

THE RISE AND RISE OF CHAPPELL ROAN

Katherine St. Asaph
and Hamza Jahanzeb

THE STORIES
BEHIND THE
SONGS,
TOURS,
AND RISE OF AN
ICON

Unofficial and
Unauthorized



THE RISE AND RISE OF
CHAPPELL ROAN

To Klay, who is not afraid of bugs or snakes
KATHERINE

To my late mother, N. Jahanzeb, for always letting me know
that there’s a special place where boys and girls can
all be Queens, every single day
HAMZA

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INTRODUCTION

From growing up in a small town in Missouri to gracing the covers of *Paper* and *Rolling Stone* and being named best new artist at the 2024 Billboard Music Awards, the 2024 MTV VMAs and the 2025 Grammy Awards, Chappell Roan's journey into stardom has defied expectations, shattered norms and captured the hearts of millions worldwide. In 2024 alone, her listens on Spotify multiplied at least seventeen-fold – an achievement that many artists can only dream of.



But what sets Chappell apart from other pop icons is not just her rapid rise – it's her authenticity, her artistry and the sheer determination behind it all.

This book details the behind-the-scenes story of 'your favourite artist's favourite artist', the country-girl dreamer turned dazzling drag phenomenon. Her journey – from uploading music covers on YouTube as Kayleigh Rose to earning Grammy nominations, headlining global tours and becoming an icon for a generation – proves that with hard work, resilience, talent and discipline even the most unassuming of beginnings can lead to extraordinary heights.

She's flung open the doors to a worldwide party, and everyone who doesn't belong anywhere else can come right on in.

The Rise and Rise of Chappell Roan: The Stories Behind the Songs, Tours and Rise of an Icon delves into the making of an artist who refuses to fit the mould, with unparalleled insight into the excitement around her performances and her style, which diverts from the traditional pop star – from cigarette butts in her backcombed hair to the iconic white-painted, jester-like face.

PART 1 details the glimmerings of fame in her childhood and late-teen years – from her formative years with her family in Missouri, releasing her first songs and her early performances, to being signed with Atlantic Records, the release of her first EPs, the impact of COVID-19 and the devastation of ultimately being dropped by her record label before being picked up by record producer and longtime supporter Dan Nigro.

PART 2 tells the story of the songs from *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* – the inspiration behind the lyrics, the musical



production, the videos and the outfits and the long, hot Chappell summer that accompanied her rise and rise.

PART 3 is a glimpse into the final ascent of her journey to becoming a global pop-fem phenomenon, with insight into her tours, recent music and television appearances along with her determination to redefine fame on her own terms.

The Rise and Rise of Chappell Roan is the story of one girl who 'made it' on a colossal scale, demonstrating that if you stay true to yourself and commit to your artistry, the world is bound to take notice. But one thing is for certain: the best of this femininomenon is yet to come.



GLIMMERINGS



FROM THE MIDWEST TO THE *Global Stage*

Chappell Roan was born Kayleigh Rose Amstutz to Dwight and Kara Amstutz in Willard, Missouri, a town in the American Midwest situated amid the Ozark mountain range. The eldest of four children, she grew up with her younger sister Kamryn and two younger brothers, Dawson and Drew. Her mother is a practising veterinarian and her father a US Navy veteran as well as an intensive care and burns nurse who also runs the family practice.

'Anywhere you go in Missouri, you're gonna see a cow,' Chappell told *Radar Radio with Megan C* about her home state, where

even the cities are just a short drive away from rural land. Many residents of Willard embrace the smalltown atmosphere: one local Facebook group calls it simply 'Our Little Town'. But for others, Willard is a 'bedroom community' like many other small suburban towns in America – a place where people have homes to sleep in, but travel to neighbouring towns to work, shop and live their 'real' lives.

