



The Girl Can't

*Whether she's on stage or in
print, Marshall Chapman*

ROCKS



Help It

By PAUL KINGSBURY, BA'80

IT'S FRIDAY THE 13TH AND THE NIGHT BEFORE Valentine's Day. As the clock strikes 7, Marshall Chapman, BA'71, looks a little edgy. Her book-signing gig at the Borders bookstore on Nashville's West End Avenue should be starting any minute now, but so far only a handful of people have congregated near the little stage in the store's cafe. Marshall—a tall, slender woman with an unruly mane of wavy blonde hair, dressed in black sweater and knit pants—has a private tête à tête among the bookshelves with Jeff, the Borders employee in charge of the book signing, and they decide to wait and see if a few more stragglers show.

They do. Fifteen minutes later, the tables are all filled, and a standing-room crowd has materialized huddling around the periphery as Marshall straps on her black Takamine acoustic guitar and launches into her version of a book signing. It includes a few of the songs she's written; some readings from her book, a memoir titled *Goodbye, Little Rock and Roller*, published last September by St. Martin's Press; and lots of Q&A, taking any and all Q's and dispensing some very frank and funny A's.

At one point she debuts a song she says she's just finished and never performed in public before. "I figure this is gonna be a big seasonal hit, kind of like 'Frosty the Snowman,'" she wisecracks, just before singing her new comical ode to the flu, complete with her own high-pitched *er-ee, er-ee* squeaks in the middle. "That's the instrumental break, y'all," she deadpans. "Those are the germs." OK, it may not be the next big thing on the

charts, but Marshall knows she's got this audience in the palm of her hand.

"I'm just makin' this up as I go along," she tells the crowd.

In the most recent edition of the *Vanderbilt Alumni Directory*, Marshall Chapman is listed as "Writer, Recording Artist, self-employed." That she is. She has been a working singer and songwriter pretty much since she graduated from Vanderbilt. She hasn't become rich in the music business, but she's done all right for herself.

Here are some of the things Marshall Chapman has accomplished in music. She's recorded eight albums since 1977, some of them for major companies like Epic Records and Island Records. She's written more than 250 songs that have been recorded by Jimmy Buffett, John Hiatt, Emmylou Harris, Olivia Newton-John, Wynonna Judd and others.

Her song "Betty's Bein' Bad," a major hit for country band Sawyer Brown, has been played more than a million times, according to licensing agency BMI. In 1978 Marshall earned a *Stereo Review* Record of the Year award for her album *Jaded Virgin*.

Here are some of the things she hasn't done. She hasn't recorded a million-selling record or a No. 1 single. In fact, few of her own recordings have ever made the charts (although many songs she has written for others have). At one point in the late '70s, though, when Marshall was getting rave reviews in the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, and other major print outlets, she seemed on the verge of becoming a national star. But somehow it didn't happen. She was a woman doing rock 'n' roll, out of Nashville, when both of those things were considered oddities. Two strikes against her right at the start. I asked Dave Hickey—Schaeffer Professor of Mod-



ALAN MESSER

**It doesn't matter
Where you're coming from
It doesn't matter
What damage was done;
We're all on a journey
Our goal is the same
We're gonna be happy
Like children again;
So be your own parent
And treat yourself good
It's never too late
To have a happy
childhood.**

"Happy Childhood" by Marshall Chapman and Terri Sharp
© 1990 Tall Girl Music (BMI). Administered by Bug.
Sony/ATV Acuff Rose Music (BMI). Administered by
Sony/ATV Music.

I started thinking to myself ... You know, rock & roll music Makes me want to lose it all I can't keep my hands

ern Letters at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, a MacArthur Award Fellow and, more to the point, Marshall's boyfriend from 1976 to 1980—what happened.

"First of all, she had the misfortune to be trapped between Nashville and New York with her record company at the time," he says via phone from Las Vegas. "And also we were making music, but we weren't really thinking about having careers. We were happy enough just being outsiders, I think." (At the time, Hickey was working as a journalist and co-writing songs with Marshall.)

"But I'll tell you what," continues Hickey, "she is as good a rock 'n' roll singer as I've ever seen—onstage, just playing rock 'n' roll. And really, honestly, I've seen them all. She's up there with Mick Jagger and Rod Stewart and Steven Tyler for onstage charisma.

