

THE TAKAMINE

It's got a few knocks. It's been played by many different people. I'm a big believer that your instrument is a tool; it's no more. It shouldn't be any more. If we identify too strongly with objects, I think we can get into an area where we get very precious.

Now, having said that, I've had this thing for so long, and it was always my workhorse. It was never my baby or my "number-one guitar" or whatever. I've got a few guitars, but there are always two I use: a Fender Thinline Telecaster and this guitar. And I just used them both because they're like an old pair of shoes. They work, they're the most comfortable and they sound the best plugged in.

But where it became precious is when we made *Once*, because then I noticed that people were paying attention to the guitar. People were saying, "Oh, is that

life, it's gone, and you get another one and you work with that tool. . . .

A few months ago, a luthier contacted me via email about fixing my guitar for me. I really wasn't sure how I felt about it. We were in L.A. and doing press, and he lives an hour's drive south, and we went down and we visited him. He asked me to leave the guitar with him for a couple of days, because he just wanted to observe the inside of it. He asked me how I felt about him reinforcing the part where it's all damaged.

I took a risk and I left it with him. I came back a couple of days later, and he had done this kind of amazing job where he had basically put a very thin layer of wood underneath the holes, which basically means that the holes may not grow anymore.

But he didn't change the aesthetic at all. He wanted to put lacquer — some sort of resin — on the

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the guitar you play in the film? Is that the guitar you're playing on the tour? Is that the same guitar?" I was like, "Yeah, of course it is. It's *my* guitar."

And because it's gotten so delicate now, because the top of it is really in a pretty awful state, I realize that I've got a year or two, maybe three, left in it, in terms of its structure. But luthiers are pretty good at fixing stuff up, so who knows? I might have it for years and years.

I've become a little more precious. I bought this [Calton] case for it. I used to just check it in on a flight, in whatever case it was in. Nowadays, I'll fight to try to get it on the plane with me. Sometimes, I'll even buy a ticket to put it next to me!

I never thought I was *that* guy. You meet some people that treat their guitars better than they treat themselves. I don't believe in this stuff. I believe the guitar is a tool; it's an object, a piece of wood. It's a beautiful piece of wood, but when it goes out of your

holes, which would have made the wood darker and which would have meant I wouldn't be able to wear the guitar down anymore. But I didn't let him do that, because I think there's something very natural about the way the thing is. I didn't want to change anything, but the reinforcing inside I was very happy with. He did an amazing job.

Marketa was amazing. I was kind of weird about [leaving my guitar with a stranger], but I wasn't saying that. Mar just turned to him and said, "If you f*** up that guitar, I will kill you!" She really had my back.

DRUNK AND LUCKY

I remember one night in Austria, I came out after a gig with my friend Mic Christopher. Very drunk. I put the guitars down on the street — my electric guitar and my acoustic guitar — and got straight into a taxi, went to another part of town somewhere outside Vienna to

OPPOSITE: Takamine no longer makes the NP15 model (perhaps because it succumbs to wear so easily), but Hansard is still a firm believer in its prowess. In fact, his guitar convinced fellow singer-songwriter Josh Ritter to purchase the same model.