

SHANIA TWAIN: SOUND AND STYLE GROUNDBREAKER

You could measure Shania Twain’s career strictly by the numbers. With 100 million in album sales, she is country music’s best-selling female artist. But the numbers alone don’t begin to express her importance.

Twain burst onto the scene in the mid-1990s with groundbreaking force, using a distinctive voice, a glamorous style, and, most of all, a catchy pop-country sound to draw millions of new fans into country music. Among her admirers are the latest generation of country artists, particularly women, who say she strongly influenced their careers.

“She grew country music around the world,” Carrie Underwood says. “There was nobody else that looked or felt or sounded like her.”

Born Eileen Regina Edwards on August 28, 1965, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, Twain began her life with hardship and loss. Her father abandoned the family when she was a toddler. Her mother, Sharon, moved to Timmins, Ontario, and remarried. Her stepfather, Jerry Twain, adopted Shania and her two sisters. Her parents constantly struggled with poverty.

At age three, Twain was singing along to country songs with a voice that showed unusual ability. She was playing guitar by age eight, writing songs by age ten, and, as a teenager, helping support her family by singing in clubs. At age eighteen, she moved to Toronto, Ontario, to pursue a singing career. Four years later, when her parents were killed in a car accident, Twain returned to Timmins to care for her younger siblings.

Twain continued to work on her own music, and she finally caught the attention of a Nashville record company, which released her first album in 1993. Twain followed advice to



change her first name to “Shania” (sha-NY-ah), inspired by her late stepfather’s Native American heritage.

The album contained only one self-written song and was considered unsuccessful, but her voice attracted the interest of Robert John “Mutt” Lange, a producer who worked with rock bands. The two joined forces and co-wrote ten of the twelve tracks for Twain’s next album, *The Woman in Me*, and by its release in 1995, the couple had married.

The album, which includes both rock as well as pop elements, quickly became a sensation, selling more than twelve million copies. Lange then produced and helped Twain write her third album, *Come on Over*, which became country’s all-time best-seller, with a staggering forty million copies sold. The couple co-wrote her fourth album, *Up!*, which was released

Continued on back

LISTEN

“Any Man of Mine,” “From This Moment On,” “Man! I Feel Like a Woman!,” “That Don’t Impress Me Much,” “Up!”

SHANIA TWAIN: SOUND AND STYLE GROUNDBREAKER (CONTINUED)

in 2002 and sold an impressive twenty million copies. Twain also headlined two sold-out world tours, filmed numerous trendsetting music videos, and earned Grammy, Country Music Association, and Academy of Country Music awards.

In 2004, Twain moved to Switzerland with Lange and their son. The couple divorced in 2010, and Twain began performing again. In 2017, she released a new album, *Now*, with all self-written songs. After being diagnosed with Lyme disease and having open-throat surgery in 2018, she had to relearn how to sing.

Netflix released a documentary about Twain in 2022 titled *Shania Twain: Not Just a Girl*. In 2023, she released her sixth studio album, *Queen of Me*, and began a World Tour. “Songwriting is my favorite part of what I do,” Twain says. “I like to give every song its own personality and attitude and to sing each one in its own style.”



CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Circle the word “sensation” in the eighth paragraph. Underline the clue words and phrases that help you understand the meaning of the word. Then, define the term in your own words.

2. In your own words, explain the title of this essay: “Shania Twain: Sound and Style Groundbreaker.”

3. Identify three obstacles Twain had to overcome to achieve success as an artist and a songwriter.