"I just think they didn't know what they had. Nobody ever did. And as a consequence, I don't think she has made a representative record."

Despite the record-business frustrations, Marshall kept living the nocturnal, chemically fueled rock 'n' roll life for all it was worth well into the '80s. "I never had planned to live past 40," she says during an interview at her Nashville home. "I had no Plan B. The way I was living, I was just heading down that old Janis Joplin road. I just wanted to go out in a blaze of glory. I didn't care. And then I woke up, and I'm 39, getting ready to turn 40, and I think, Holy shit, I don't have a backup plan. So I just checked myself into a treatment center. Because I wasn't happy. My late 30s were really kind of rough."

It's crunch time, and Marshall is on the spot. She looks down, squares her shoulders, clears her throat a little, takes a deep breath, and lets fly.

Swish. "Woow! Nothin' but *net!*" Her long-range shot from the right baseline just inside the three-point line puts her on top. Marshall has just beaten me, a guy almost a decade younger, two out of three in H-O-R-S-E, the old basketball playground game of matching shots where each missed shot earns the miss—er a letter, starting with H. First to spell HORSE

loses. "Good game," she says, shaking hands, flashing a wide grin. She's a born competitor, but she's careful not to rub it in.

It's a chilly Thursday afternoon in early December, and Marshall has agreed to meet me to shoot some hoops. I was thinking maybe a nearby Y, but Marshall has a better idea: She checks with Vanderbilt men's basketball coach Kevin Stallings and gets us into Memorial Gym, where we have the court all to ourselves. "This is like church to me," she says at one point, gazing around the cathedral-like expanse of the 1952 gym. She mentions how much she likes the recent renovation of Memorial and points out where she and her longtime boyfriend, Dr. Christopher Fletcher, have two season-ticket seats in the front row in one corner. The two seats constitute their own minirow. "I call them 'the Love Seats,'" she says. She and Fletcher are big fans of Vanderbilt athletics, particularly women's basketball. They're such committed supporters that they not only attend all the home games, but they regularly drive or fly to the team's road games.

Marshall starts off the shooting match a little gingerly, taking a few minutes to warm up and start getting in her rhythm. Decker out comfortably in sweats and tennis shoes, she looks relaxed and in her element. She complains a little that she's out of shape and hasn't been playing much lately. But once a player, always a player, and there's no doubt Marshall's a player. She can still twirl a basketball on one finger, and she can palm the slightly smaller women's basketball in one hand. She also has an easy grace on the court, and she knows the lingo. "What a brick!" she chuckles ruefully when one of her shots clangs off the rim. "Choke!" she yells when she fails to match one of my shots.

Marshall's well known around the basketball program. In 1994 she endowed Vanderbilt's first scholarship for the women's basketball team. "I thought, if this will help women's basketball, then I want to do it. It was really a symbolic thing for me because I think I was a good athlete, and I grew up at a time when there was no arena for my talent."

Marshall, as it turns out, was a star basketball player as a youngster. I find out later,

from her mother, that Marshall was asked to play on the junior high *boys'* team in her hometown of Spartanburg, S.C.—and this was in the 1960s. (Her father said definitely not.) Later, when Marshall got to Vanderbilt, women didn't have their own varsity basketball team. Title IX, which mandated gender equality in school academics and athletics, didn't become law until 1972, the year after she graduated. So Marshall pledged Theta and played intramural basketball. And she channeled some of those sharp-shooting instincts into a career as a songwriter and a singer.

A couple weeks earlier, Marshall is in her element at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe. On a frosty Saturday night in late November, the little storefront music club is filled to its small capacity with Marshall Chapman fans of just about all ages and types. Couples young and old on dates. Tables of college girls. Tables of middle-aged women. Single men. A couple of families with children. Chancellor Gee and Constance Gee have a front-row seat. About a hundred people in all.

Marshall used to be a perennial presence in Nashville music clubs, but she doesn't perform live nearly as much as she used to, even in Nashville. And this night is special because she's performing with a band, something she used to do all the time, but has done very little of in the past five years. She's cut back on her live performing because she's spent much of the last few years writing not songs but her book. True, since *Goodbye, Little Rock and Roller* was published last September, she has spent much of the fall on the road, but instead of strapping on her guitar in smoky bars, she's been putting on her reading glasses and revisiting passages of her prose in bookstores around the country. Tonight her rare appearance with her some-time band, the Love Slaves, is an opportunity to promote the book. But it is also an opportunity to cut loose and play for the sheer fun of it.

