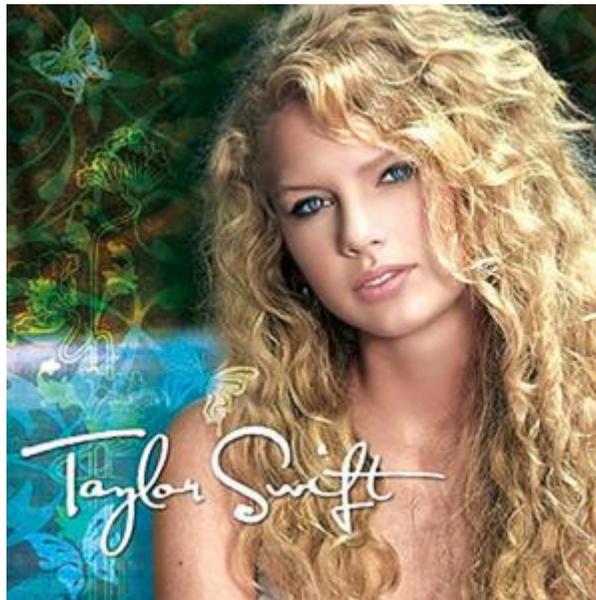


A Winthrop & Weinstine blog dedicated to bridging the gap between legal & marketing types.

[Taylor Swift's Signature Trademark?](#)

Posted on March 7, 2011 by [Steve Baird](#)



What are the odds that the signature on the cover of [Taylor Swift's](#) self-titled [debut album](#) from 2006 depicts her actual and personal signature (she would have been 17 at the time)?

Or, could it be that the highly marketed and consistent [trademark signature](#) is more about the branding and packaging of the artist and not actually her own handwriting or penmanship?

If the above signature is not actually penned by Taylor Swift what would that say about her brand, if anything? Would it make her brand any less authentic? Or does a vocal artist get a pass on handwriting, penmanship, and personal signatures, especially at the age of 17, and even thereafter, since it doesn't affect the authenticity of the voice (remember [Milli Vanilli](#)?) (Classic YouTube video [here](#)).



Do you suppose TS fans have an expectation that the [Taylor Swift signature trademark](#) represents her actual, personal signature? If so, would their decision to purchase goods be affected if the signature was actually penned by another? Probably not, but if so, would that subject the trademark registration to cancellation on [deceptiveness grounds](#)? Or, on the other hand, do fans assume and expect the trademark signature to be part of the artist's professional handling, more like they would view assistance from a make-up artist, hair stylist, and/or airbrushing expert?

Now, given all that, as a trademark type, how would you answer the apparently frequent question: "[How can I get a Taylor Swift Autograph](#)"?

As we learned with the [recent criticism involving Sarah and Bristol Palin's attorney](#) (who failed to obtain the necessary written consents at the time of application), perhaps, the best bet might be to scour the USPTO database for Ms. Swift's personal written consent to federally register the Taylor Swift name as a trademark, as TMEP 1206.04(a) reads:

Must Be Personally Signed. When a name, portrait, or signature in a mark identifies a particular living individual . . . the mark can be registered only with the written consent of the individual The consent must be a written consent to the registration of the identifying matter as a mark, and must be personally signed by the individual whose name or likeness appears in the mark.

Just don't be surprised if it looks nothing like the signature appearing on her album/CD covers:

