

CBS NEWS / January 25, 2014, 9: 29 PM

# Guy Clark: Country songwriter on Grammy nomination, distinctive style



Comment /  71 Shares /  Tweets /  Stumble /  Email

More +

Texas native and veteran musician Guy Clark is a master of the musical word. His country hits, with piercing lyrics and a distinctive style, have inspired a generation of songwriters. At Sunday night's **Grammy Awards**, Clark is nominated for Best Folk Album.



Play VIDEO

## The top Grammy moments of all time

Clark discussed his nomination and his career as a songwriter with CBS News' Mark Strassmann.

Clark told Strassmann that the key to writing a song that sticks around is to "write with a pencil and a big eraser."

"Write what you know about," he said. "You know, don't make up some [expletive] that nobody cares about, that you don't know about."

The Texas native has written songs for performers like John Denver, Johnny Cash, Jimmy Buffett and George Strait.

He told Strassmann that "just living is writing songs for me."

But simply living has become tougher for Clark, who has been battling cancer for years.

"I just don't have time to be worried about it," he said. "Got songs to write, guitars to build - life is short, you better get started."

He moved to Nashville in 1971 and helped pioneer two genres of country music, progressive and outlaw country. His music "gang" included Cash, Waylon Jennings, Emmylou Harris and Willie Nelson.

Even today, no one in Nashville is more celebrated as a songwriter. In September, he received the Academy of Country Music's Poets Award.

Clark's acclaimed first record, "Old No. 1," debuted in 1975. But, 20 albums later, he's still telling vivid stories about dreamers and drifters - and ordinary people who have hit a patch of rough road.

Country star Vince Gill is among the legion of Guy Clark admirers.

"I think most people would surmise that when they hear God's voice it will either sound like Guy Clark or Johnny Cash," said Gill. "The real dirt of the earth, the real thing that makes most of us tick as musicians, as songwriters, storytellers, whatever you want to call us - gypsies - he spoke to the core of it about better than anybody I ever heard."

Clark also makes his own guitars in a basement. An old snapshot tacked to a wall for years inspired his latest album, "My Favorite Picture of You." It's a loving tribute to the woman in it, his wife, Susanna.

“We were hanging out over there, and Townes Van Zandt and I were in that house, just drunk as skunks and just being jerks, you know,” he said of what was happening when the picture was taken. “Susanna had had enough. She put on her jacket and just walked out.”

Strassmann asked if she was fed up. Clark joked, “Yeah. Oh, she's had more than enough.”

They were married for 40 years. In 2012, she died of cancer.

On Sunday, “My Favorite Picture of You” is up for the Grammy Award for Best Folk Album.

The Grammy Awards will be broadcast Sunday at 8 p.m. ET on CBS.