

## SINGER, SONGWRITER, AND OUTLAW

For five decades, Marshall Chapman has been an accomplished singer, songwriter, published author, and actor. Although her name isn't as well known as others in the Outlaw era, she played an important role in the 1970s movement.

Martha Marshall Chapman II — named after her paternal grandmother — was born on January 7, 1949, in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and she was always called Marshall. Chapman's father was a wealthy textile-mill owner and her mother was active in local politics. When she was seven, she attended an Elvis Presley concert, and she became an instant fan of rock & roll. By high school, she was performing on the guitar.

In 1967, she enrolled in Nashville's Vanderbilt University at the urging of family friend Walter Forbes, a former RCA recording artist. At the time, Chapman thought the Nashville music scene was mostly made up of the traditional sounds of the Grand Ole Opry. But Forbes changed Chapman's mind when he introduced her to such Outlaw trailblazers as producer "Cowboy" Jack Clement and songwriter Kris Kristofferson.

By the time she graduated in 1971, she had joined a community of Outlaw artists who were trying to make a living in the city. She shared the stage at the Exit/In club with Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, and Billy Joe Shaver. She went out on the town with Jennings, Tompall Glaser, and Johnny Cash. For a time, she worked as a restaurant greeter with Rodney Crowell, then a busboy.

She made a living for a couple of years as a lounge singer performing cover songs. When songwriter Danny Flowers suggested she would be stuck



singing other people's songs unless she wrote her own, she picked up pencil and paper.

In 1976, she formed her own band and performed mostly her own songs. Her energy-packed shows attracted a solo contract with CBS Records, which was in search of country acts with an Outlaw sound.

Over the years, her thirteen albums have earned praise from critics, and she has toured the country to perform in front of both country and rock fans. Her songs have been recorded by a long list of artists, including Jimmy Buffett, Jessi Colter, Emmylou Harris, Ronnie Milsap, and Conway Twitty.

Since 2004, she has published two non-fiction books and acted in movies. Still, she says, "Music is my first and last love."

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## SOURCES

*American Songwriter*, *Goodbye, Little Rock and Roller* by Marshall Chapman, *Lone Star Music Magazine*, *Nashville Scene*, NPR.com, *They Came to Nashville* by Marshall Chapman

## LISTEN

"Ready for the Times to Get Better"  
(written by Allen Reynolds)  
"You Asked Me To"