

this party. When it came time to sing a few songs at the party — two or three hours later — I'm looking for my guitar, and it's not there! I panicked; I turned white.

I ran back to the venue, and, amazingly, this guitar was still sitting there. There were kids going to school stepping over the guitar! And it was, like, late at night when we left the place! It was there on the street. My electric guitar was gone; someone picked it up and took it. I had it since I was 15.

But the electric guitar showed up two weeks later, standing against the venue wall. The venue owner came into work one morning, found it, brought it into the place and rang me: "Your guitar just showed up, completely untouched, still in tune." So someone had picked it up, heard that this guy had lost it and basically felt guilty and brought it back. It's very, very lucky.

I think, for other people, this [Takamine] might just be a bit of a plank. But for me, it's exactly what I need. For them, I don't know. But it's like a thousand people have played my guitar, because if we're on a session and someone wants to sing a song, I just hand it over. I don't think about it. Maybe they'll break it — and sometimes people do treat it more rough than I'd like them to — but that's all a part of all my instruments, that's what they're for.

A BUSKING PRIMER

I'm not a purist, but there's something about guys who use a microphone or amplifier . . . not that they're cheating, but they're not going to learn as much doing it that way as they will by having to project raw.

That was the biggest lesson I learned — projecting raw. I remember I listened to *Before the Flood*, where Dylan sings "Just Like a Woman." I remember making it my goal to be able to sing like that. On Grafton Street, like any street, learning how to project your voice to the point to where it bounces back at you was the goal. And it was all about learning how to play loud — and fast. In that way, I noticed I had made more money.

The most lucrative day of the week was always Friday and Saturday night, when everyone was drunk, but that also meant you were going to face a lot of madness as well. It can be very tough, but an education — a baptism of fire.

That guy at the beginning of *Once*, who steals my money? There was a guy I knew that used to do that.

On the street, you meet everyone; you know who the pickpockets are, you know where the whores are, you know who the drug squad are. You figure them all out. If you stand still on any street in the world for long enough, every person in that city will pass you by.

INTO THE MYSTIC

When I was busking, one of the people that I became very friendly with was Marina Guinness. She was of the brewing family and she knew I loved Van Morrison, because she heard me singing his tune. She said to me one day, "You know, Van is having this party — his 50th birthday party — at my house. Why don't you come along?" I said, "What? Come along?" "Take it easy; don't make a big deal of it. Bring your girlfriend, bring a bottle of port. Treat him with respect, because we'd love for you to come."

So, I was overjoyed with the opportunity. Her place is way outside the city. I drove out on my scooter with my girlfriend; it was late, and we got there and we got in. And I thought it was going to be a party, but it wasn't 20 people. It was Van sitting with just a few friends. And I was introduced to everybody, sat down; we ate some food — just being quiet and sort of being in the background.

It was amazing — I'm sitting here with Van Morrison! And a couple of drinks were had, and then someone comes into the room we were in and said, "Everybody, come on into the kitchen. Van is singing some songs." Van was there with Jerry Lee Lewis. And Jerry Lee and Van are standing at the fireplace, and they're both singing beautiful old country songs — beautiful.

At one point, Van says, "Anyone want to hear a song? Any requests?" I'm a huge fan, but I didn't know whether I should say it or whether I shouldn't. No one else was shouting out, so I said, "Van, 'I'm Hungry for Your Love'?" "I'm Hungry for Your Love" is a great song, but a fairly lesser-known song.

He looks at me and he says, "You don't know me!"

I was just like, "Jesus Christ!" I turned away and I walked outside. I kind of freaked out. The first thing I'd said to him, and I just got *bam!*

So I went outside, and I was thinking about taking my head off, thinking I just shouldn't have come here. And Marina come out and said, "Glen, come on.