

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions is a 2020 American documentary concert film directed and produced by the American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, released on Disney+ on November 25, 2020. The documentary is set at Long Pond Studio, an isolated recording studio in a forested area in the Hudson Valley, New York; Swift performs all of the 17 tracks of her eighth studio album, Folklore (2020), whilst discussing the creative process behind the songs with her collaborators Aaron Dessner and Jack Antonoff. Swift made her debut as a film director with the documentary, which is her fourth film to be released on a streaming service, following the releases of The 1989 World Tour Live (2015), Taylor Swift: Reputation Stadium Tour (2018), and Miss Americana (2020).

Receiving widespread critical acclaim, *Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions* was praised for its music, intimacy, visuals, and insight provided on *Folklore*, with many critics labeling the film an admirable supplement to the album. It received an approval rating of 100% on review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes. Imbued by the sessions, Swift wrote and recorded several new songs off-screen while shooting the documentary. These songs came to be a major portion of Swift's ninth studio album, *Evermore* (2020), which was released fifteen days after the documentary. The film received the Gracie Grand Award for Outstanding Special or Variety.

Accompanying the film's premiere, a <u>live album</u> <u>soundtrack</u>, entitled *Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions (From the Disney+ Special)*, consisting of the recordings of the live performances featured in the film, was released to <u>music streaming</u> and <u>digital</u> platforms. For the 2023 <u>Record Store Day</u>, a run of 115,000 <u>limited-edition</u> vinyl LPs of the album was released exclusively via <u>independent record stores</u> across the world, selling out in three days. The album topped the US <u>Billboard</u> Soundtracks, Vinyl Albums, Top Alternative Albums, Top Rock & Alternative Albums, and Tastemaker

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions



Official release poster

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Directed by	Taylor Swift
Based on	Folklore
	by Taylor Swift
Produced by	Taylor Swift
	Robert Allen
	Bart Peters
Starring	Taylor Swift
	Jack Antonoff
	Aaron Dessner
	Justin Vernon
Cinematography	Ethan Palmer
Edited by	Laura Randolph
Production	Taylor Swift
companies	Productions
	Big Branch
	Productions
Distributed by	Disney+
Release date	November 25, 2020
-	

Albums charts, and became the first-ever Record Store Day-exclusive in history to enter the top 10 of the overall *Billboard* 200 chart, landing at number three.

Running time	106 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English

Synopsis

In September 2020, Swift and her co-producers for her eighth studio album, Dessner and Antonoff, assembled together at Long Pond Studio—a secluded, rustic <u>cabin</u> in <u>upstate New York</u>—to play the complete album for the first time in the same room after writing, recording, and producing it in isolation due to the <u>COVID-19 pandemic</u>. The result was the concert documentary, *Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions*, where the three performed stripped-down, <u>acoustic</u> renditions of all 17 tracks in order, while revealing the creative process, stories, and inspirations behind the songs through discussions. [1]

The film's premise on Disney+ reads: "Taylor Swift performs every song from her best-selling album, "Folklore", in a truly intimate concert experience. Accompanied by her co-producers, Aaron Dessner (of The National) and Jack Antonoff (of Bleachers), along with a guest appearance by Justin Vernon (of Bon Iver), Taylor filmed the event at the historic Long Pond Studios in upstate New York, a setting that evokes the nostalgic, wistful nature of the album. In between live performances, she and her collaborators discuss the creation and meaning behind each song, and also share the challenges and joys of remotely producing this acclaimed and record-setting collection". [2]

Cast

- Taylor Swift, vocalist and instrumentalist
- Aaron Dessner, instrumentalist
- Jack Antonoff, instrumentalist
- Justin Vernon, vocalist

Production



A still from the film, in which Taylor Swift (*middle*) sings into a microphone while Jack Antonoff (*left*) plays a guitar and Aaron Dessner (*right*) is at the piano.

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions is a hybrid between a documentary and a concert film. [3] It marked the first time Swift, Dessner and Antonoff had assembled together in person after several months of COVID-19 quarantining. [4] Due to the pandemic, they were filmed not by a film crew, but instead by six Panasonic Lumix S1H mirrorless cameras with Leica lenses embedded in the studio, along with one Arri Alexa LF with an Angénieux 24-290 lens on an Agito Trax modular dolly system with more than 30 feet of curved track that occasionally scans the recording session from the background. [5][6] A drone camera was also used to capture aerial shots of the studio and the surrounding forested estate. [7]

Justin Vernon appeared via video stream from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to perform "Exile" with Swift. [8]

