

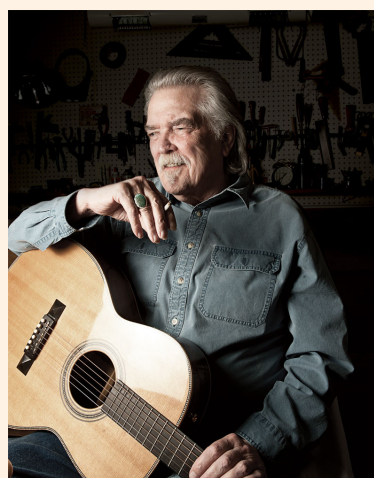


from Garth...

## Has he sung 'The Randall Knife'?

**Last week we heard the news of the death of the Texas songwriter Guy Clark.** I was saddened to hear this - he's someone I've listened to steadily through the years, both on albums and live concerts.

I've been influenced by all sorts of musicians but there are three songwriters that have particularly influenced the way I wanted to go as a songwriter myself, and they all have something of the storyteller about them, and they are all poets. One was Guy Clark, one is John Prine, and one is Kris Kristofferson.



*Guy Clark*

Guy Clark approached his songwriting as a craftsman - he wrote in a workshop where he also even made guitars, and instinctively I found that I've learned from him - though there will certainly not be any guitar-making from me! You may well feel you've never heard of him but his songs have been covered by many other artists such as Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Ricky Skaggs and Vince Gill. Song titles you may recognise: Desperados Waiting for a Train; LA Freeway; The Last Gunfighter Ballad; Home Grown Tomatoes; Dublin Blues, and of course The Randall Knife.

Years back I bought two Guy Clark albums in the States, and one of them had the song The Randall Knife, which is a song he wrote after his father died. I was very moved by it but I didn't know anyone in Britain who had those albums. Later I went to a concert of his at a small university hall in London, and someone came in late and squeezed passed us to get to her seat, and as I stood to let her in she said to me, "Has he sung 'The Randall Knife'?" And it was one of those moments when you thought, my goodness, someone else knows about this song! Well he hadn't sung it, because he mainly ended concerts with it.

I shall miss his style of writing. I hadn't realise he had been so ill, and I was hoping for one more concert and one more album.

I'll leave you with some words of his from a song that I'm very fond of, called 'Stuff That Works'.

**"I've got an old blue shirt and it suits me just fine  
I like the way it feels so I wear it all the time  
I got an old guitar, won't ever stay in tune  
I like the way it sounds in a dark and empty room  
Stuff that works, stuff that holds up  
The kind of stuff you don't hang on the wall  
Stuff that's real, stuff you feel,  
The kind of stuff you reach for when you fall.**

**I've got a pretty good friend who's seen me at my worst  
He can't tell if I'm a blessing or a curse  
But he always shows up when the chips are down  
That's the kind of stuff I like to be around  
Stuff that works...**

**I've got a woman I love, she's crazy, paints like God  
She's got a playground sense of justice, she won't take odds  
I've got a tattoo with her name right through my soul  
I think everything she touches turns to gold  
Stuff that works, stuff that holds up  
The kind of stuff you don't hang on the wall  
Stuff that's real, stuff you feel,  
The kind of stuff you reach for when you fall."**

I hope John Prine and Kris Kristofferson are keeping well and still doing albums and concerts!

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## **Songs from the Fifth Gospel**



My great friend Wisam Salsaa, from Beit Sahour (The Shepherds' Fields) in Palestine, has been the tour guide that I've worked with for years. Some of you will recognise his name from the song 'Moonlight on Galilee' which is on the Moonrise album, where I talk about going into the desert:  
"Touches of mercy, down in the desert,

*Wisam Salsaa talking to an Amos Trust pilgrimage group in the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem*

Wisam, Ayman, Shadi and me,  
Grandeur and laughter, a special  
oasis  
A fifth gospel story - that helps me  
believe”

and the song ends with the words about the three of them, “with the greatest of friends there ever could be.”

