

= Back to December =

" Back to December " is a song written and recorded by American singer / songwriter Taylor Swift for her third studio album *Speak Now* (2010) . The song was sent to country radio in the United States on November 15 , 2010 , as the second single from *Speak Now* . According to Swift , " Back to December " is the first time she ever apologizes to someone in a song . Critics speculate that the song is about Taylor Lautner , Swift 's ex @-@ boyfriend , although neither Swift nor Lautner have commented on these allegations . " Back to December " is considered an orchestral country pop ballad and its lyrics are a remorseful plea for forgiveness for breaking up with a former lover .

" Back to December " received positive reviews from critics , who regarded it as one of the highlights of *Speak Now* . Critics have praised the song for its expressive lyrics , its indelible melody , and Swift 's vocal improvement . The song enjoyed commercial success , peaking at number six on the United States *Billboard* Hot 100 , and at number seven in Canada . It also peaked at number three on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs . The song received moderate success internationally , peaking at number 24 in New Zealand , and number 26 in Australia .

The song 's accompanying music video , directed by Yoann Lemoine , laments the aftermath of a break @-@ up between Swift and her boyfriend . The music video garnered mixed to positive reviews from critics ; some praised the spectacular visual sense in portraying the somber mood while others criticized its inadequate narrative . Swift has performed " Back to December " in several live appearances , notably at the 44th annual Country Music Association Awards and at the 38th American Music Awards .

= = Background and release = =

According to Swift , " Back to December " is an apology to a former lover in the form of a song , something that she has never done before . She continued " I 've never felt the need to apologize in a song before . But in the last two years I 've experienced a lot , [including] a lot of different kinds of learning lessons . And sometimes you learn a lesson too late and at that point you need to apologize because you were careless . " Critics have speculated that the song is Swift 's apology to her ex @-@ boyfriend , The *Twilight* Saga actor Taylor Lautner , due , in part , to the lyrics " your tan skin , your sweet smile " , as well as the hidden lyrics in the booklet , which spelled out " TAY . " However , neither Swift nor Lautner have confirmed or denied these rumors . " Back to December " was first released as a promotional single from *Speak Now* on October 12 , 2010 as a part of the exclusive campaign by the iTunes Store leading up to the album 's release . On November 15 , 2010 , the song was released as the second single from *Speak Now* .

= = Composition = =

" Back to December " is a country pop song with a length of four minutes and 55 seconds . Stephen M. Deusner from *Engine 145* called the song " an elegant ballad full of orchestral swells , solemn guitars , and pleading lyrics " . It is set in common time and has a ballad tempo of 72 beats per minute . It is written in the key of D major , and Swift 's vocals span more than one octave , from the note of F ³ to A⁴ . It follows the chord progression of D ³ Bm⁷ ³ G @-@ D. Randy Lewis from *Los Angeles Times* commented that " Back to December " is one of two songs where Swift has first incorporated an orchestra on record (the other being " Haunted ") .

The song 's narrative is in first person , and depicts Swift apologizing to a young man whose heart she broke . Mandi Bierly from *Entertainment Weekly* describes the song as " a melancholy mea culpa with the kind of driving chorus and age @-@ appropriate yet universal honesty " , adding that " in the tune [...] she says she 's sorry for the last time he saw her (' You gave me roses , and I left them there to die ') and that she wishes she realized what she had (' I 'd go back to December , turn around , and change my own mind / I go back to December all the time ') .

Leah Greenblatt from *Entertainment Weekly* ranked these couplets from the song ; (" Your guard is up and I know why , because the last time you saw me is still burned in the back of your mind / You

gave me roses and I left them there to die ") , at number two out of ten best couplets from *Speak Now* sheet .

= = Critical reception = =

The song has received critical acclaim . Rob Sheffield from *Rolling Stone* gave the song a positive review commenting , " Swift 's voice is unaffected enough to mask how masterful she has become as a singer ; she lowers her voice for the payoff lines in the classic mode of a shy girl trying to talk tough . " Jonathan Keefe from *Slant Magazine* complimented Swift 's ability " to write an indelible melody " and praised the production of the song , writing " [the song] showcase (s) Swift 's unique knack for matching the overall tone of a melody to the broader themes of a song " . He added that " it isn 't easy to make a melancholy song like " *Back to December* " sound catchy at the same time , but that 's what Swift does , and it 's an impressive trick . " Bobby Peacock from *Roughstock* gave the song four stars out of five and praised Swift 's vocal , saying that " it 's her best vocal since " *Tim McGraw* " " . He concluded that " [the song] feels a little more focused , a little more mature and a little better @-@ sung than her previous material . " The *Oxonian Review* considers it the centerpiece of the melancholic album , noting how " equating regret with *December* is a mainstream American musical tradition " and this song is " the congruence of her singing and songwriting at its finest . "