The film is characterized by a casual, small-scale production, [9] and a softly lit, [10] cottagecore aesthetic. Apart from a few videos of Swift at her home studio, the film was entirely recorded at Long Pond Studios in New York's Hudson Valley—one of the places where *Folklore* was engineered. The

studio, which is located near Dessner's residence and was originally a <u>barn</u>, <u>[12]</u> had been converted into a wooden cabin situated in a waterfront estate besides an elongated pond and surrounded by chairs, <u>string lights</u> and <u>fire pits</u>. The studio is an open room with a church-high ceiling, tall windows, and a woodland view, set up with a variety of Dessner's musical instruments. The ambience outside the studio consists of sounds of birds, insects, frogs or the trees swaying in the wind. In the film, Swift performed seated on a couch in an oversized <u>plaid</u> <u>shirt-dress</u>, singing directly into a microphone, with Antonoff and Dessner playing instruments and an engineer in the back of the room. The instruments used in the film include a variety of guitars, keyboards, a Fender bass, a piano, a drum machine and a snare.

Release

Like the <u>release of Folklore</u>, Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions was a surprise release, announced hours before its launch at midnight. It was released on Disney+ on November 25, $2020^{[13]}$ and on Hotstar in India and Indonesia on November 26, $2020^{[14]}$

Reception

Critical response

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions received universal acclaim from film and music critics. On review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 100% based on 13 reviews, with an average rating of 7.4/10. On Metacritic, it has a weighted average score of 76 out of 100, based on 7 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews". Andrew Barker of Variety praised the film's picturesque setting, performances, and ability to recreate Folklore's "sparse yet carefully textured soundscapes" with fewer instruments, and dubbed Swift's vocals as the film's "most striking element". MME writer Will Richards named it a perfect "early Christmas present" and praised its editing, especially when Swift and Dessner have a "genuinely touching" discussion on the meaning behind the song "Peace", followed by a performance of the song that "hits right in the gut".



Critics praised the conversational and musical chemistry between *(from left to right)* Swift, Antonoff, and Dessner.

Writing for $\underline{\mathit{The New York Times}}$, $\underline{\mathsf{Jon Pareles}}$ dubbed the film a "musical experience" that heightens the album's "sense of pristine contemplation" using a small-scale, casual-looking $\underline{\mathsf{production}}$. $\underline{^{[9]}}$ $\underline{\mathit{i}}$ newspaper's Sarah Carson defined the film as "artfully crafted, aesthetically gorgeous, cosy cottagecore $\underline{\mathsf{escapism}}$ " with diverse conversations, such as light-hearted "giggly" discussions around the campfire to formal $\underline{\mathsf{introspection}}$ on stiff chairs. Carson opined that it sheds "genuine light" on Swift's work, seeing her at peace with her life, laughing, "publicly relaxed for the first time in a decade". $\underline{\mathsf{[11]}}$ $\underline{\mathsf{Decider}}$ critic Johnny Loftus

found it refreshing to see and hear Swift in the "dressed-down setting" of *Long Pond Studio Sessions*, calling the film "a balm for the soul as we wind down an extremely not cool year" and an intimate portrait of artists at work, in contrast to the pop persona that dominated Swift's career. [10]

<u>Little White Lies</u> critic Sydney Urbanek lauded the film as a "triumphant debut" for Swift as a film director, as well as the cast's on-screen presence: Swift's and Antonoff's "captivating" one-on-one chats and Dessner's studio focus. Alex Hudson of <u>Exclaim!</u> described the film as "an oasis of tranquility in a chaotic time", in which "even the biggest pop star on Earth holed up and got cozy and insular". He admired Swift's rapport with Antonoff—their "laugh-out-loud" jokes—and the discussions that yielded "interesting insights and factoids" about the songwriting of Folklore. In Junkee's Richard He complimented Swift's vocals, emotion, the film's visuals and intimacy, and the cast's instrumental skills; he described the film as a "masterclass" in songcraft and "a rare glimpse inside a genius songwriter's mind". In He's words, "Great popstars embody our times; great songwriters address them. Taylor Swift is doing both".