The Love Slaves—guitarists Tim Krekel and Danny Flowers trading off leads and electric rhythm, Jackie Street on bass, Lynn Williams on drums—are a veteran band and a well-oiled machine. The music they play

off of nothing That's gonna turn me on. I try to use my head But then I follow my hands instead.

"Don't Leave This Girl Alone" by Marshall Chapman © 1978 Enoree Music (BMI). Administered by Bug.

with Marshall is a hybrid, hard to pigeonhole. The clever wordplay is reminiscent of good country music, but the groove and drive sound more like the Rolling Stones. On this night, Marshall's low contralto voice is a little ragged sometimes on the high notes, but it goes down rough and warm like good bourbon. Marshall is in complete command, able to simmer the band down with just a hushed aside of "easy now." When she decides to tell one of her colorful stories mid-song, the Love Slaves keep the rhythmic pulse simmering 'til she signals them to crank it back up.

Throughout it all, she seems energized and ageless. I remember her when she used to play the clubs in Nashville in the '70s and '80s, and though she could be more frenetic then, she's better now. After a few numbers, she peers out in the audience and asks, "Are y'all having fun? I'm having a blast. But I learned a long time ago: The No. 1 rule is that you can't have more fun than the audience. So I'm trying to gauge myself."

Marshall and the Love Slaves play two sets for more than two hours, and at the end everyone looks like they got their money's worth. Afterwards Marshall retreats to the bar, looking exhilarated yet calm and exhausted, like a runner who's just finished a marathon.

I tell her I think she's even better now than when I saw her in Nashville clubs 20 years ago. "You know," she says, "I feel like that might be true. And why not? It's just that the music industry doesn't want to believe that someone over 50 could be at their best." We make plans to get together for an interview, and as I leave around midnight I see she's still signing autographs and hobnobbing with fans.

Marshall and I meet a few days later at her Nashville home, a 1930s-era two-story bungalow on a quiet street in an older Nashville neighborhood, and then we head out to a nearby Vietnamese restaurant for soup and inscrutable Asian cuisine. "I hate chain restaurants," she says. She thinks she's coming down with a bug. "But I'll be OK. I'll tough it out. I'm a professional," she says with a tinge of play-acting bravado, hoisting her

bottled water in a mock salute.

Onstage, Marshall radiates command and strength. And a good number of her songs suggest a tough, brook-no-nonsense attitude, such as "Booze in Your Blood," "Betty's Bein' Bad," "Why Can't I Be Like Other Girls" and "Bad Debt" ("You haven't taken out the garbage yet, / You hang around me like a bad debt"). But offstage, she's quieter, more pensive, though just as frank and forthright. I ask her if she feels she has an onstage reputation to live up to as the life of the party.

She snorts a laugh, pauses, and says, "I don't even know how to talk about what happens when I go onstage. Because I just sit around the house and I'm just really quiet, but when I get onstage ... it's almost like an out-of-body experience when I'm up there." Then she laughs and admits that for all her apparent fearlessness onstage, she battles stage fright all the time.

"It's very real. I think it's very unnatural for anybody to get up in front of a large group of people. I mean, you can prepare and everything, but if that doesn't put you on edge, you're not human.

"But I'm not aware of who I am when I'm up there, when it's good. So I can't really talk about it. It's like asking, What's it like to have sex with the one you really love? You feel like a jerk. It's why poets write poems. It's one of those things you can't really talk about. But the great poems will circle it. And right now I'm trying to circle it. When it's really good, you have transcended yourself, and we transcended ourselves the other night. There are nights when it's really painful to play, when the audience will transcend themselves because you're a professional, even though the performers don't transcend themselves. I've heard the Beatles talk about this. They said, 'One out of 10'—where they got to transcend being the Beatles. But if you're a professional, that will happen for the audience every night—unless the sound is really bad."

I ask her how she came to write her book. "I'd had the idea for a long time because when I'm nervous onstage, messing around, looking for my capo, I'll talk to the audience. And when I used to do 'Rode Hard and Put Up

Wet,' I'd say, 'I wrote this song after waking up face down in my condemned neighborhood vegetable garden wearing nothing but my underpants.' *Bam!* It just brings people in. And I like when other performers do that. So I just had an idea: One of these days I'm gonna sit down and write the stories behind some songs."

