Taylor Swift releases single and deluxe album, 'The Life of a Showgirl: The Encore'

By ISABELLE PEPIN
Contributing Writer

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, one of the biggest pop stars today, announced a new single and other deluxe songs to her album, "The Life of a Showgirl" on Sept. 25. She currently holds 14 Grammys, out of 58 nominations, and has made history as the youngest artist to receive Album of the Year in 2010. Swift teased her deluxe release by replacing the "Os" with zeros in her social media bios of, "And, baby, that's show business for you." After, she added a countdown on her social media stories, leading up to the reveal of her single, "Patient Zero" to released Sept. 25 at midnight.

Many questioned this at first, as they didn't know if this single was for a new album or "era" for Swift. On Wednesday, Swift announced the deluxe version of the album, "The Life of a Showgirl: The Encore" would release alongside the single, "Patient Zero," and three extra songs titled "Cleveland!," "Pink Clouding," and "Babylon."

Swift announced on all her social media platforms the following statement: "About a year ago, you guys did a truly unfathomable thing. Something that completely blew my mind… You gave "The Life of a Showgirl" the biggest first week for an album in history. I took a trip to Sweden to celebrate with Max and Shellback, my two collaborators on this album. Really, we just wanted to reflect and take in how grateful we were for the moment we were in, but there was a studio there and we did what we do when we feel anything at all: We wrote more songs. I hope you love them, because they were born out of pure gratitude for your exuberance for and celebration of the album we made. "The Life of a Showgirl: The Encore", including four new songs, is out on Friday and available to pre-order and save now."

This is her first release since she created and featured, "I Knew It, I Knew You," for the movie "Toy Story 5." Spotify then announced that with her deluxe album release she had become Spotify's "most-streamed female artist in a single day this year."

"The Life of a Showgirl," originally released Oct. 3, encapsulates ideas ranging from cherishing a new love to the feelings that reflect the regret of not ruining a friendship before it's too late. "The Life of a Showgirl" featured two music videos with her hit singles "The Fate of Ophelia" and "Opalite." Swift's hit song "Opalite" featured celebrities like Graham Norton, Cillian Murphy and Lewis Capaldi in her music video.

Swift just got married to Travis Kelce, a tight end on the Kansas City Chiefs, this summer at Madison Square Garden, with comedian and actor Adam Sandler officiating the wedding July 3. With Swift entering this new era of her life, some people argued that the lyricism within "The Life of a Showgirl" doesn't compare to other albums Swift has produced like "folklore" or "evermore." Those albums leaned more into heartbreak, loss, memory and introspection, creating a much more somber tone than the upbeat sound of "The Life of a Showgirl."

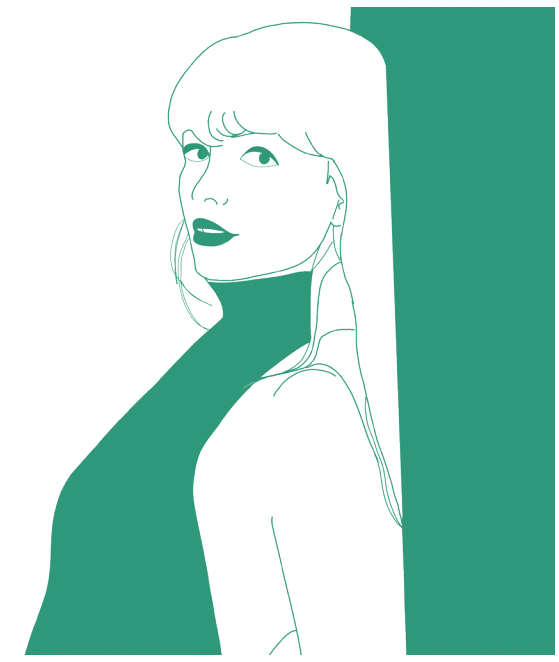


ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY ZELLER

The difference has also sparked conversation about whether an artist's personal life should influence that way listeners interpret their music. Swift has spent much of her career writing about heartbreak, relationships and personal struggles, making the happier and more confident tone of "The Life of a Showgirl" a more noticeable shift. While listeners may miss the more vulnerable storytelling in her previous albums, the deluxe series gives Swift another opportunity to explore this new chapter with additional songs. This way, Swift continues to build on the themes of the original album while giving fans more insight on the era she's created.

How to read a poll and understand what the numbers really mean

By JAY BOOTH
Staff Writer

To the average person, an electoral poll can either seem simple and straightforward, confusing, or maybe even both. Just seeing a post on social media about a poll, or seeing one used in campaign fundraising, can be especially common nearing an election and it's important to understand exactly what you're seeing when a poll is being introduced.

