

# Beth Nielsen Chapman

## MAKING MUSIC & MUD PIES



According to Nashville tunesmith Beth Nielsen Chapman, one of the best songwriting techniques is to avoid technique.

"I try to stay as much as possible in the unconscious place where real creativity comes from," says Chapman, whose songs have been performed by Faith Hill, Bonnie Raitt, Tanya Tucker, Elton John, Trisha Yearwood, Willie Nelson, Lorrie Morgan and many others. "I try to remove my intellect from the process and just get into the childlike joy of creating, like stringing beads or making mud pies."

Regardless of whether she's writing for one of her own albums or for another artist, Chapman strives for the same free-associative approach. "I start by just hitting a chord on a guitar or a keyboard," she says. "The sound of that chord will subliminally suggest a melody line, which will then suggest a specific vowel sound. Usually I just sing nonsense syllables that fit the vowels I hear, though the final version of the song often winds up with the exact vowel sounds I started with. Eventually I have to tighten the song up and look at it from an intellectual angle, but not until after I've let the idea grow and mutate and become what it wants to be."

Some of Chapman's most successful songs were written on inexpensive Yamaha keyboards. "I love how those keyboards are totally accessible," she says. "If I'm in a creative songwriting mode, the worst thing for me would be to have to read a manual to figure out how to make a drum loop work. The song would never get written! But on the Yamaha keyboards, you just push a button, and you have a basic beat. **You can just throw them in your car and take them to the beach.**" In fact, the beach is where Chapman and her collaborators wrote the Faith Hill mega-hit "This Kiss" on a Yamaha battery powered PSR keyboard.

"I've been using a PSR730," says Chapman, "but I'm also going to get a PSR8000 or 9000. They're all fantastic writing tools. Like guitars, they have songs inside them. The songs are already perfectly written—some of us are just lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time to download them." Chapman pauses, then chuckles. "Seeing it that way gets me off the hook when I'm having a bad writing day. I can just say, 'I must be standing in the wrong place.'"



## They Know the Secret

**Tom Shapiro**  
As a songwriter he's enjoyed 13 #1 hits and counting, Tom is also a 3 time winner of BMI's Country Songwriter of the Year



**Jon Vezner:**  
ACM & CMA Song of the Year winner and GRAMMY® winner for Best Country Song



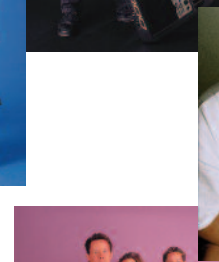
**Kathy Mattea:**  
Sixteen top ten hits, Five CMA's, Four ACM's, Two GRAMMY® award's and she's still going strong



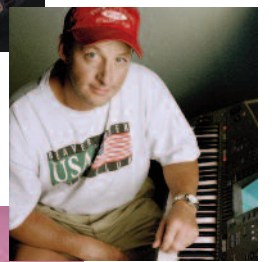
**Kenny Greenberg**  
GRAMMY® winning Producer (Edwin McCain, Pam Tillis, Ashley Cleveland, Joan Baez) and Guitarist (The Indigo Girls, Wynonna, Michael Bolton, Trisha Yearwood). He's penned hit songs for Amy Grant and SheDAISY



**Gary Nicholson**  
From BB King to George Jones, Bonnie Raitt to Wynonna, Waylon Jennings to Neil Diamond, he's written for them all



**The Wilkinsons**  
GRAMMY® nominated family trio with hits including "Don't I have a Heart", "26 cents" and "Jimmy's got a Girlfriend"



**Gary Chapman**  
TV Host, multiple Dove Award winner and GRAMMY® nominee



**Deborah Allen**  
With her signature song, "Baby I Lied", Deborah Allen has gone on to make her mark as a remarkable solo and songwriting talent



**Annie Roboff**  
Trisha Yearwood, Martina McBride and Faith Hill, to name just a few, have all enjoyed huge hits written by Annie



**Phil Vasser**  
ASCAP's songwriter of the year



**Delbert McClinton**  
One of the Planet's greatest roadhouse rockers

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