

Artist to Watch: Shawn Mendes

- Maeve Reilly

If you're someone who listens to the radio, you've likely heard - and probably even know many of the lyrics to - the hit song "Stitches" by Shawn Mendes. But did you know that the artist behind the song has an entire incredible album? And that he is only 17 years old? Shawn Mendes, the young and talented musician in question, took home the People's Choice Award on January 6th for Best Breakthrough Artist. Mendes, originally from Ontario, Canada, got his start by posting 6-second covers on the social media app Vine. He burst onto the mainstream music scene in 2015, when Taylor Swift asked him to be one of her openers for her *1989* World Tour. Since then, he has continued to soar in increasing success.

Shawn Mendes is an artist that all music lovers should keep their eyes on.

This past spring Mendes released his debut album, *Handwritten*, featuring 12 tracks, most of which were co-written by Mendes himself. The album was then re-released in November with four added tracks and live versions of preexisting songs, under the title of *Handwritten Revisited*. The music on the album is catchy, feels lyrically genuine, and has a stripped down quality (unlike much of what is on the radio today). It's no surprise that people have taken such a liking to the acoustic and refreshing feeling of Mendes's songs. Mendes sings with a rich and strong tenor voice, creating a soothing and listenable sound reminiscent of 2000's pop star Jesse McCartney but with more power and purity in tone. Some of the highlights of the album include "I Don't Even Know Your Name," "Kid In Love," and "Air," all of which are lyrically driven and show off Mendes's impressive voice and wide range.

2015 has been a big year for Shawn Mendes. He released his first album, scored his first number one single, reached the number 10 spot on the Billboard Artists' 100 List, and proved his talent to live crowds of over 60,000 during the *1989* World Tour. Thanks to all these achievements, Mendes began 2016 on a high note when last week he received the People's Choice Award for Best Breakthrough Artist. Assuming he continues on this same upward trend, 2016 will bring even bigger things for 17-year-old Mendes. A headlining tour? Another album? More collaborations? Who knows! Watch out Justin Bieber and One Direction; Shawn Mendes is on his way to the top.