**Wisam said to me one day, “Why don’t you put all the songs you’ve written about the holy land and the situation here on a double CD?”** So I’ve done that, and it’s especially an album for those on pilgrimage - there are songs and prayers and stories about the land once known as holy. I love the quote from St Jerome in the third century, who lived in Bethlehem translating the Bible - he described the holy land as the fifth gospel; he was pointing out that it helps us to interpret the other four gospels.



**For me when I think of the fifth gospel I think not just of the land but especially the people of the land.** And so I hope that this double album that has 33 songs on it will be both an inspiration and a reminder that in this wonderful land people are suffering.

The great theologian Naim Ateek called his first book about the situation in Palestine and Israel, “Justice and Only Justice”, and I love that phrase because it reminds me that if we follow that route there will be justice and peace for both Palestinian and Israeli. These are bad days in the land once called holy, terrible violence, the Israeli government is very extreme - and I would have to say that “justice and only justice” points the way forward.

Inside the album cover I quote some prophetic words from Naim Ateek, and he ends with this sentence, “Is this not a Kairos moment for the church to speak a prophetic word of justice?” And I believe it is the moment and I hope this album will encourage people in their prayers, in their campaigning, in their recognition that human rights and international law is so important, and that they will hold together in their hearts both Palestinian and Israeli, knowing that justice and peace for Palestine offers peace and security for the Israelis too.

**And so this album is a prayer that Palestinians and Israelis will be treated as equal human beings, that the occupation of Palestinians will stop, and both communities will live in peace - and a joy will come to this land which has been sadly missing.**

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## **B-side the C-side**



**Recently I had a wonderful weekend in Herne Bay.** I was doing a concert at Herne Bay Baptist Church and then joining them on Pentecost Sunday morning and doing a sung sermon spot. It was a wonderful time, such a welcoming church, and a thoughtful and hopeful church.

But the first thing the organisers Eve and Ron did when I arrived was take me down the road to a record store called 'B-side the C-side'.

There I saw vinyl records of mine in the window from many, many years ago! It was a fantastic community shop. To me a record store is a little reminiscent of a library - people can come and hunt for music.

Oz and Chris Eastman had given up their work and opened the shop three years ago - they had decided, "If we don't do this now we will never do this and it's our dream" - so they sell vinyl, used and new, and they have new CDs there, but actually they can't sell many CDs because it's vinyl that's selling now! On the first Saturday of every month they have a live local band and they have a vinyl club once a month. People come in and ask their advice about a song they've heard and what album it's from - and they have a listening booth at the back of the shop, just like the old days!

They welcomed me, they were playing my album from 1976, 'Love Song for the Earth' and got me to sign on a wall in the shop. And then they were on the front row in the gig at the church that evening.

They had realised the importance of music and making music available, and particularly the interesting shift to vinyl; and frankly can you think of a better name for a record store than 'B-side the C-side'?

I wish them all the best with their vinyl dream that has come true.

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## **Prayer**

**from the cover of the album Songs from the Fifth Gospel**

**God of justice and compassion  
hear the cries of your wounded people,  
hear the cries of those imprisoned  
in a land once called 'holy'.**

May we be part of the community  
that raises our voices  
and challenges our governments  
to speak up for those who get ignored.  
We pray for justice to come  
because peace cannot come  
without justice.

And yet when there is justice we know  
that both Palestinians and Israelis  
will find freedom and hope.

In the sadness of a deeply wounded Middle East  
we pray that the plight of the victims of injustice  
will not be forgotten any longer  
by the governments of the world,  
nor by the church leaders of the world.  
May we hear the call of this kairos moment,  
to walk with the values of Jesus,  
and to campaign and pray,  
that peace with justice  
will become a reality -  
so both Palestinians and Israelis will find peace,  
so both may move forward to a new day where all are respected,  
and where both communities find hope.

And when we travel there as pilgrims  
may we be renewed by our encounter with the 'Fifth Gospel'  
that opens our eyes to the values of your kingdom  
and the way of healing and hope.

*Garth Hewitt*



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