

Striking a chord

Written by Deb Egenberger
Friday, 14 September 2012 13:22 -



Gothenburg graduate's song 'I'll Remind You' touching lives

What if one day, all you've worked for, everything you've accomplished, each good and wonderful thing you've spent your life doing was erased from your memory?

"What a tragedy," says 1994 Gothenburg High School graduate Jason Henke.

That thought is what sparked Henke's creative juices when he and co-writer Jessica June Rose put together the song, "I'll Remind You."

One afternoon, Henke and Rose were talking about former President Ronald Reagan and how sad it must have been for him to accomplish so much with such a decorated life and not be able to remember it.

Regan served two terms as the country's president after having been governor of California following a long acting career.

In 1994, Regan revealed he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He died in 2004.

SEE IT, HEAR IT

To see the video of "I'll Remind You," search the song title on www.youtube.com. To purchase a download of the song on iTunes for 99 cents, follow the internet link: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/i-ll-remind-you-feat-jason-0467894687>.

At least 25% of the proceeds from all purchased iTunes downloads are being donated to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

The "Crew" also wrote a song called "Taken Care Of." The song and accompanying video have been used in promotions for When's The Funding for Lung Cancer, an online social media outlet operated by another Gothenburg graduate, Jennifer (Stauss) Windrum.

Windrum's mother Leslie Lehman, now of Phoenix, has battled lung cancer for a decade.

"We were so honored to write a song for such a wonderful inspiration to us," Henke said of Lehman, who is a dear family friend. The video for "Taken Care Of" can also be seen at www.youtube.com.

The song can be downloaded from iTunes at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/taken-care-of-acoustic-single-046982360>.

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“We know it’s a struggle for all who suffer from Alzheimer’s, dementia, etc.,” Henke wrote in an e-mail interview from his home in Nashville. “It made us want to write a song that would hopefully provide some encouragement to those who have to deal with this terrible disease.”

Henke sat down at the piano that day and Rose began singing.

Out came “I’ll Remind You.”

Henke graduated from GHS in 1994 and moved to Nashville after graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1998.

“I’ve loved music since essentially the day I was born, and I love to write music and sing and to be around great music,” Henke said.

He has had the opportunity to work with many Nashville stars, and is currently in his fourth year as a member of Kenny Rogers’ management team.

In addition, Henke worked on John Waite’s 2011 album, “Rough and Tumble,” as well as co-writing and co-producing the debut CD of duo Winfield’s Locket, in which his wife Leslie sings.

“There is nothing like watching a song come of age from a simple work tape to a fully-produced track,” he said.

That was definitely the case for “I’ll Remind You.”

Rose and Henke have worked together on a number of songs.

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“Jessica and I understand each other musically and we are very much on the same page when it comes to writing and what we’d like our art to be,” Henke said. “It’s a natural, free-flowing process that typically happens fairly quickly. I’ve never written a song with her that I didn’t enjoy.”

With plenty of positive feedback on “I’ll Remind You,” Rose and Henke decided to extend the reach of their song with a music video.



“Working for other artists, I’ve been on many a set, in meetings going over treatments and the like, but I had never been the artist in a video,” Henke said. “How everything came together was nothing short of a miracle.”

The owners of Awaken Films donated their time to the video project and generous donations from friends, family and countless other people provided production funds.

“So many people came together to make this video happen,” Henke said. “It was awe-inspiring for us to see it all play out. We kept looking at each other like, ‘Is this really happening?’”

All of the characters in the video are either family members or friends of Henke and Rose, not professional actors.

Henke said Mabel Jones, who plays the lead role, provided an especially memorable moment during filming.

“On set the first day, we had wrapped a scene and people were saying things along the lines of,

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‘Wow...that was such a moving take, Mabel.’ She had this proud smile on her face and a tear in her eye and said, ‘I’m 86 and I had no idea until today that I could do this!’ I will never forget it,” Henke said.

Another favorite moment, he said, was playing a grand piano out in the middle of a Tennessee field for the nighttime outdoor tree scene.

Henke’s parents, Jim and Judy Henke, were also on the video set one day, helping with props, offering feedback and providing moral support.

Jim and Judy bought a home in Fairview, just outside Nashville, in 2010.

“One of the cool things for me is that my dad’s mother, Stella, and his brother, Lloyd, and also Lloyd’s wife, Louise—who are all gone now—are in a couple of the picture frames that are on top of my piano in the nighttime tree scene,” Henke said. “Even though they didn’t pass from Alzheimer’s, they no doubt still needed to be reminded how special they were from time to time when they were still with us.”

The song and video quickly became a hit with the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America.

“We thought it would be a perfect fit, so we reached out to them and almost immediately, they responded that they loved the song and wanted to use it and the video for many of their events throughout the year,” Henke said. “We’re honored that the foundation premiered the first public viewing of the video during a candlelight vigil at their 10th anniversary reception in New York City in May.”

The foundation has also featured the video on its web page. Reaction has been incredible and heartfelt.

“Jessica has told me stories about people who will come up to her at church and tell her how

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much the song means to them,” Henke said. “One woman said she gets up every morning and reads the lyrics to ‘I’ll Remind You’ before doing anything else to help remind her how to handle the situation of being a caretaker for her loved one with Alzheimer’s and the challenges the day may bring.”

That kind of impact is what Henke and Rose were hoping for from the beginning. “It means so much to be able to help generate awareness for a great cause,” Henke said. “It’s been such an honor to hear that the song is striking a chord and helping people to cope. If that’s all that ever comes of it, we’ll be very grateful to have affected people’s lives in a beneficial way through music.”

Henke continues to write, perform and produce music in Nashville.

He is working with Winfield’s Locket now on the duo’s second album.

Kevin Killen, who has worked with groups such as U2, Prince, Bon Jovi, Sugarland and others, has mixed the first two songs.

In addition, Henke was also one of the editors for Kenny Rogers’ autobiography, “Luck Or Something Like It – A Memoir,” which will be released in October.

“It’s always exciting to see what adventure may be coming next,” he said.

Being in the music business is exciting, despite some of the mundane things that have to be done during the day.

“It’s the creative process that is the most gratifying part of it all for me,” Henke said. “If we can create music for our children and grandchildren that they can hand down years after they were first created, I consider that to be something very special. We all want to make a mark and leave something behind that matters, and I think music is that for me.”