Rob Sheffield of *Rolling Stone* praised the cast's chemistry, and asserted that *The Long Pond Studio Sessions* is not a mere <u>footnote</u> to the album, but a "stunning musical statement in its own right, full of stripped-down acoustic warmth". He underlined how Swift moves past vague anecdotes about the tracks by explaining why she felt the need to write such music in the first place. [21] Branding it a "very beautifully done" film, *The Daily Telegraph*'s Kate Solomon called it a "very warm two hours of music that gives the songs a new lease of life", and observed the parallels between the "luscious, remote surroundings" of the studio and how they reflect the "lusciousness and isolation" of the songs. [22] *Stuff* critic James Croot compared the special's atmosphere to that of *MTV Unplugged*, and added that the film's production is slick despite the intimate appeal, similar to Swift's 2020 Netflix documentary, *Miss Americana*. [23]

Drew Taylor of <u>Collider</u> labelled the film "a winning examination and celebration" of *Folklore*, and "a look at one of the world's biggest pop stars at her most vulnerable and artistically ambitious". He picked Antonoff as the more active personality, while Dessner is "terse", except at the point where he opens up about his depression—"a moment that is both incredibly vulnerable and also powerful". Ryan Lattanzio of <u>IndieWire</u> described the film as "a window into the introspective songwriting" of *Folklore* that "isn't going to blow your head off" but is a "fine supplement to one of the year's most beloved albums". Area <u>Guardian</u>'s Elle Hunt wrote that the film shows Swift at ease, but also at the "peak of her power" with little to prove, while her song-by-song commentary depicts the "shifting emotional tenor" she felt in quarantine. However, Hunt felt that Swift not name-dropping her detractors "seems coy" as it limits the film's personal reflection.

Accolades

Awards and nominations for Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions

Organization	Year	Award	Result	Ref.
Shorty Awards	2021	Best Use of Emojis	Nominated	[26]
Gracie Awards	2021	Grand Award for Special or Variety	Won	[27]

Impact

American comedian Jimmy Fallon released a parody of the documentary on YouTube, titled *Fallonlore: The 30 Rock Sessions*, featuring American hip-hop band the Roots. In the skit, Fallon wrote an album in quarantine, enlisting Questlove and Black Thought to help him finish it remotely. Months later, the trio gather at 30 Rockefeller Center to perform their tracks together for the first time. The setlist included songs titled "Peed My Pants in an Applebee's", "Song About Milk", "Sourdough Heart", and "Fuzzy Wuzzy" featuring Chris Martin of Coldplay. [28]

Most of the songs on <u>Evermore</u>—Swift's ninth studio album and *Folklore*'s sister album—were recorded while filming *The Long Pond Studio Sessions*. [29]

A still from the film was featured in a 2021 television advertisement by *The New York Times*, titled "The Truth Is Essential: Life Right Now", showcasing a variety of articles from the publication. [30]

The Department of English of the Queen's University at Kingston, a public research university in Ontario, Canada, offers a fall semester course titled "Taylor Swift's Literary Legacy (Taylor's Version)", with a syllabus requiring students to watch and analyze many of Swift's works, including *Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions*; the course objective is to examine Swift's music, its literary references, and her sociopolitical impact on contemporary culture. [31]

After the release of *Folklore, Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions* and *Evermore*, artists such as <u>Maya Hawke</u>, <u>Gracie Abrams</u>, <u>Ed Sheeran</u>, <u>King Princess</u>, and <u>Girl in Red</u>, desired to collaborate with Dessner and record songs at his Long Pond Studio. Dessner stated, "After Taylor, it was a bit crazy how many people reached out. And getting to meet and write songs with people you wouldn't have had access to... I'm so grateful for it." He described the studio as a "creative oasis" for artists.

Live album

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions (From the Disney+Special), [a] or simply Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions, is the fourth live album and first soundtrack album by the American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift. It contains the acoustic renditions of Folklore tracks performed in the Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions film. The album was released via Republic Records to streaming and digital platforms on November 25, 2020, alongside the film, [37][1] and in a limited number of vinyl LPs on April 22, 2023.

Commercial performance

To commemorate the 2023 Record Store Day (RSD), a limited vinyl edition of *Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions* was released on April 22, 2023, exclusively via independent record shops participating in the event. [38] All of the 75,000 vinyl LPs of the album available for purchase in the US sold out quickly, giving Swift the largest single vinyl sales week in 2023. The album debuted at number three on the *Billboard* 200, in addition to *Midnights* (2022) charting at number four and *Lover* (2019) at number ten, making Swift the first artist since Prince in 2016 to

Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions			
Live al	bum by Taylor Swift		
Released	November 25, 2020		
Recorded	September 2020		
Studio	Long Pond Studio, Hudson Valley		
Genre	Acoustic		
Length	2:14:43		
Label	Republic		
Producer	Taylor Swift • <u>Aaron</u> <u>Dessner</u> • <u>Jack Antonoff</u> • <u>Joe Alwyn</u>		
Taylor Swift chronology			

chart three albums in the top $10.^{\boxed{39}}$ It also marked the first-ever RSD exclusive in history to land in the top-10 region of the chart. Furthermore, the live album topped the *Billboard* Vinyl Albums, Soundtracks, Top Alternative Albums, Top Rock & Alternative Albums and Tastemaker Albums charts—Swift's tenth, first, third, first and ninth number-one on the charts, respectively—and placed second on the Top Album Sales chart. [40] A total of 115,000 copies