Ryan Brockington from *New York Post* lauded the song , writing " it ? s a very surprising , and somewhat brilliant , apology track where Taylor sings about wishing to fix a relationship she wished she wouldn 't have ruined in the first place . " His point was echoed by Rudy Klapper from *Sputnikmusic* , who described the song as a " regret @-@ filled apology " . Stephen M. Deusner from *Engine 145* gave the song a thumbs @-@ up and praised Swift as " an expressive singer " , calling the song " a dark fantasy of apology and reconciliation " which is " a true heartbreaker " . Kevin John Coyne of *Country Universe* graded the production of the song as " B " , complimenting the lyrics in particular , by writing " it ? s always a good sign when there ? s a line as memorable as that one , the kind that lingers around in your head more than the song itself . " He also added that he " appreciate (s) the restrained vocal , though a more varied melody would ? ve made the chorus quite a bit more distinctive . "

= = Commercial performance = =

" *Back to December* " is one of 14 songs on the standard edition of *Speak Now* which has charted within the top 40 of the *Billboard Hot 100* . Upon its release as a promotional single , " *Back to December* " debuted at number six on the *Billboard Hot 100* with sales of 242 @,@ 000 digital downloads (approximately) , on October 12 , 2010 . Following its single release , the song re @-@ entered *Billboard Hot 100* at number 74 on the week ending November 27 , 2010 . It reached a position of number 18 . It also peaked at number one on *Hot Digital Songs* , number 11 on ' *Pop Songs* and at number 12 on the *Adult Pop Songs* . " *Back to December* " also became Swift 's fifth song to have failed to reach the top spot on the *Hot Country Songs* , instead peaked at the top three (the previous songs were " *Teardrops on My Guitar* " at number two , " *Picture to Burn* " at number three , and both of " *White Horse* " and " *Mine* " at number two) and her ninth overall song to reach the top ten , but failed to reach the top spot (the previous songs were " *Tim McGraw* " at number six , " *Fifteen* " at number seven , " *Fearless* " at number ten , and four Top five songs previously mentioned .) The song was number 38 on the year @-@ end chart of *Hot Country Songs* and number 74 on the year @-@ end chart of *Hot 100* . It is the only song from *Speak Now* that charted on the *Hot 100* year @-@ end chart in 2011 . As of November 2014 , " *Back to December* " has sold 1 @.@ 9 million copies in the United States .

Internationally , " *Back to December* " had moderate success . The song entered in Canada and peaked at number seven on the week ending October 30 , 2010 . In Australia , the song entered at number 26 on the week ending October 31 , 2010 . On the week ending October 18 , 2010 , the song debuted at number 24 in New Zealand .

= = Music video = =

= = = Development and release = = =

" Back to December " ' s accompanying music video was directed by Yoann Lemoine , who directed the video for Katy Perry ' s " Teenage Dream " , and was filmed in late December 2010 before Christmas Day . In an interview with Country Music Television , Lemoine explained that he developed the idea for the video after being inspired from the film , E.T. the Extra @-@ Terrestrial . He also told MTV News that he wanted the video to be simple yet metaphorical . He added , " I wanted to work on the coldness of feelings in a very visual way , playing with the snow , the distance and sadness . " He wanted to focus on Swift ' s look in the video so that she would come off as accessible , saying " I wanted her to perform a very natural way , to make her look very European . This was the main challenge to me . All of Taylor ' s world is very far away from my culture , but I saw something in her that could be very rough and heartbreaking ; far from the princess glittery outfits and glam that she often goes for . " Lemoine was allowed to take control of the whole production of the video , although it was Swift ' s idea to have her character leave the letter for her beloved . Swift ' s love interest in the video was played by male model , Guntars Asmanis . Lemoine commented that Asmanis was the perfect fit for Swift ' s love interest , saying " I wanted a boy that was fragile and beautiful . I didn ' t want to go for a hunk or a perfect cheesy boy that would have killed the sincerity of the video . " The music video premiered on January 13 , 2011 , on CMT and Great American Country . Footages of the school and baseball stadium in the video were filmed in Binghamton , New York , in MacArthur Park while scenes with Swift were shot in an old country mansion outside of Nashville . The video reached 100 million views on Vevo , in June 2015 , becoming Swift ' s 13th certified video . To date , the video has over 134 million views on YouTube .