The impetus that got her started, Marshall says, came in 1996. Shortly after the release of her last album, *Love Slave*, the record company that issued it was dissolved, leaving her record high and dry with no marketing and promotion. But as luck would have it, Nashville songwriter Matraca Berg called Marshall shortly afterward and asked her if she'd like to work together on an idea for a stage musical. The two songwriters soon brought in novelists Lee Smith and Jill McCorkle, and in 1998 the musical they developed together, "Good Ol' Girls," went on tour. Much of the early planning took place in Lee Smith's living room in Hillsborough, N.C. During down time, Marshall would sing her songs and tell the funny and touching stories behind them, and the play's director and the assembled writers encouraged Marshall to write them down.

"So I just started writing one day," says Marshall. "I started the prologue, just the very first part of it. I just said to myself, I'm turning 50, I'm bored, so I'm gonna write about it. And that's how it kind of started. After 30 pages I called Lee Smith, who said, 'Fax me, fax me!' So I faxed her those 30 pages, and she was very enthusiastic. She was the mentor for that book from day one."

Lee Smith is a popular novelist, an acclaimed chronicler of life in the South for such books as *Fair and Tender Ladies*, *Family Linen* and *The Last Girls*. Fittingly, she penned the foreword for Marshall's book. The two first met each other in the early '70s shortly after Marshall graduated from Vanderbilt. At the time Smith was a middle-school English teacher at Nashville's Harpeth Hall Academy; her husband at the time was Vanderbilt poet-in-residence Jim Seay. Smith first met Marshall when she was singing cover songs at a chain restaurant called the Jolly

Well, I feel like I been rode hard and put up wet Lord knows last night was a night I will never forget I can't

Ox, and already attracting an admiring audience of country music VIPs like singer Waylon Jennings and record producer Jack Clement, who soon became good friends of hers.

“She would draw huge crowds,” says Smith. “She’s always been in person one of the absolutely most charismatic performers. I mean onstage she is just magic. She just doesn’t do it like anybody else.”

Smith says she was fairly bowled over to meet the 6-foot blonde. “It was just like, Damn, this person is so much larger than life in every way. She was so *big*. Literally. And she was just so talented, and she was such a nonconformist at a time when you didn’t find that many nonconformists, particularly among women.

“I was a little bit scared of her when I met her. I really was. She just seemed so much more courageous and living on the edge than I was.”

Smith later divorced Jim Seay and moved back to North Carolina, and she and Mar-

shall stayed only loosely in touch until “Good Ol’ Girls.” Asked about her reaction upon seeing the first 30 pages of Marshall’s book, Smith laughs and says, “Well, I told her she might want to have some paragraphs! But beyond that, all I could say was that it was just terrific. She’s a natural storyteller in person, but that doesn’t really mean you can write. [But for Marshall] there was this flow when she would get on the computer, and it would be just like listening to her. And I loved that she decided to organize the book around the songs, just as she’d been telling us the stories as we were working on ‘Good Ol’ Girls.’

“To me the song aspect allowed the memoir to have a much larger meaning. It really is a book about the relationship between art and life, and how you use the things of your life and transcend them and understand them through making art out of them. To me it was like reading a painter’s notebook.”

Martha Marshall Chapman was born into wealth and privilege in Spartanburg, S.C. Her parents, James and Martha Chapman, were well-to-do owners of a textile mill in Spartanburg, a town whose major industry has long been textiles. She grew up in a time in the South when it was assumed among the upper class that a young woman would get a good education, to be followed in short order by marriage, childbirth, and joining the Junior League. Marshall (and her two sisters and brother) did get a good education, and at 18 she was presented to Spartanburg society as a debutante. But early in her childhood, Marshall had already begun veering away from the plan. It started at age 7 when she saw Elvis Presley live onstage in Spartanburg in 1956, the breakout year the young King electrified America. Her parents were out of town, and family maid Cora Jeter took her to the local auditorium.

All the fortune and all the **fame**
 And all the lights around her name
 And every night was now or never
 The road just seemed to go forever
 And all her dreams that had come true
 They didn’t thrill her like they used to
 She never thought she’d grow to hear
 A voice inside her strong and clear sing

Goodbye, little rock and roller
 Gee, it sure was good to know ya
 Goodbye, little rock and roller
 Goodbye.