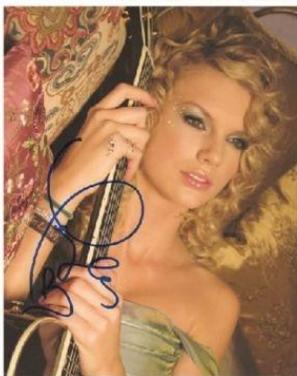
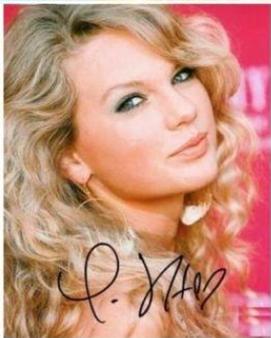
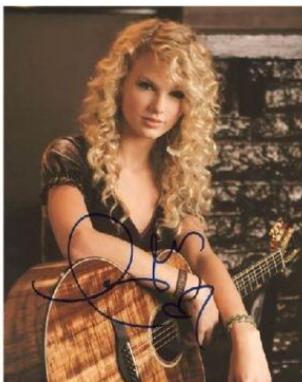
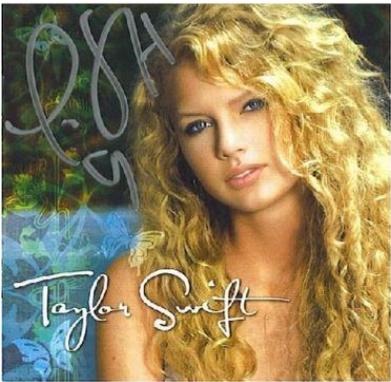
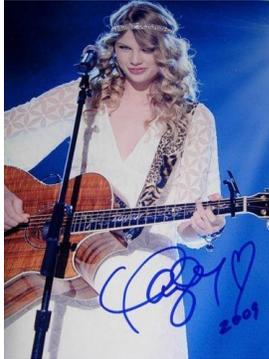
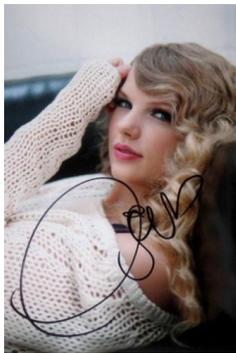
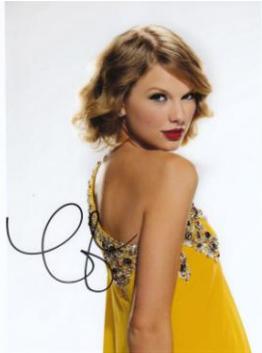
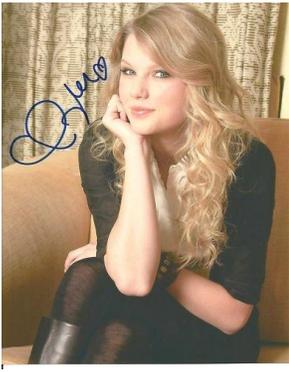


The highly marketed and consistently branded trademark signature is on the left and Ms. Swift's personal signature, as submitted to the U.S. Trademark Office, on January 8, 2008, is on the right.

Linked here are some additional written consents with Taylor Swift's personal signature as of [May 11, 2009](#), [October 5, 2010](#), and [December 15, 2010](#). Not exactly a model of brand consistency.

More to the point of consistency, or the lack thereof, our challenge to handwriting experts is below the jump, showing a collage of photos for sale on eBay, each claiming to be signed by "the" Taylor Swift:

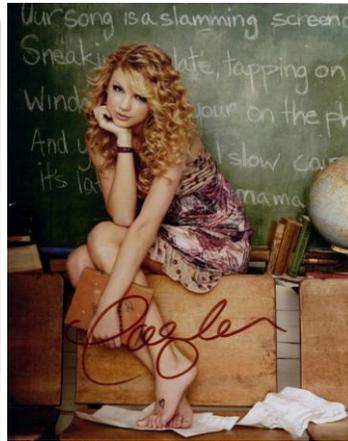
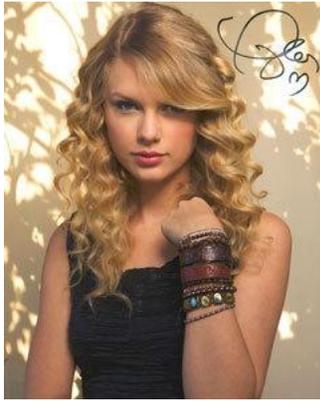
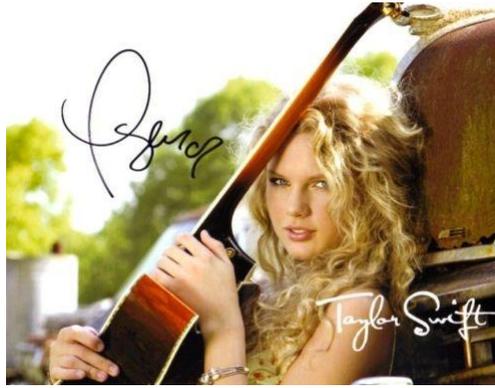




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If the signatures are authentic, it appears Ms. Swift has as many signatures as outfits.

Coming full circle, perhaps this best explains the need for the consistently branded Taylor Swift signature trademark.



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