RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS

REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

PERFORMING ARTS TOURING

Dust of Uruzgan

Fred Smith Productions

2014

ARTS VICTORIA

State Government Victoria

CONTENTS

This resource has been prepared by Regional Arts Victoria.

BASIC INFORMATION

DUST OF URUZGAN
Fred Smith Productions
Presented by Regional Arts Victoria's Performing Arts Touring program

Directed by Fred Smith
Performed by Fred Smith (narrator/singer)
Liz Frencham (singer/bassist)
Carl Panuzzo/Pete Olsen (drums)

The performance runs for approximately 90 minutes without an interval and can be shortened for schools audiences to accompany workshops.

2014 TOUR DATES

Thursday, 24 April	Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, Nowra, NSW
Saturday, 26 April	Townsville Civic Theatre, QLD
Monday, 28 April	Cairns Centre of Contemporary Arts, QLD
Saturday, 12 July	Riverside Theatre, Parramatta NSW
Saturday, 26 July	Glen Street Theatre, NSW
Tuesday, 27 May	Old Bendigo Fire Station, VIC
Wednesday, 28 May	Elmore Memorial Hall, VIC
Thursday, 29 May	Heathcote RSL Public Hall, VIC
Friday, 30 May	Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall, VIC
Saturday, 31 May	Theatre Royal, Castlemaine, VIC
Tuesday, 3 June	Burnie Civic Theatre, TAS
Wednesday, 4 June	Earl Arts Centre, TAS
Thursday, 5 June	Peacock Theatre, Salamanca, TAS
Saturday, 7 June	Tallarook Mechanics Institute, VIC
Monday 9 June	Wesley Performing Arts Centre, Horsham VIC
Tuesday, 10 June	Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, VIC
Thursday, 12 June	Portland Arts Centre, VIC
Friday, 13 June	Casterton Town Hall, VIC
Saturday, 14 June	Stawell Bowling Club, VIC
Thursday, 19 June	Burrinja Arts and Cultural Centre, VIC
Friday, 20 June	The Memo, Healesville, VIC
Saturday, 21 June	Montrose Town Centre, VIC
August 2014	Western Australian venues with Country Arts WA

Please contact individual venues for booking enquiries

SYNOPSIS

Dust of Uruzgan revolves around the performance of a collection of songs written by Iain 'Fred' Smith during his two years working as a diplomat and political advisor alongside Australian Forces in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

On returning from his first trip to Afghanistan, he released these songs on the acclaimed album *Dust of Uruzgan*, described in the Sydney Morning Herald as "*a cycle of songs that are raw, remarkably honest and suitably ambivalent about the nature of war… a collection of songs that offers an intimate perspective on the war in Afghanistan*." The recording has earned Smith comparisons to Eric Bogle, John Schumann and Don Walker. His music became legendary on the Multinational Base in Tarin Kowt.

In the ***Dust of Uruzgan*** performance, a stunning series of projected photographs from Afghanistan accompany his performance of songs from the album. As well as photographs and songs, Fred weaves in stories of life on the base, and of living and working in Uruzgan province. His tale accompanying the song N*iet Swaffelen op de Dixi* is a humorous and light hearted look at life on the base whilst the story behind the writing of *Sappers' Lullaby* pulls at the heartstrings. The powerful imagery of the photographs taken by military and civilian photographers, combined with the narrative and songs, provides the audience with a rare and candid insight into life in a war zone.

The show has been described as "*an incredibly articulate and witty commentary of Smith's experiences in the troubled country, punctuated with some of the most meaningful song writing you're ever likely to encounter in Australian music"*. The larrikin spirit is well and truly alive in Smith's work. His wry humour and masterful story telling eases the audience through some harsh and complex terrain. Through his commentary and songs, Smith deftly sets the war in its historical and political context, looking at the situation through the eyes of Australian soldiers, as well as from the point of view of Afghans who have struggled to survive 35 years of war and chaos.

Dust of Uruzgan touches hearts with humour, honesty and a delicacy befitting its grounding in the harsh realities of this difficult war. As the mission in Uruzgan draws to a close, this show is an important offering for an Australian public eager to understand what it was all about. Between 2014 and 2018 Australia will commemorate the ANZAC Centenary, marking 100 years since our nation's involvement in the First World War. Regional Arts Victoria are looking forward to aligning the ***Dust of Uruzgan*** performances with local centenary events – further reinforcing the relevance of this project.

ABOUT THIS PERFORMANCE

There is a deep fascination in Australian society with the experiences of Australians at war. Many of our grandfathers and fathers served in World War II or Vietnam. Growing numbers attend ANZAC Day ceremonies in Australia and overseas. The stories of our soldiers abroad are said to have shaped the national identity. Despite this, Australians and Australian students may not always have a real grasp of the situation in Afghanistan, and what life is like for our young men and women on the ground.