“Goodbye, Little Rock and Roller” by Marshall Chapman
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ALAN MESSER

remember what happened But it must have been the best one yet 'Cause I feel like I been rode hard and put up wet.

“Rode Hard and Put Up Wet” by Marshall Chapman © 1974 Enoree Music (BMI). Administered by Bug.

“We sat upstairs in what at that time was called ‘the colored balcony,’” Marshall recalls. “Probably the only reason I could get in was because I was there with Cora. Downstairs, the white section, was sold out. And then here comes Elvis, and it was like lightning had struck the building. On some level nothing was probably ever the same for me, even though I went right back to trying to fit in. I was just a little kid—loved Mama and Daddy, and wanted to be who I was being raised to be, but it just wasn’t in the cards for me.”

Later that year, in second grade, Marshall got sent to the principal’s office—and then home—for singing Elvis’ “Too Much” at the top of her lungs in the school hallway. After that it was only a matter of time before she took up the guitar.

Marshall’s mother, Martha Chapman, still lives in Spartanburg in a handsome brick home in a retirement community on the eastern outskirts of town. Though Marshall was no doubt a challenge as a youngster, she laughs

frequently recalling Marshall’s formative years: “I just watched her go by!” She says that once Marshall set her mind to music, it was a foregone conclusion that she would succeed. “Everything she ever said she was going to do, she did,” says Mrs. Chapman. “When she took up horse riding, she was going to be the best rider there ever was. And she was. When she took up basketball, she was going to be the best basketball player. She was like a snapping turtle when she got something—she did not let it go. She’s got that drive.

“Marshall was always a tomboy. She played football with the boys in the neighborhood and played baseball with them and rough-housed with them in the yard. She was a beautiful rider. She won the horse show at Camp Pinnacle every year for years. Finally, they wouldn’t let her ride her last year because she had won so many times. When she was about 15 or 16, she took up golf. The first nine holes she played, she had a 65. The second nine holes she played, she had a 55. The third nine

holes she played, she had a 45. She’s a natural athlete. A fabulous athlete.”

When it came time to go to college, Marshall had the grades and SAT scores to go almost anywhere she wanted. “She had 785 on her math SAT and cried all night because it wasn’t 800. And she had a 685 on her English. She picked Vanderbilt, and I was thrilled. She picked a good school and a private school. It’s reasonably small. It’s not a big university. ... And then I found out 30 years later she picked Vanderbilt because the Grand Ole Opry was in Nashville, and Nashville was Music City!” Chuckling at the thought, she adds, “She didn’t tell me that at the time.”

Toward the back of Marshall’s Nashville home, she’s set up a tidy writing office. Surrounding a simple wooden desk are all the tools of the modern writer: computer, copy machine, fax machine, file cabinet, bulletin board, big dictionary. Hanging like art on the walls are the Martin D-28 acoustic



Betty’s out bein’ **bad** tonight;
Betty and her boyfriend
They had a big fight.

She went home when she found out
Said, “Pack your bags
I want you out.”
Her boyfriend thought she was talking jive
Till he saw her standing with a .45
A .45’s quicker than 409
Betty cleaned house for the very last time.

“Betty’s Bein’ Bad” by Marshall Chapman © 1984 Tall Girl Music (BMI).
Administered by Bug.

Waitin’ on tables At the Hi-Dee-Ho There ain’t a song on the jukebox That she don’t know. She laughs when

guitar her dad bought her when she was 16 and a 1957 Fender Stratocaster along with autographed photos of Robert Mitchum and of guitarist Scotty Moore, with his famous boss, Elvis, and framed certificates from BMI acknowledging radio airplay for her songs. Posted on the inside of the door is a handwritten note attributed to Marshall's old ex-boyfriend and arts critic Dave Hickey: "If better English doesn't hurt ... why not use it?"

After our Vietnamese lunch, Marshall props her feet up on the desk. Asked why she majored in French at Vanderbilt, she's typically direct in her response. "I was determined to be unemployable because I wanted to go into music."

