

# Lawyer, Songwriter Make Touching Music About Our Heroes

By Irene Seiberling  
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A songwriter and wills lawyer? Sound like an odd combination? Not really, insists Les Kotzer.

In fact, the Toronto-based wills lawyer, who writes lyrics on the side, considers them quite compatible.

Both focus on words, thinking and depth, and trying to analyse, he pointed out in a telephone interview from his Hogtown law office.

Add a five-time Juno award winner and Grammy nominee to the mix and what do you get? A hit, Kotzer hopes.

Kotzer teamed up with charismatic vocalist Alan Frew -- the voice of the internationally renowned recording group Glass Tiger -- to produce a tribute to heroes.

"Alan usually does his own stuff," Kotzer said.

But he made an exception in this case. As a favour to his friend Kotzer, Frew performed and produced "These are our Heroes."

The two men met when Frew walked into Kotzer's office because he needed to make a will.

Frew introduced himself. But Kotzer admitted, he really had no idea his new client was a 20-year veteran of the Canadian music industry.

"So I asked, 'What do you do for a living?' " Kotzer recalled.

And Frew pointed out he was a member of a very popular band -- Glass Tiger.

Kotzer told Frew how much he loved Glass Tiger, and how the lead singer of the group touched his heart.

"When I was down, he'd bring me up; when I was up, he would just inspire me. I would be so touched," Kotzer told Frew.

To which Frew replied: "Well, I was the lead singer," Kotzer recalled.

While he had Frew in his office, Kotzer asked if he would mind hearing his lyrics.

"He heard them. And we became good friends," Kotzer said.

Then one day, Kotzer asked Frew if he would honour him by performing the vocals for Kotzer's song honouring heroes.

Frew agreed to do this for his friend.

"And I believe he's made it into the ultimate tribute song," Kotzer said.

The original demo version of "These are our Heroes" was used in a documentary put out by the War Amps.

"I donated that song to them. I didn't want any money for it. They could just use the song," he said.

And while he agrees the song is a perfect fit for War Amps, Kotzer was quick to point out that it's meant to honour all sorts of heroes.

"I made the song so generic that it could be anybody's hero," he said. "It may be your mother's caregiver, it may be the nurse, it may be the coast guard, it may be the soldier, it may be the baseball player that changed your life because he talked on TV about how important it is to go straight and narrow, it may be your teacher."

The song isn't available on CD -- yet. But it will be available on iTunes shortly, Kotzer said. And people can go to his Web site for a listen, at [www.leskotzer.com](http://www.leskotzer.com) and click onto the link for his songs.

One thing has led to another, and as a result, Kotzer is moving more and more into the music industry.

When his song "Photos in a Drawer" -- dedicated to anybody who's lost somebody -- was played on a San Francisco radio station, Kotzer said he received 600 phone calls.

"One woman said she pulled over at the side of the road, on the freeway in California, because she said the song inspired her to call her sister, who she hadn't talked to in years," Kotzer said. "Because it's that kind of thought-provoking, family-provoking song."

"The most important asset you have isn't the money you have in the bank; it's those faces in those pictures, growing up with your brother and sister," he explained. "Don't forget about them when the time comes, after Mom passes away. That's your memories and you've got to cherish those."

Although songwriting is still just a sideline for Kotzer, he said: "Hopefully one day it will be a profession for me -- to be retained by people to write songs for them."

With that in mind, Kotzer has teamed up with some of the icons in the Canadian music industry to form a Canadian songwriting team.

Kotzer provides the lyrics. Lewis Manne does the music. And Greg Kavanagh handles production.

Manne, whose music credits include the popular TV show *Degrassi*, is a well-established cameraman/editor in the broadcast, commercial and video production industry. And Kavanagh -- a Juno award winner and winner of a MuchMusic Video Award -- is a world-class multi-instrumentalist, who has worked with such greats as David Foster, Aretha Franklin, Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt.

"This is an all-Canadian story," Kotzer proudly pointed out. "Our goal is to be able to write hit songs for other people ... I believe there's a lot of good stuff out there, but there's room for more."

"By the time summer's finished, I'll have about 10 songs," he said.

The next step is to find the right person, or people -- a group, a young artist, or an established artist -- to sing the songs.

"We want someone to come along and make signature songs out of them -- make them their own," Kotzer said.

The songwriting team is optimistic they've got some future hits on their hands.

Only time will tell.