalent across *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, and *Red*. However, from 1989 on, it was all but gone save for one brief instance on *Lover*.

Evolution by Album: Country



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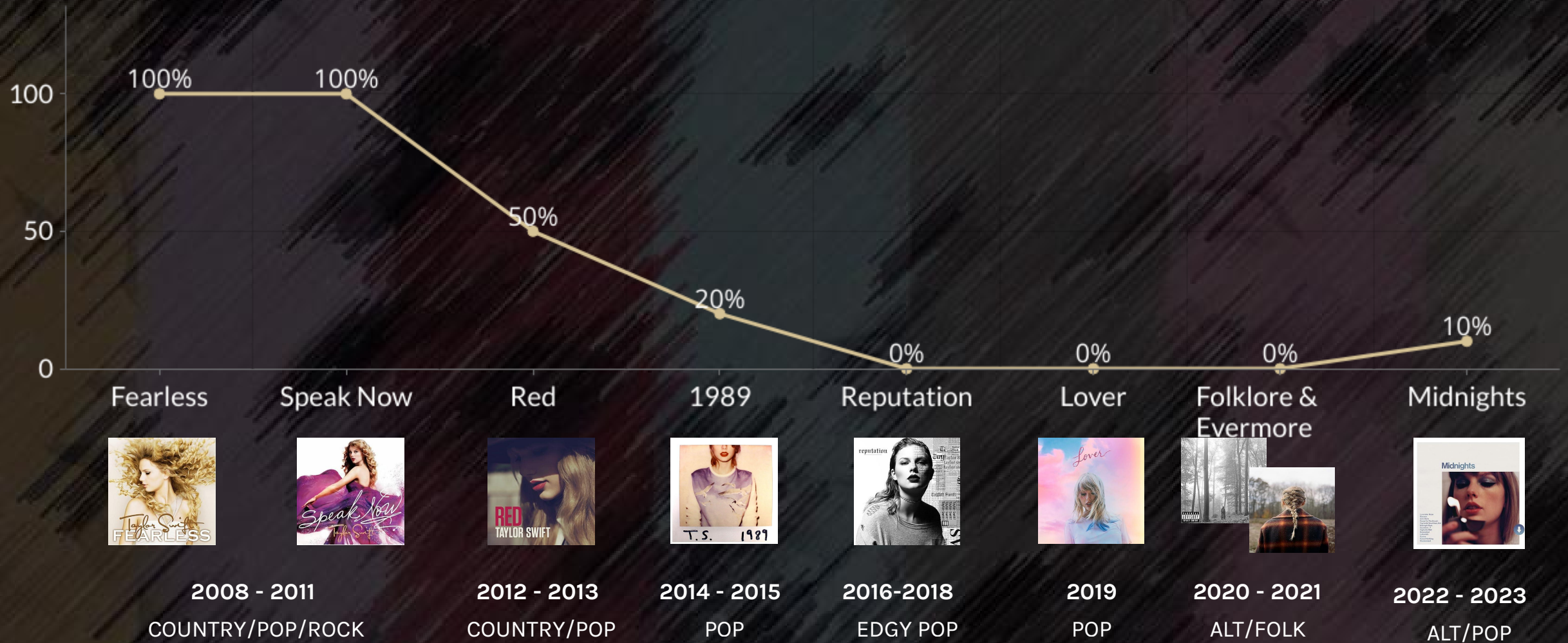
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Rock

Rock is also a defining influence in Swift's early hits, present in all of her top 10s on *Fearless* and *Speak Now*. However, like country, it began to diminish on *Red* and was completely gone following 1989 save for a one-off return on *Midnights* ("Anti-Hero").

