

Can we guess Taylor Swift's 'surprise songs'?

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Near the end of her Eras Tour shows, Taylor Swift leaves room for two “surprise” acoustic songs — usually one on guitar and one on piano, sometimes with a special guest — that aren’t in the normal set list. A blank space for fun extras, if you will, that has also given her famously avid fans a chance to track and prognosticate about what Swift might play. These deeper cuts have been different for *almost* every show (see The Rules™), but if we know anything about this mastermind, she never fails to plan, and she loves to drop hints for fans to deduce. Can we get inside her head and guess the plans for the four Minneapolis secret songs? This is us trying.



Photo by Associated Press, Star Tribune file

The Setup™

Ten studio albums plus lots of tracks on deluxe editions, special issues, rerecords and “from the vault” material still leaves a lot of Swift music on the cutting room floor, even after the 3½-hour, 44-song mega set list. It covers nine of her 10 albums, including her most recent four that she hasn’t toured yet. Those largely unperformed “eras” account for almost two-thirds of the show.

The Rules™

Swift said she doesn’t want to repeat the songs during the acoustic set, although she’s already somewhat shaken that off. She’s given herself permission to repeat a song if she makes an error the first time around, and said she’ll play songs from her most recent album, “Midnights,” as many times as she wants. Not that she’d need to: Her back catalog leaves plenty to choose from. Plus, Swift is a prolific songwriter and collaborator on other artists’ albums, so those could be on the table, too. She has already played one track she recorded just for the movie soundtrack of “Fifty Shades Darker.”

... or forever hold your peace

Swift has been playing frequently from “Red,” her most recent rerecorded album. But as we inch closer to the release of “Speak Now (Taylor’s Version)” on July 7, she might consider playing more from that purple-drenched era, especially here, the home of Prince. Based purely on the fact that we think it would sound great on piano, our guess from this era is “Back to December.”



Justin Vernon



Dan Wilson

We are never-ever getting back together

Swift likes to bring out collaborators for special appearances (see also: Aaron Dessner, Jack Antonoff, Ice Spice), and she’s due for a surprise guest in Minneapolis. During her 1989 tour, famous for a rotating cast of celebrity guests each night, her shows here were among the only ones that *didn’t* feature a visitor. Fans were bummed.

This would be the moment for her to play the two cuts featuring Bon Iver — aka Justin Vernon, based out of nearby Eau Claire, Wis. — neither of which she has played yet: “exile” and “evermore.” Curiously, he doesn’t have any tour dates listed after June 19 until the end of July.