Folklore	Folklore:	Evermore
(2020)	The Long	(2020)
	Pond	
	Studio	
	Sessions	
	(2020)	

were available for purchase worldwide, all of which sold out within the first few days. [41]

Track listing

Disc 1: Folklore — Deluxe edition[37]

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No.	Title	Writer(s)	Producer(s)	Length
1.	" <u>The 1</u> "	Taylor Swift · Aaron Dessner	Dessner	3:30
2.	"Cardigan"	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	4:00
3.	"The Last Great American Dynasty"	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	3:51
4.	" <u>Exile</u> " (featuring <u>Bon Iver</u>)	Swift · William Bowery Justin Vernon	· Dessner · <u>Joe Alwyn</u>	4:46
5.	"My Tears Ricochet"	Swift	Swift · Jack Antonoff · Alwyn	4:16
6.	" <u>Mirrorball</u> "	Swift · Antonoff	Swift · Antonoff	3:29
7.	"Seven"	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	3:29
8.	"August"	Swift · Antonoff	Swift · Antonoff · Alwyn	4:22
9.	"This Is Me Trying"	Swift · Antonoff	Swift · Antonoff · Alwyn	3:15
10.	" <u>Illicit Affairs</u> "	Swift · Antonoff	Swift · Antonoff · Alwyn	3:11
11.	"Invisible String"	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	4:13
12.	" <u>Mad Woman</u> "	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	3:57
13.	"Epiphany"	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	4:50
14.	"Betty"	Swift · Bowery	Swift · Dessner · Antonoff · Alwyn	4:55
15.	" <u>Peace</u> "	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	3:54
16.	"Hoax"	Swift · Dessner	Dessner	3:40
17.	"The Lakes"	Swift · Antonoff	Swift · Antonoff	3:32
			Total length:	66:58

Disc 2: Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions (From the Disney+ Special)[37]

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Length
1.	"The 1"	Swift · Dessner	3:40
2.	"Cardigan"	Swift · Dessner	3:51
3.	"The Last Great American Dynasty"	Swift · Dessner	3:52
4.	"Exile (featuring Bon Iver)"	Swift · Bowery · Vernon	4:40
5.	"My Tears Ricochet"	Swift	4:55
6.	"Mirrorball"	Swift · Antonoff	3:57
7.	"Seven"	Swift · Dessner	3:29
8.	"August"	Swift · Antonoff	4:20
9.	"This Is Me Trying"	Swift · Antonoff	3:29
10.	"Illicit Affairs"	Swift · Antonoff	3:04
11.	"Invisible String"	Swift · Dessner	4:17
12.	"Mad Woman"	Swift · Dessner	3:58

13. "Epiphany"	Swift · Dessner	4:35
14. "Betty"	Swift · Bowery	4:50
15. "Peace"	Swift · Dessner	3:34
16. "Hoax"	Swift · Dessner	3:42
17. "The Lakes"	Swift · Antonoff	3:20
	Total length	: 67:25

Notes

- All track titles are stylized in all lowercase.
- All tracks on Disc 2 are noted as "The Long Pond Studio Sessions" and produced by Swift. [42]

Charts

Chart performance for Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions

Chart (2023)	Peak position
Australian Albums (ARIA)[43]	24
Belgian Albums (<u>Ultratop</u> Flanders) ^[44]	126
Danish Albums (Hitlisten) ^[45]	12
Dutch Albums (Album Top 100) ^[46]	3
Hungarian Albums (MAHASZ) ^[47]	5
Irish Albums (OCC)[48]	6
New Zealand Albums (RMNZ)[49]	24
Scottish Albums (OCC) ^[50]	1
Swedish Physical Albums (Sverigetopplistan)[51]	5
UK Albums (OCC) ^[52]	4
US Billboard 200 ^[53]	3
US Soundtrack Albums (Billboard) ^[54]	1
US Top Alternative Albums (Billboard)[55]	1
US Top Rock & Alternative Albums (Billboard) ^[56]	1
US Top Tastemaker Albums (Billboard) ^[57]	1

Release history

Release dates and formats for Folklore: The Long Pond Studio Sessions

Region	Date	Format(s)	Label	Ref.
Various	November 25, 2020	Digital download · streaming	Dopublic	[37][1]
	April 22, 2023	Vinyl LP	Republic	[41]

See also

- List of Disney+ original films
- Cultural impact of Taylor Swift

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Footnote

a. Stylized as folklore: the long pond studio sessions (from the Disney+ special).

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