Evolution by Album: Rock



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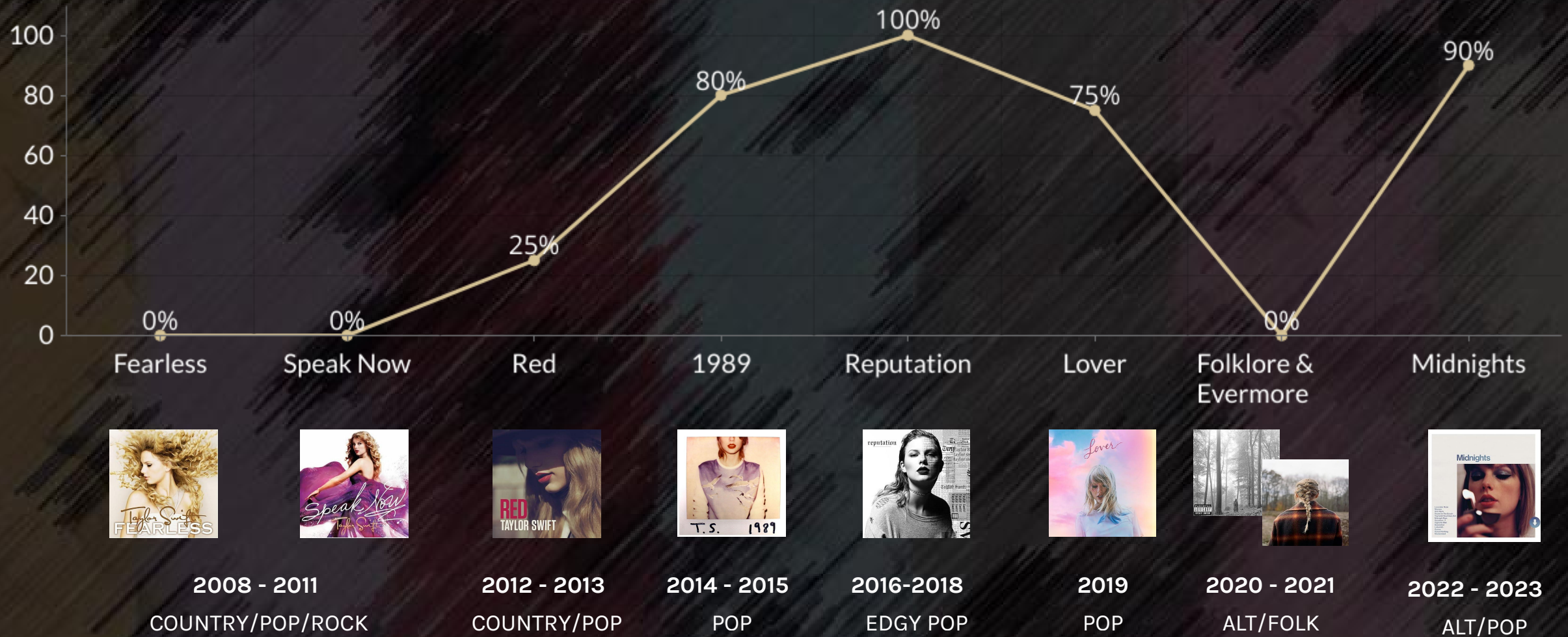
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Electropop/Synthpop

As country and rock began to fade, electropop/synthpop started to emerge during *Red* and became a key ingredient of her sound on 1989, *Reputation* and *Lover*. After being omitted on *folklore* and *evermore*, it returned notably on *Midnights*.

Evolution by Album: Electropop/Synthpop



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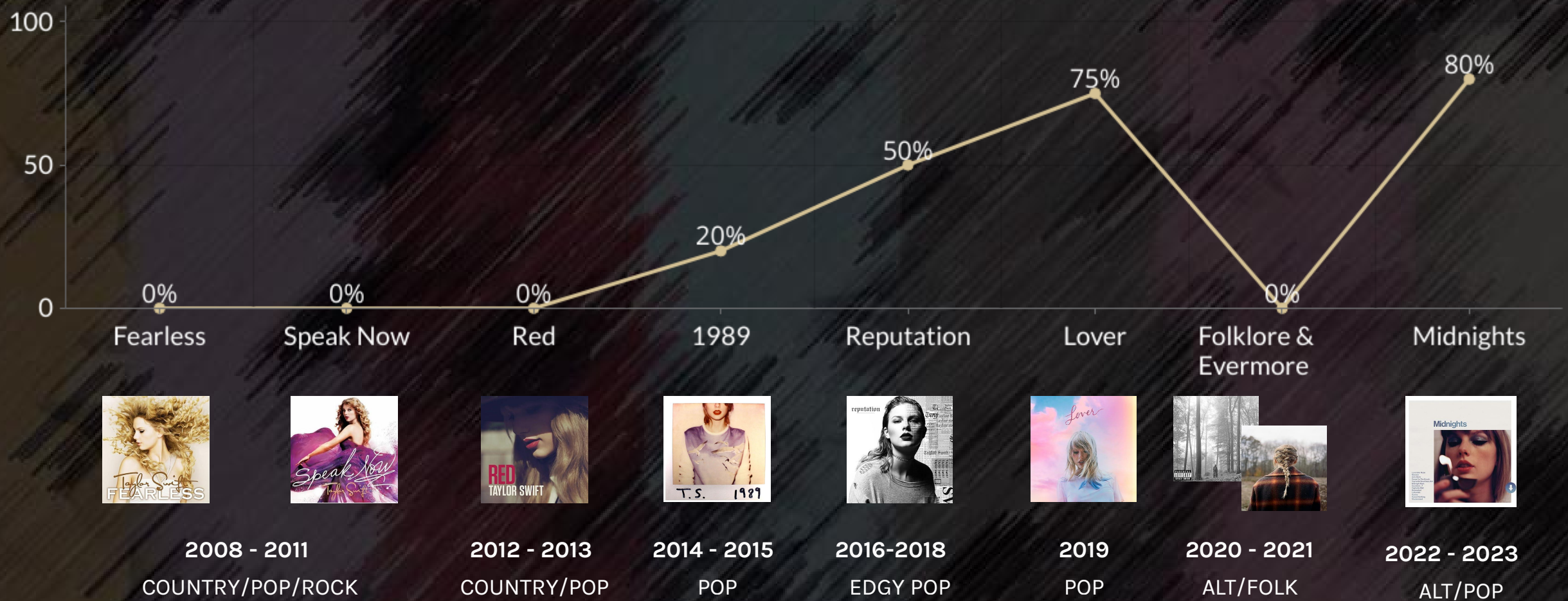
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Retro

Mirroring electropop/synthpop's rise is retro, with the 1980s being the main decade of inspiration. Retro qualities are mainly present in the instrumentation (i.e., synth and drum sounds) and to a lesser extent the vocals.

