

Texas Voices, Timeless Love: Award-winning Country Music Singers/Songwriters Radney Foster and Kelly Willis Team Up to Share “The One They Call”

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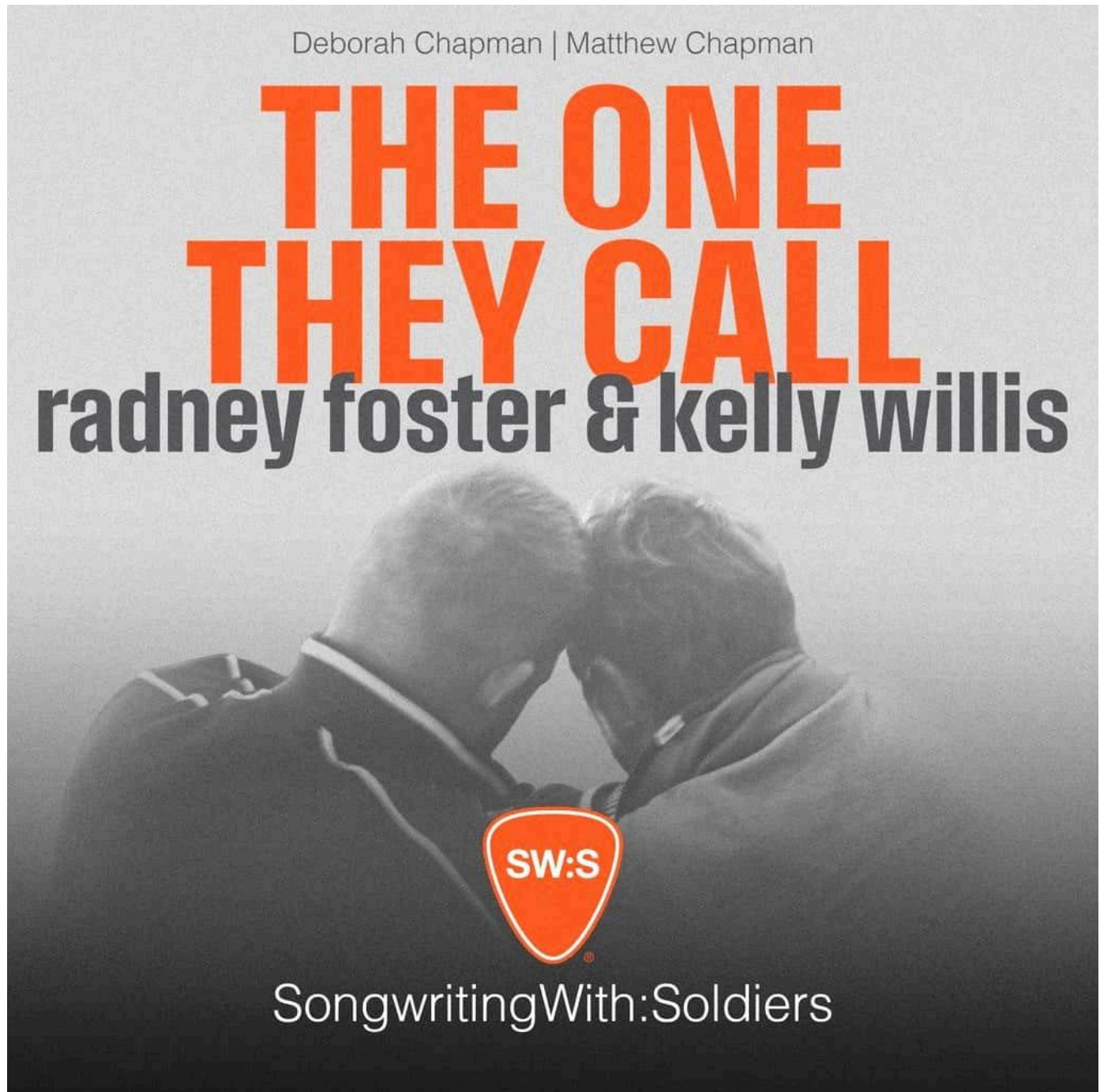


Some love songs are imagined. Others are lived. “The One They Call” belongs firmly in the second category.

Released on Feb. 13—the day before Valentine’s Day—the new song is an unconventional, deeply moving love story rooted in real-life devotion, courage, and choice. Written during a SongwritingWith:Soldiers retreat, the song brings together acclaimed Texas singer-songwriters Radney Foster and Kelly Willis with the powerful true story of retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Chapman and his wife, Debbi.

Matthew, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician, had proposed to Debbi twice. As his unit prepared for deployment shortly after 9/11, Debbi finally said yes—not out of fear, but out of clarity. If anything were to happen, she wanted to be *the one*

they called. The couple married at a courthouse in Fayetteville, North Carolina, shortly before Matthew deployed. That simple, devastatingly honest sentence became the emotional center—and ultimately the title—of the song.