When graduation day came, she knew what she wanted to do, but she didn't quite know how she would get there. "I remember walking across that stage and thinking, What now? Because my whole life I'd been told, 'Well, you've got to get into the right school, and then you've got to get into the right college, and then you're gonna get married.' And I just knew I wasn't gonna get married. And I knew I wasn't gonna work in a bank. So I didn't know what I was gonna do. I just knew I wasn't going back to South Carolina. And I think I said this in the book: Better to be in Nashville where you don't know what's gonna happen next, than to be in South Carolina where you know nothing's gonna happen next. I was just following what felt good. I liked playing music. Playing music felt good."

Nevertheless, it took a solid 15 years before Marshall ever made a comfortable living in the music business. "I think there's a perception among some people out there that Marshall is a child of privilege and that she's always had that," says Chris Fletcher. "In fact, she never took a dime from her family. Ever. Even when things got tough for her at times. She is not independently wealthy. She committed to the life she has lived. She is not living the life of a dilettante."

Marshall Chapman will surprise you with who she knows. Among the friends who wrote blurbs for the dust jacket of her book are authors Alice Randall,

Jill McCorkle, Larry Brown, and fellow Vanderbilt alumnus Roy Blount Jr. (BA'63), along with singer Emmylou Harris. All right, those names aren't really big surprises. But who would have expected former U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley and Chancellor Gordon Gee to weigh in as well?

It turns out Bradley and Marshall got to know each other a few years ago when they met at Nashville's public radio station. As for the chancellor, he and his wife, Associate Professor Constance Gee, have been friends with Marshall and Chris Fletcher since shortly after the Gees moved to town in 2000. Last September the Gees hosted a launch party for her book at Braeburn, the chancellor's residence. The occasion brought together two sides of Marshall's life that were worlds apart when she first arrived in Nashville as a student: the University and the music business. But in recent years the University and Music Row have gotten to know each other better, and Marshall—as one of the few folks in town with feet in both camps—is part of the reason for the détente. Naturally, then, the Gees celebrated her book by inviting guests from both sides of the fence.

As friends of Marshall's and fans of her work, the Gees shared a few observations about her gifts as a performer. "She's the kind of person who has everybody rooting for her within about five minutes of getting up on stage," says Constance Gee. "And you can tell she really has a way with the audience. She's very witty, but she's also very approachable and genuine, I think.

"I think she's vulnerable, and I think she's sensitive. She puts up this front of, 'Oh, I'm such a tough rock 'n' roller,' yet you can tell that just below the surface she's really quite sweet."

For his part, Chancellor Gee is grateful for Marshall's commitment to the University. "She is passionate about Vanderbilt athletics," he says. "She follows it closely. When we were hunting for a new women's basketball coach [when Jim Foster left for Ohio State in 2002], some of the very best insight and advice we got regarding who to hunt for and what to think about came from Marshall."

"Plus," chimes in Constance Gee with a laugh, "she makes us look cool!"

Towards the end of her Valentine's Eve book-signing gig, during the Q&A, a young woman asks Marshall, "What did your mother think of the book?" Marshall pauses, says it's a good question, and sets about giving a completely honest answer. She notes that her mother established an e-mail account just as Marshall was beginning the book, so she e-mailed her mother from time to time to check family facts. When in one case Marshall and her mother disagreed about the facts, her mother said, "It's your book, write what you want."

"Years earlier," Marshall tells the audience, "we went through some pretty rough times. At one point I went years without even speaking to her. Let me explain, though. This is what my mother can be like: When I was in college at Vanderbilt, and I'd write letters home, she'd send 'em back to me with the grammar and spelling all corrected. And then she wouldn't write me back!

"Well, you asked what my mama thought about the book. Here's what she said. She told me it was really well written, that it was very moving, and that ..."—at this point Marshall pauses, her voice choked with emotion, and explains, "Every time I tell this I start crying," before continuing—"she said it was one of the best books she's ever read." She dabs at a few tears and smiles broadly, declaring, "That's my mama!" Then in a graceful, heartfelt coda she adds, "Don't ever give up on anybody, because we're changing all the time."

Marshall takes a few more questions from the audience, thanks them all for coming out, and says it's time to sign some books. Some 20 to 30 people line up for autographs and a chance to chat with the woman behind the guitar, behind the quips, and now behind the byline. A half hour later the line is still long, but the group seems cheerful, and Marshall, seated with pen in hand, is caught up in conversation with one reader after another. ▼

For more information about Marshall Chapman, her book and her music, visit www.tallgirl.com.

they play "Stand By Your Man" She's trash but you love her She's Alabama bad.

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