

Keeping with the times

Emmy award-winning Medill prof produces music video with industry veterans to aid Sept. 11 relief efforts

BY MATT ALDERTON
The Daily Northwestern

It lasts only 4 minutes and 30 seconds, but it is a relief effort of much larger proportions.

Medill Asst. Prof. Gary Swanson is the executive producer and senior editor of the music video for a song called "In Times Like These." The song was written in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to inspire and lift the spirits of those affected all over the world.

The song and its video is a tribute to the attacks' survivors, and the proceeds will benefit relief funds in New York and Washington.

"In times like these we need to be strong, we need to carry on, we need to get along, hold on and right what's wrong," read the

opening lyrics to the song — words Swanson and his team have clearly taken to heart.

Swanson, an Emmy award-winning video producer and editor, is heading the effort to produce a music video to accompany the song, which was released on 2,300 CDs last week to radio stations across the nation.

The video will be finished within three weeks and will feature footage of Americans after the attacks. Swanson is negotiating to obtain powerful still photos from diverse sources, including Reuters, Rolling Stone and Vanity Fair magazines.

NBC News in Chicago has given him full access to its footage, a rare exception in a world of copyrights. In particular, Swanson hopes to incorporate into the video an image of middle school students reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agreements are being made with such companies as McDonald's, Kmart, Blockbuster and VH1 to sell the CD and the music video, which Swanson hopes to combine on a DVD.

"This is a national campaign and we want to try to reach the most widespread audiences that we can," he said.

"In Times Like These" was written by Emmy and Grammy award-winning composer, producer and lyricist Jim Tullio. It features the vocals of famed R&B and gospel singer Mavis Staples, a 1999 inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Chicago Music Community Choir.

"It's a beautiful song," Tullio said, adding that he hoped the song will make a successful transfer to a visual medium.

"In Times Like These" was born from the

desire of one woman, Vicki Esralew, president and founder of Vickilew.com, a Web site aimed at helping parents of young children.

Esralew enlisted the help of leaders in the music and video industries, and when Swanson was approached, he said he was happy to volunteer his time.

Swanson has given about six to eight hours a day, and as many as 12 hours during what he calls "crunch time," of video production.

"I wanted to find a way I could help the relief effort aside from giving money," he said. "A lot of people seem to think the initial giving is all they need to do."

Swanson said he thought people should give more to relief efforts.

"I have the abilities to do this (video editing) and I couldn't turn it down," he said.