Despite the lack of urban amenities, Chappell found ways to pass the time, working briefly as a lifeguard and later at her parents' office. Outside school and working hours, she'd hang out at Sephora in the mall until it closed



INSTEAD OF BEING TREATED LIKE A *Princess* WHY NOT BE ONE?



and then with friends in the parking lot. She ran cross-country and did arts and crafts, often sewing her own clothes. Growing up around two vets, she was naturally an animal lover. At the age of ten, she got a guinea pig – the first of many.

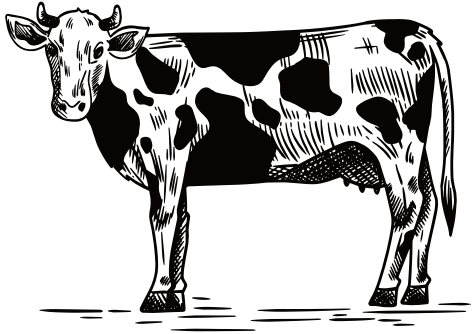
But for a young teenager with big dreams – one who felt at odds with her surrounding culture – places like Willard could sometimes feel stifling. ‘I had this part of me that wanted to escape so bad. I just wanted to scream,’ Chappell told *Variety*. ‘It was just this dichotomy of trying to be a good girl, but also wanting to freaking light things on fire.’

Particularly stifling was the evangelical Christianity that saturated her upbringing. Missouri is part of the band of American states known as the Bible Belt for their staunch religiosity, and Greene County, where Willard is located, is especially devout. Its congressional district is the second-most conservative in the state, and among the most Republican nationwide – so much so that its longtime representative in the US Congress, Billy Long, was recruited for a role in the second Donald Trump administration. ‘There’s a lot of churches and there’s a lot of straight people with families and it’s just really encouraged to take on the role of a wife and mother,’ Roan told *Polyester* magazine about her hometown. ‘There’s this mentality that a woman should be

treated like a princess, but also she should be a cook, a cleaner, a driver and so on.’

And Chappell’s own extended family, she told *Making the Album* podcast, were ‘very conservative [...] highly Republican [Party supporters].’ Her uncle Darin Chappell – a former administrator of various cities across Missouri and frequent guest on conservative radio shows – ran for Missouri’s House of Representatives in 2022 as the Republican candidate and won. Roan went to church three times a week, somewhat reluctantly, feeling out of place. She got baptized with the church congregation. She even had a purity ring – an item of jewellery that evangelical Christian teens of the time commonly wore as a pledge to remain virgins until marriage.

As she grew older, and grew into her queer identity, she felt only more at odds with her community. ‘I didn’t know a single out lesbian girl, gay girl, bi girl – nothing,’ Roan told the LGBTQ+ newsletter *QBurgh*. ‘There were a couple of gay boys in my school who were out and they got terrorized, slurred, threatened.’ Roan knew by seventh grade that she was queer, but she didn’t yet know where to go from there. ‘I saw what would happen if you came out, and I knew that it was a sin at the time,’ she said. It would take new surroundings, and new friendships blossoming into more, for her to embrace that identity.



However, Willard was the place that shaped Roan, and while her feelings about it are complex, they aren't entirely negative. 'I do love certain parts of [the town] – the peace and growing up in a trailer park; four wheeling, the farm and bonfires,' Roan told *Polyester*. She even reconciled herself with her conservative Christian background, to a degree. She later said that looking back, she was 'grateful' because she 'understood where [those people] were coming from'. As she told *Polyester*, 'It's very easy to label communities that you don't understand, and because I know the inner workings of it, [I don't] see it as anything it's not.'

Roan couldn't abandon her Midwestern roots entirely and nor did she want to. So, as much as she could, she separated the parts of her upbringing that caused her pain from the parts that were dear to her, then transformed and exaggerated their rural aesthetics. 'Oh, my God, this is so camp,' she realized, as she found a way into her artistic identity: the Midwest Princess. Instead of simply being treated like a princess, why not *be* one?