Evolution by Album: Retro



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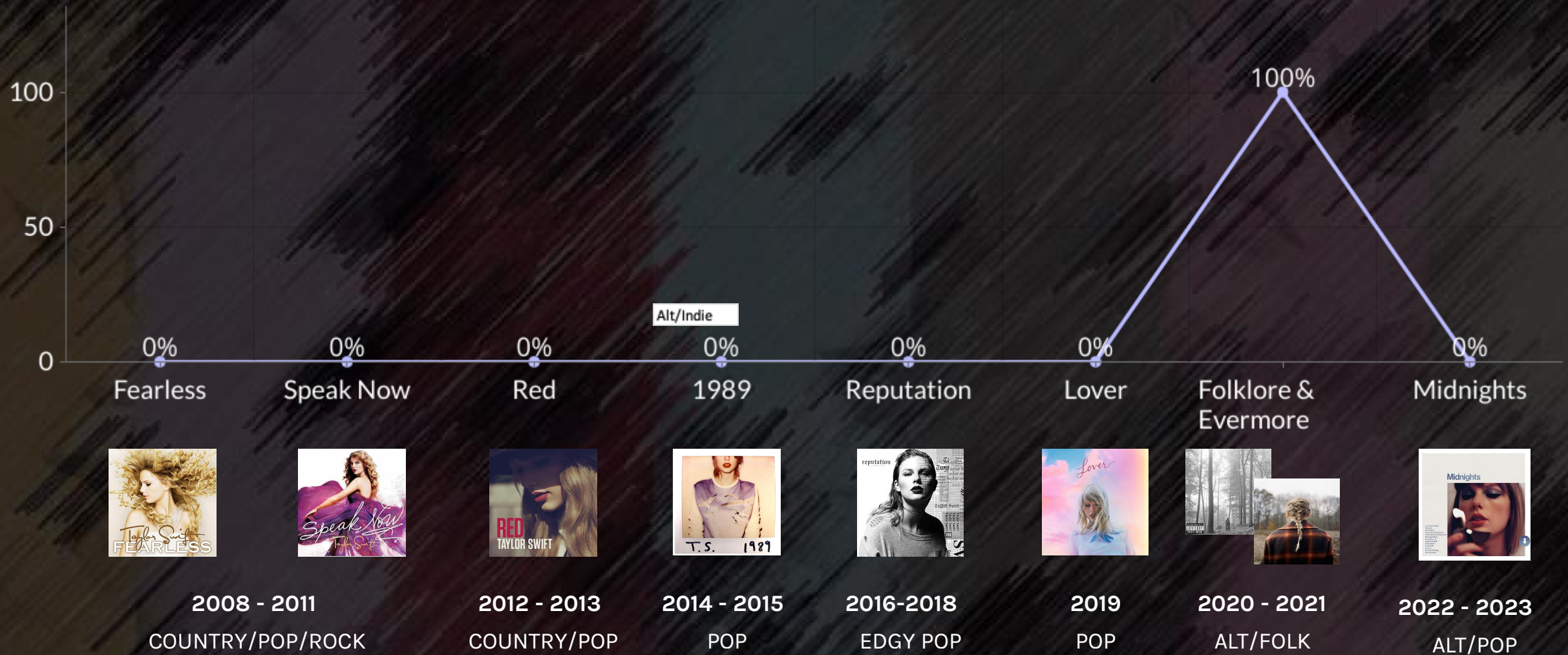
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Singer-Songwriter/Folk

Swift's sudden shift into singer-songwriter/folk territory on *folklore* and *evermore* was magnified by the ditching of most of her other major influences heard on the previous albums.

Evolution By Album: Singer-Songwriter/Folk



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Alt/Indie

Complimenting Swift's stylistic shift on *folklore* and *evermore* is alt/indie, which provides songs with a subtle left-of-center quality. Swift maintained the influence into *Midnights*, where it's present in every song in varying degrees of prominence.

Evolution by Album: Alt/Indie



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TAYLOR SWIFT HITS DECONSTRUCTED

Take a deep dive into the songwriting and production techniques used to craft her biggest hits!

This 4.5-hour masterclass provides unprecedented insight into the songwriting techniques Swift and her A-list collaborators used to craft her Hot 100 top 10 hits.

- Learn the art of connecting deeply with audiences through songs that weave personal stories with universal emotions.
- Master the balance between emotional depth and catchy hooks that make her songs linger in hearts and charts alike.

You'll gain a treasure trove of tools, techniques, and insights that you can immediately use to elevate your craft!



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