Polls, in their most basic form, are just gauges of public opinion. They're done by polling firms to gather information about the opinions of the population as a whole by sampling from that population and surveying the sample.

As long as it's done in specific statistical ways, it is scientifically sound and can be used for making assumptions about the population as a whole; this makes it very useful for campaigns, national committees and fundraising organizations.

Individual polls are also useful, and you can learn to read them, too. There are a few important parts to each poll and a few things to keep in mind, but if you understand all of them, you'll be able to get a basic grasp of each and every contest based on one poll.

The topline is never quite what it appears to be. It appears so simple, "oh, this candidate is leading by this much." And sure, in that sample, it means that the vote share difference is some certain amount, but there's almost always more behind that number than just the vote share difference. Instead, the important factors are the percentage of the vote that each candidate receives instead of the mere difference between those two numbers.

First, there is inherent statistical improbability in every single poll. Due to laws of statistics and randomness, it is impossible to get a perfectly accurate sample of a population using only a randomly selected portion of that population.

The result of this is called the margin of error. This is, essentially, the amount a vote share can possibly vary from the value that is stated in the poll, within 95% confidence (essentially meaning there's roughly a 95% "chance" it's within the interval of the observed proportion plus or minus the margin of error, to simplify the full explanation a bit).

For a sample poll that will be referenced multiple times, let's suppose John America has 42% support and Susan Patriotic has 44% support in a hypothetical poll. If the margin of error is 4%, that means John America could, amongst the population, have up to 46% support, and Susan Patriotic as low as 40%, meaning if John America ended up winning 46-40, the poll wouldn't be "wrong" - the sample was just "unlucky."

Second, the number of undecided people sampled matters. In the sample of the poll before, assuming there are no other candidates, since John America and Susan Patriotic only add up to 86% support, that means that 14% were undecided, meaning they did not have a preference or have not made up their mind yet.

In the race that was stated, where John America is only down by two percentage points, if he wins enough of the ndecided vote on Election Day, he could easily win. This is especially important to remember in early polls, especially before Labor Day, when a party might appear to be winning in an uncharacteristic area on the topline.

A great example of this is 2024, when President Donald Trump won over many people on Election Day, so he won quite comfortably despite polls showing the contest between him and former Vice President Kamala Harris as relatively close. If this appears, like a Democrat leading a top-line in Trump+16 Kansas, but the two candidates' totals only add up to 72%, remember that 28% of voters sampled have not yet chosen a candidate to support, so it's not a sure sign that a huge political realignment is taking place.

Third, voter behavior is weird, and it changes. A poll is a moment in time. A poll from August is not going to "tell" you how the election in November will turn out. These polls are useful for seeing trajectory, or if a candidate has momentum over time, but the only polls that can explicitly be used for attempting to predict vote shares in the final election are the ones that are conducted mere days before Election Day.

Fourth, polls and humans are not perfect. Polls can be incorrect in their methodology, and get really "unlucky" samples. Just because a poll was outside the margin of error doesn't mean it's a bad poll - statistically it happens 5% of the time (see Selzer 2024 Iowa poll), or have hidden biases ingrained in them that we may be blind to at the moment.

These can all have an impact.

But none of this means polling is useless or misleading at its core. It is important and necessary to understand public opinion and is an integral part of elections for the teams that support candidates and tuned-in citizens. Instead, it means that they take a little time and effort to understand, which you are now equipped with the tools to accomplish.

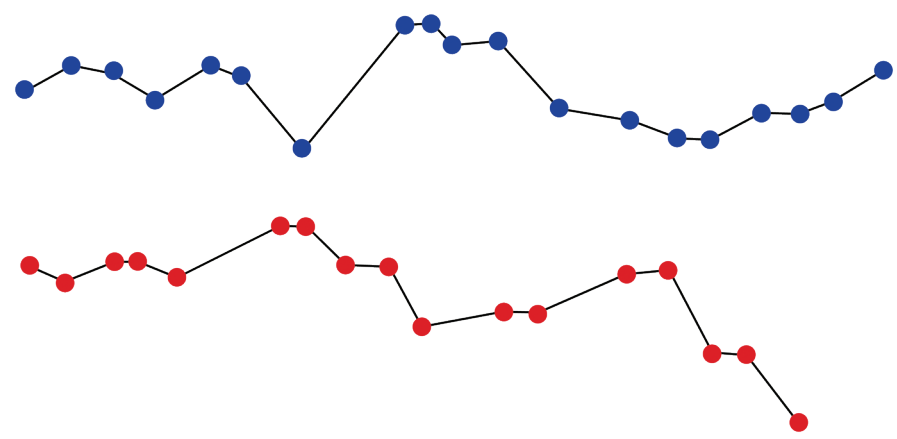


ILLUSTRATION BYLILIANA MIRABELLA