= = = Synopsis = = =

The video begins when a young man is seen walking alone in a small town to the snowy football fields in a morning winter . A cut @-@ scene shows Swift inside a house wearing a comfy sweater draped over one shoulder . She is brooding and singing about her lost love while wandering morosely around her apartment . She is also seen sitting in the bathtub , missing her boyfriend who she didn ' t treat well when they were together . About halfway through , it starts to snow inside the spacious house . A montage of Swift writing a letter is shown alternately with scenes of her boyfriend strolling around the town . It is then revealed that the whole situation is the aftermath of a break @-@ up between Swift and her boyfriend . It is also shown that Swift slips the letter that she has written in his coat pocket before he leaves . The final scene shows her ex @-@ boyfriend sitting in the bleachers , reading her apology letter .

= = = Reception = = =

Critical receptions towards the music video were positive . Jillian Mapes of Billboard believed that the video is " appropriately understated " considering the fact that the song is all about making an apology . The Improper noticed that the video has " the look and feel of a Hallmark movie and is almost as maudlin , " while Amos Barshad of the New York felt that the video was " terrible . " Tamar Anitai of MTV described the video as " a bummer " , writing " [It] isn ' t just about a girl with her calendar permanently stuck on the twelfth month of the year . It ' s not just about feeling like a Lady Antebellum song . It ' s about getting stuck in a place of romantic regret . " In a different perspective , Kyle Anderson of MTV argued that the music video puts Swift in a " pantheon of modern classics " with regards to its " almost haunting visual sense " which makes up for the inadequate narrative . Leah Collins of Dose.ca called the music video as " dreamy and moody " . Her points are echoed by Leah Greenblatt of Entertainment Weekly , who deemed the video as " kind of lovely " , which

corresponds with the melancholic yet regretful mood of the song . Joycelyn Vena of MTV noticed that the video is " darker " and " somber " , something that is not synonymous with Swift . Yet , The Oxonian Review considers Swift 's " listlessness , the bare trees , and snowy indoors " in the music video attuned to the tenor of the song , achieved by " mixing wide shots , medium close ups , and cut @-@ ins of Ms Swift and her ex , matching their gazes across frames , and blurring focus tastefully . "

= = Live performances = =

Swift first performed " Back to December " in Paris at a showcase at the Salle Wagram theater , on October 18 , 2010 , to promote her upcoming album , Speak Now , set for release on the October 25 , 2010 . Swift also performed the song on Speak Now : Taylor Swift Live From New York City , a special programme which was streamed live on CMT.com , MTV.com , VH1.com and other MTV Networks websites in Europe , Asia , Australia and Latin America to celebrate the release of her new album .

Swift also performed " Back to December " on several other occasions . On November 10 , 2010 , she performed the song live at the 44th annual Country Music Association Awards at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville , Tennessee . Her performance of the song during that event was graded as a " B + " in the Los Angeles Times , noting she " kept it simple " and " rose to the occasion " . On November 21 , 2010 , Swift mashed " Back to December " with OneRepublic 's " Apologize " at the 38th American Music Awards . Her rendition in that event was graded as a " B- " in the Los Angeles Times , noting that " a brief end @-@ song breakaway into OneRepublic 's " Apologize " seemed unnecessary " .

Swift performed " Back to December " and several songs from Speak Now on November 24 , 2010 during Thanksgiving night , on NBC . She later performed the song on The Ellen DeGeneres Show on December 2 , 2010 . On January 31 , 2011 , she sang the song in JetBlue ? s Terminal 5 in New York as part of JetBlue ? s Live at Terminal 5 concert series . She also performs the song on her Speak Now World Tour . The performance was released on Swift 's first live album called Speak Now : World Tour Live .

= = Track listing = =

European digital download

" Back to December " ? 4 : 54

UK digital download

" Back to December " ? 4 : 54

US digital download

" Back to December " ? 4 : 54

US Acoustic digital download

" Back to December " (Acoustic Version) ? 4 : 52

= = Credits and personnel = =

Lead Vocals : Taylor Swift

Writers : Taylor Swift

Producers : Taylor Swift , Nathan Chapman

Mixing : Justin Niebank

Mastering : Hank Williams

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =

Since May 2013 RIAA certifications for digital singles include on @-@ demand audio and / or video song streams in addition to downloads .

= = Release history = =