"The One They Call" is Radney Foster and Kelly Willis' new song telling the unconventional, deeply moving love story of Matthew and Debbi Chapman. Photo Courtesy SongwritingWith:Soldiers

Performed by Foster and Willis, whose voices blend with rare emotional precision, "The One They Call" captures what it means to commit without conditions and to choose love when everything feels uncertain. The song marks the seventh release from SongwritingWith:Soldiers' new music program and will also appear on a forthcoming album of deeply personal songs written alongside military veterans. In this interview, Radney Foster reflects on the responsibility of telling someone

else's truth, the magic of singing with Kelly Willis and why stories like Matthew and Debbi's deserve to be heard, especially now.

A Story That Stopped Him Cold

When Radney Foster first heard Matthew and Debbi Chapman tell their story, it stopped him cold. As they spoke, the weight of their love—the kind forged under pressure, uncertainty, and real stakes—hit him all at once. He remembers being completely blown away, to the point of tearing up. To Radney, their relationship embodied something rare and elemental. If that wasn't the very definition of love, he thought, he wasn't sure what was.



Radney Foster says working with [SongwritingWith:Soldiers](#) is one of the most personal and meaningful ways he knows to give back. Photo Courtesy Radney Foster

The Gift of [SongwritingWith:Soldiers](#)

That emotional immediacy is part of what keeps drawing him back to [SongwritingWith:Soldiers](#). For Radney, working with the organization is more than a creative collaboration—it's a gift. It's one of the most personal and meaningful ways he knows to give back. The men and women he meets through these retreats have done and seen extraordinary things, and being trusted with their stories is an honor he doesn't take lightly. With that honor comes responsibility: a deep need to get the

story right, to tell it honestly, and to make it as emotionally accessible as possible. When you're writing with a service member, he says, you feel the stakes immediately.

"I Want to Be the One They Call"





Debbi told Matthew that she wanted to marry him because if anything happened to him, she wanted to be the one they called. Photo Courtesy Matthew and Debbi Chapman

The emotional core of “The One They Call” revealed itself early on, almost effortlessly. The title came straight from Debbi herself. She told Matthew that if his proposal was still on the table, she wanted to marry him. When he asked what had changed her mind, her answer was simple and devastating: if anything happened to him, she wanted to be the one they called. That line undid Radney the moment he heard it. He knew instantly—not only was that the heart of the song, it was the title.

Singing With Kelly Willis



Radney Foster collaborated with Kelly Willis for “The One They Call.” Photo Courtesy Jasna Boudard

Bringing the song to life vocally meant reuniting with longtime collaborator Kelly Willis, a pairing that has always felt instinctive. Radney speaks with deep admiration for Kelly—not just as an extraordinary lead vocalist, but as a harmony singer with rare intuition. There’s something about the blend of their voices, he says, that has always clicked. In the studio, that chemistry made it easy to tap into the deepest emotions of the song. Her presence, her musical magic, opened the door to the vulnerability the story required.

Letting These Songs Be Heard

Radney is grateful that SongwritingWith:Soldiers has found the funding to release new music like this into the world. Every retreat leaves him in awe—not only of what he’s able to write with a service member, but of what emerges from the rooms around him as other songwriters collaborate with veterans and their families. These songs move him at a heart level every time, and he believes deeply in the importance of letting the public hear them.

Telling Their Story First



Radney hopes that Matthew and Debbi's story resonates beyond the song. Photo Courtesy Radney Foster

When he walks into a songwriting session with soldiers, Radney carries one guiding principle with him: this is their story. His role is to help them tell it. Writing a song can offer catharsis, a way to shape experiences that are often too big or too painful to hold alone. If he stays true to that intention, he knows the song will find its way. And inevitably, he leaves changed by the experience himself.

Choosing Love Over Fear

More than anything, Radney hopes that Matthew and Debbi's story resonates beyond the song. He hopes it inspires people to see that choosing love, especially in moments of fear and uncertainty, is the only way through. It's a belief he holds close,

rooted not just in songwriting, but in the real people behind “The One They Call.” And, as he says simply and sincerely, he really loves those people.

As “The One They Call” makes its way into the world, Radney Foster is also carrying these stories with him back onto the stage. With multiple tour stops across Texas throughout the year, audiences will have the chance to hear not just the new song, but the deeper sense of purpose that now travels with his music. For Radney, these performances are an extension of the same truth that shaped the song itself—songs are meant to connect, to honor real lives, and to remind us that choosing love, even when it’s hard, is always worth it.

For more information about Radney Foster or Kelly Willis, please visit their website:

www.radneyfoster.com/

www.kellywillis.com/

Cover Photo Courtesy Matthew and Debbi Chapman

Bob Valleau is a regular entertainment writer for Texas Lifestyle Magazine.

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