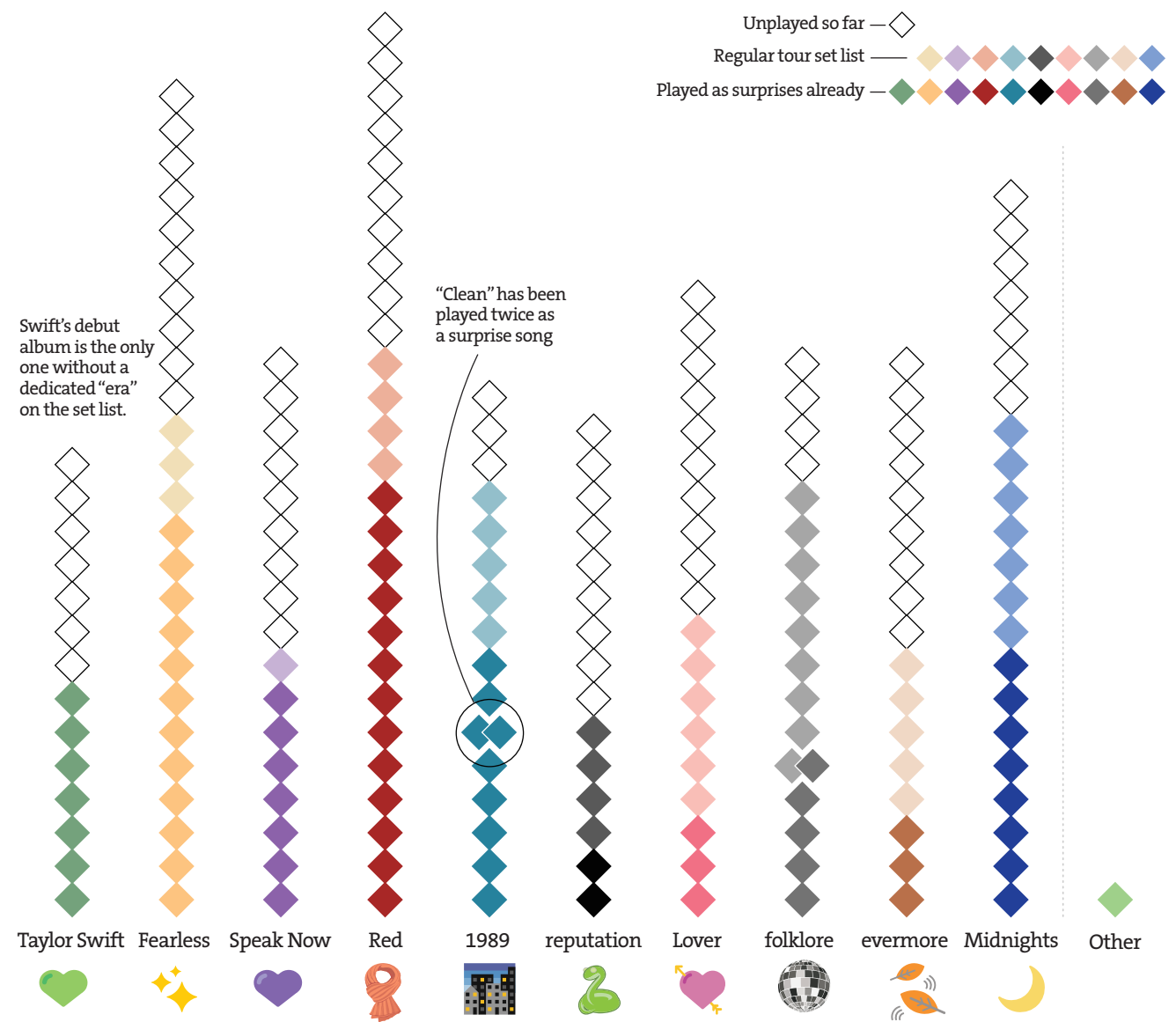
One more notch in the Bon Iver column: She made a surprise appearance on *his* tour late last year to play “Exile.” Perhaps he’d like to return the favor.

If Vernon indeed comes to town, there’s even another shot-in-the-dark song possibility. A couple of years ago, Swift appeared on two tracks with him and Dessner under the band Big Red Machine. On one, “Renegade,” Swift leads vocals. It would be only her second Eras-less surprise song if played, but not unheard of.

For what it’s worth, St. Louis Park’s own Dan Wilson would have been on our shortlist (he co-wrote and helped produce some “Red”-era tracks), but his band Semisonic is scheduled for shows in California while Swift’s in town.

All too well

Swift loves a local tie-in — like playing songs that reference New York in New York — for these secret songs. “The Lakes” from “Folklore” was one of our predictions until she played it in Chicago earlier this month. We turned instead to the other natural phenomenon Minnesota is known for: winter. The “Red” from-the-vault track “Forever Winter” would be a fitting nod, especially after our record-setting snow season.