Fred Smith's ***Dust of Uruzgan*** harnesses the unique ability of song to convey what words alone cannot – an emotional sense of life for soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan. The show uses a powerful combination of great song-writing, an extraordinary collection of photographs and first-hand accounts of life on the front line to offer students a three dimensional sensory experience of life as a soldier in Afghanistan: the dust, the heat, the frustration, the camaraderie, the fighting and the mundane day-to-day. ***Dust of Uruzgan*** is a rare opportunity for Australians to get an insight from someone who was there. It succeeds in providing this insight, not through lectures and headlines, but through witty storytelling, clever song writing and an extraordinary array of images.

Dust of Uruzgan does not seek to glorify war, or lionise our diggers. Nor does it seek to overwhelm the audience with an anti-war message. It tells the experiences of our soldiers, as well as that of Afghans, with accuracy, delicacy and detail born of direct experience.

Schools are offered a choice of three companion workshops for senior school students:

1. Writing and arranging Australian contemporary songs
Looking at the great Australian narrative song writing tradition from Lawson to Kev Carmody to Paul Kelly, this workshop teaches students how to build songs that tell stories dealing with issues in their own communities. Uniquely Australian, this style of storytelling song writing is rarely taught and will provide students with a once in a lifetime opportunity to learn from a master of the art form.

2. Australian involvement in peacekeeping
While armies have traditionally been built for state-on-state conflict, the Australian military, since 1996, has been involved in a series of peacekeeping missions to help stabilise fragile states such as in East Timor, Bougainville, Solomon Islands, and Afghanistan. This workshop examines how and why we have become involved in these missions and discusses what is it like to live in a society where government has lost control of law and order and competing armed groups struggle for power.

3. Australian involvement in Afghanistan
Half lecture, half concert, this workshop discusses the Australian involvement in Afghanistan from its origins in post-9/11 global politics to the withdrawal from Uruzgan Province in December 2013.

The *Dust of Uruzgan* album has been popular amongst young soldiers within the Australian Defence Force who have made over a dozen music clips for the song attaching their own photographs to the title track. The song Sappers' Lullaby has been played at ramp ceremonies and memorial services from Forward Operating Base Hadrian in Deh Rawud district of Uruzgan to the Enogerra Barracks. Throughout this pack we encourage students to express themselves creatively, another excellent exercise is to ask students to put together their own video clip of images to one of Fred's songs.

The following education resource acts as a companion to both the performance and workshops and provides links to the Australian Curriculum and VCE studies. It has been compiled by Emily Atkins based on original ideas and writings by Fred Smith.

BIOGRAPHIES

FRED SMITH

"Fred Smith is the most interesting folk musician working in Australia. In tune with the times and prepared to reach beyond predictable folk formats, he is endlessly innovative and creative. He is also very funny"
Bruce Elder, Sydney Morning Herald

"Fred Smith is one of this country's most literate, humorous, intelligent and empathic songwriters."
Warwick McFadyen, the Sunday Age

Over the last 15 years Fred Smith has emerged as one of Australia's most interesting songwriters. He has spent the last 15 years working on peace keeping missions in Afghanistan and the South Pacific, touring in America and travelling the Australian festival circuit.

He is the subject of the film *Bougainville Sky* about his time in the war-torn islands of the South Pacific where his work as a musician and radio broadcaster contributed to the success of the world's first unarmed peace keeping force. He is also the subject of an ABC *Australian Story* Documentary released in October 2013.

Fred was the first Australian diplomat to be posted to Uruzgan in July of 2009. He wrote a powerful collection of songs about the realities of life for soldiers and civilians in this difficult war, recently released as the highly acclaimed album *Dust of Uruzgan*.

He has release multiple CDs, two of which won National Film and Sound Archives Awards. Some were joint efforts with Liz Frencham and the Spooky Men's Chorale.

In parallel with all this, he has maintained a career with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He lives in Canberra with his wife Maryanne.

LIZ FRENCHAM

"Frencham has a voice with all the appeal, emotional honesty and clarity of someone like Shawn Colvin or Mary Chapin Carpenter. Yes, really, she is that good."
Bruce Elder, Sydney Morning Herald

Liz Frencham is a veteran of festival stages across the country (with acts like Jigzag, Frencham Smith & Devlish Mary). She easily traverses genres from folk and bluegrass through to jazz and blues with gentle expertise and plenty of good humoured banter to accompany the journey.

Liz studied Jazz performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and has been working full time as a musician for over 15 years. She is an experienced session double-bassist & vocalist who has been employed by professional musicians nationally and internationally. Her natural habitat, however, is the stage. She has become an audience favourite on the music festival circuit whether performing alone, with Sydney band Jigzag, award winning songwriter Fred Smith, Melbourne's first all girl Old Timey outfit Dev'lish Mary, iconic vaudeville showman Mic Conway or 2010 National Flat pick guitar champion Robbie Long. She is also a regular guest of visiting international performers like BBC award winners Chris While and Julie Matthews, and Gregory Page.

