



# Once a Busker . . .

*Some things never change for singer-songwriter Glen Hansard*

BY JASON VERLINDE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAXWELL BALMAIN

**I**N 1990, WITH money he received from appearing in *The Commitments*, young, Dublin-based busker Glen Hansard bought himself a guitar. It was a brand new, cedar-topped Takamine NP15 with stock electronics, and it cost him around 1,000 pounds at the local music store.

Flash forward two decades, and the singer-songwriter is still making music — now with the Frames and the Swell Season — on that very same guitar. And, like Willie Nelson’s “Trigger” or Springsteen’s Esquire, it’s become more than an instrument for Hansard; it’s become his curriculum vitae.

Last fall, I spent an afternoon with Hansard at Kells Irish Restaurant & Pub in Seattle. He’d been busy running around town with musical partner Marketa Irglova promoting the latest Swell Season album, *Strict Joy*. After talking shop and snapping guitar photos for nearly an hour, we went outside to take some shots of Hansard in the daylight. Before we knew it, he had befriended a busker and was revisiting his teenage roots on Grafton Street, playing for change on a corner in front of Pike Place Market.

Hansard can not only write, play, sing and act with the best of them, but he’s also a world-class storyteller. We thought we’d just sit back and let him riff on some of his formative moments — and, of course, give us the lowdown on that tried-and-true Takamine.

Glen Hansard can usually be seen fronting the Frames or Swell Season, but on October 22, 2009, he sat in with local busker Sleepy Joe in front of Seattle’s iconic Pike Place Market.