Nothing new

We can rule out a lot based on what she’s already played or is already on the set list. Most surprise songs so far have pulled from her earlier work, particularly “Fearless” and “Red,” but not as much from “Reputation,” which was her newest album during her last major tour five years ago. Based on all of that, here are the remaining possibilities:

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| <p>Taylor Swift</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picture to Burn The Outside Tied Together With a Smile Stay Beautiful Mary’s Song (Oh My My My) I’m Only Me When I’m With You A Perfectly Good Heart | <p>Fearless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Way I Loved You Change Untouchable Come in With the Rain Superstar We Were Happy That’s When (ft. Keith Urban) Don’t You Bye Bye Baby | <p>Speak Now</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back to December Dear John Never Grow Up Better Than Revenge Innocent Last Kiss Long Live If This Was a Movie Superman Tell Me Why | <p>Red</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay Stay Stay Everything Has Changed (ft. Ed Sheeran) Starlight Girl at Home Ronan Babe Message in a Bottle Forever Winter Run (ft. Ed Sheeran) The Very First Night <p>1989</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I Know Places You Are in Love New Romantics | <p>reputation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End Game (ft. Ed Sheeran and Future) I Did Something Bad So It Goes ... King of My Heart Dancing With Our Hands Tied Dress This Is Why We Can’t Have Nice Things Call It What You Want New Year’s Day | <p>Lover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I Forgot That You Existed Paper Rings Cornelia Street London Boy Soon You’ll Get Better (ft. The Chicks) Afterglow ME! (ft. Brendon Urie) It’s Nice to Have a Friend Daylight All the Girls You Loved Before | <p>folklore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> right where you left me it’s time to go exile (ft. Bon Iver) epiphany peace hoax <p>evermore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no body, no crime (ft. Haim) happiness dorothea ivy long story short closure evermore (ft. Bon Iver) | <p>Midnights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labyrinth Sweet Nothing Bigger Than the Whole Sky Paris Glitch Dear Reader You’re Losing Me |
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I know places

What she’s played in Minnesota *before* — at least 20 individual shows from 2006-18 — could also lend insights. We have a hunch that she’d be more likely to pluck a song we haven’t heard in a long time.

The last time she was at U.S. Bank Stadium, she played “Tied Together With a Smile” from her first album, which she hadn’t performed anywhere since 2007, according to setlist.fm.

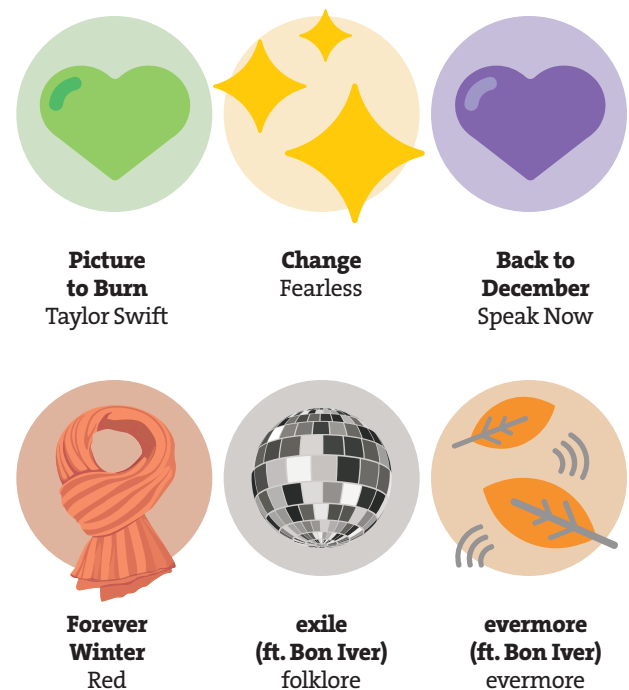
There are several like that she hasn’t played in Minnesota in more than a decade. Good candidates for a surprise song.

“Picture to Burn” was reliably Swift’s concert-ender early in her career — one of her first breakup revenge fantasies — but she hasn’t played it here since 2010.

“Change” would be an even more rarefied play and would also give Swift an opportunity to acknowledge two culturally significant dates while she’s here: Pride weekend and the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned Roe v. Wade. Swift has been more outspoken about both LGBTQ+ rights and women’s rights in recent years.

End game

Thirteen guesses feels like overkill, so we’ll stop at six songs from six eras, plus a bonus prediction. As for Taylor, if you’re reading, consider these our wildest dreams.



Bonus prediction:

Renegade, from “How Long Do You Think It’s Gonna Last?” by Big Red Machine