

**Gary Nicholson**  
**2022 Bio\_Longform**

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**Grammy-winning songwriter Gary Nicholson comes home to Metroplex to perform before  
Songwriter Hall of Fame induction**

Garland, Texas native Gary Nicholson is coming home to the Metroplex for the first time in a couple of decades for a one-night solo acoustic performance at the legendary Poor David's Pub on Thursday, October 13.

While his name may not be instantly familiar, music aficionados will recognize a few of the more than 600 songs Nicholson has penned through the last four decades; songs that have been recorded by artists ranging from Willie Nelson and George Strait to Ringo Starr and Buddy Guy.

The two-time Grammy award winner and [Texas Heritage Songwriter's Hall of Fame](#) recipient generally takes a back seat to fame. He is "the man behind the song." On October 30, Nicholson will be inducted into the prestigious [Nashville Songwriter's Hall of Fame](#), along with Shania Twain, Steve Wariner, Hillary Lindsey. And David Malloy. They join 213 previously honored songwriters, a virtual who's who of American music.

Nicholson's older sister had an extensive record collection that chronicled the advent of rock and roll: Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Ricky Nelson, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Buddy Holly. He was ten years younger than his sister and admits to sneaking into her room to play her records when she wasn't around. When he was six, his mother took him to see *Love Me Tender*, the Elvis movie. On the way, she bought him a little plastic guitar. "That was where it all started," he admits. "I learned to play 'Tom Dooley' and 'Red River Valley' on the cheapest acoustic guitar my dad could find."

He soon moved up to an electric guitar when a neighbor electrician hooked up a jack to the family console stereo in the living room so he could play along with records by Duane Eddy and the Ventures. Then he heard Freddie King and Jimmy Reed and fell in love with the blues.

He graduated from South Garland High School in 1968, and knowing he wanted to pursue a career in music, Nicholson enrolled at the University of North Texas.

"My band at the time included the amazing steel guitar player, Larry White. Larry gave the Burritos' steel player Sneaky Pete a tour of the MSA steel guitar factory in Dallas. After their show that night, Gram came over to our practice house and we played country music all night long. When we told him of our troubles as long hairs trying to play country music for rednecks that didn't like hippies, and rock audiences that had no use for country music, he encouraged us to come to California, where there was a growing country-rock scene," Nicholson recalls.

Two weeks later, Nicholson's band arrived in Los Angeles. On their first night in town, Gram encouraged them to play the weekly talent show at the Palomino, and they won the fifty dollar prize.

Gary and his bass player, Garland native Wes Pritchett, formed a bluegrass trio, the Whitehorse Brothers, which expanded and became Uncle Jim's Music, named for Wes's uncle, who supported them financially and became their manager. The band was signed to Kapp Records, a division of MCA, for two albums in 1971.

Another friend from college, Jim Ed Norman, joined Uncle Jim's Music for their second album. He had come to California as a member of the group Shiloh, which included Don Henley. After the Eagles' outrageous success on the radio and Uncle Jim's Music breaking up, Gary moved back to Garland and married his college sweetheart, Barbara, in 1973.

Through the 1970s in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Gary played a lot of country bars to make a living with Barbara teaching school. He wrote a country song "Jukebox Argument," about a couple who were fighting and wouldn't speak to each other but argued by playing songs back and forth on the jukebox. She played "Release Me," and he played "Stand By Your Man," on and on with titles, ending with "She played "I'll Get Over You" and he played "Born To Lose."

Jim Ed Norman produced Mickey Gilley's record of that song for the "Urban Cowboy" soundtrack and signed Gary to his new publishing company. In August of 1980, Gary, Barbara and their two young sons moved to Nashville. In 1983, Norman became president of Warner Bros Records-Nashville, and Gary was signed to Tree Publishing, where he would be a staff writer for fifteen years before forming his own publishing company.

The learning opportunities in Nashville were abundant, with Nicholson playing guitar with Guy Clark, Billy Joe Shaver, Bobby Bare, and others while developing skills as a co-writer in the company of legendary Tree writers Harlan Howard, Bobby Braddock, Don Cook, Keith Whitley, and others. His first number one hit was "That's The Thing About Love" with Don Williams in 1984.

Today, after 42 years of songwriting, his songs have been recorded by many of his heroes and friends, including Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Bonnie Raitt, John Prine, Ringo Starr, BB King, Buddy Guy, Keb Mo, and so many others. ([see discography](#))

Delbert McClinton has recorded 35 of the songs he and Nicholson have written together. "I am very proud of my body of work with Delbert. He has embodied the country and rhythm and blues that made rock and roll what it was to begin with. He is one of my major influences in music making."

Nicholson has produced five projects for Fort Worth native Delbert McClinton, winning Grammys in the Best Contemporary Blues category for the albums, *Nothing Personal* in 2001, and *Cost of Living* in 2005: as well as leading productions for The Judds, Wynonna, Pam Tillis, Marcia Ball, Billy Joe Shaver, and many others.

In addition to his long list of songs performed by other artists, Nicholson has a catalog of his own recordings ([see recordings](#)), and many videos available on his [website](#) and other streaming services.

He occasionally performs as his alter-ego, Whitey Johnson. The character of Whitey Johnson is based on a short story Nicholson wrote about a guitar player who performed at a fair in his hometown of Garland. When Nicholson performs as Whitey, he invokes the spirit of the blues music he has loved all his life. With deepest respect for all the great founding fathers of the blues, and songs that reflect his own unique point of view, Whitey Johnson lives on.

When notified of the upcoming induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, among the most prestigious honors a songwriter can achieve, Nicholson said “I am a product of this environment, this community shaped me and gave me a way to live this dream. I credit this honor to the value of our songwriting community.”

**A Sampling of Gary Nicholson Songs**

“One More Last Chance” - Vince Gill  
“Squeeze Me In” - Garth Brooks/Trisha Yearwood  
“Same Kind of Crazy ”- George Strait  
“Worry B Gone” - Chris Stapleton  
“Trouble With the Truth” - Patty Loveless  
“Shadow of Doubt” - Bonnie Raitt  
“Never Without You” - Ringo Starr  
“He Won’t Ever Be Gone” - Willie Nelson  
“Skin Deep” - Buddy Guy  
“Follow The Money”- Buddy Guy/ James Taylor  
“When Rita Leaves”- Delbert McClinton  
“Falling And Flying” - Jeff Bridges

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<https://garynicholsonmusic.com/discography>