CURRICULUM LINKS

VCE STUDY LINKS

STUDY	OUTCOME	SPECIFIC
Australian and Global Politics	Unit 2: The global citizen, Outcome 2	On completion of this unit the student should be able to describe and analyse the extent to which the international community is cohesive, and whether it can effectively manage cooperation, conflict and instability in relation to selected case studies.
	Unit 3: Global Actors, Outcome 1	On completion of this unit the student should be able to evaluate the power and influence of key global actors in the twenty-first century and assess the extent to which they achieve their aims.
English / EAL	Unit 1, Outcome 1	On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify and discuss key aspects of a set text, and to construct a response in oral or written form.
	Unit 1, Outcome 2	On completion of this unit the student should be able to create and present texts taking account of audience, purpose and context.
	Unit 3, Outcome 3	On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the use of language in texts that present a point of view on an issue currently debated in the Australian media, and to construct, orally or in writing, a sustained and reasoned point of view on the selected issue.

CURRICULUM LINKS

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

SUBJECT	MODE	DESCRIPTION
ENGLISH	Reading and Viewing	Language: • Compare the purposes, text structures and language features of traditional and contemporary texts in different media (ACELA1566) • Understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and mode of communication (ACELA1565) Literature: • Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1639) • Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses (ACELT1643) • Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812) Literacy: • Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749) • Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences (ACELY1752)
	Writing	Literature: • Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACELT1644) Literacy: • Create sustained texts, including texts that combine specific digital or media content, for imaginative, informative, or persuasive purposes that reflect upon challenging and complex issues (ACELY1756)

FRED SMITH'S NOTES ON AFGHANISTAN

"In 2001, Afghanistan lay bleeding. The country had been in steady decline since a coup deposed long serving king Shah Masood in 1973. The Soviet Union invaded the country in 1979, but struggled for ten years to control it losing 30,000 soldiers in a long and bitter campaign that contributed to the eventual dissolution of the USSR. After the Russian withdrawal in 1989, there followed another period of chaos and violence during which competing Afghan warlords and their militias fought one another for control of the country.

Into this power vacuum entered the Taliban, an ultra-Islamic Conservative organisation that initially earned widespread support amongst a nation of people weary of chaos and exploitative local warlords. With this popular support, the Taliban swept to power and took Kabul in 1996. There was some optimism at the time that the new regime would at least be able to maintain basic law and order in Afghanistan so people could get on with their lives. But the Taliban were brutal. The Regime introduced Draconian laws limiting the civil liberties of citizens. Women were forbidden to walk the streets except in the company of men and always with their faces and bodies fully covered with the traditional Afghan Chedari (Burkha). Recreational activities such as kite flying, dancing, music and movies were all banned. These laws were all enforced with public executions in town squares and football stadiums. Meanwhile the economy got even worse, exacerbated by anti-modernist economic management and three years of severe drought. All of these conditions contributed to a mass exodus of Afghans from their homeland such that by 2001 there were 3.1 million Afghan refugees dispersed into Pakistan and Iran, and for those who could make it, into the Western world.

By 2001, there were compelling humanitarian reasons for the international community to try to do something about the growing issues in Afghanistan. In an increasingly connected world, the problems of Afghan state failure had become everyone's problems - terrorism, narcotics, massive refugee flows. The attacks in Manhattan on September 11, 2001 by terrorists from the Al Qaeda organisation supported by the Taliban made this impossible to ignore and sparked a UN sanctioned international mission to do something to help the people of Afghanistan and depose the reign of the Taliban.

50 nations joined the mission including all the countries of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization: www.nato.int/nato-welcome), New Zealand and Canada. Iran, India and China could not get involved but were supportive. Invited by the U.S. and the international community, Australia simply could not have stood by idly. For a middle-sized power with the interests, alliances, and allegiances we've got, doing nothing wasn't an option. The only question was going to be the scale and focus of our contribution, and this is what the government has been wrestling with ever since.

Initially Australian Special Forces were involved in operations that began in October 2001 to drive the Taliban out of Afghanistan. This only took a few months, but Australian soldiers remained in Afghanistan in 2002. In 2003, the U.S. led an alliance of other nations into Iraq on the grounds that Saddam Hussein's regime was harbouring weapons of mass destruction. Australia committed troops to this mission, which absorbed U.S. and U.K. resources and saw over 3000 coalition troops killed in action. The Iraq mission distracted the international community's attention from the job in Afghanistan, and in the period between 2003 and 2006 Taliban members, funded by and harboured in Pakistan, began to reassert control of rural areas in Afghanistan, particularly in the south and east of the country. Realising there was a problem, in 2006 Western nations increased their commitments to the International Assistance Force Afghanistan (ISAF).

Nations other than the U.S. focused their military efforts on particular provinces in Afghanistan as part of a sensible enough international division of labour. The Australian government agreed to send around 400 soldiers to work in a Reconstruction taskforce in the Uruzgan province in the south of Afghanistan in support

FRED SMITH'S NOTES ON AFGHANISTAN

of a larger Dutch mission which had begun in 2006. The Australians worked as junior partners to the Dutch until the summer of 2010, when the Dutch withdrew to be replaced by American soldiers. Between 2010 and 2013 Australia partnered with the U.S. in a joint U.S.-Australian effort in the province. During this time the Australian military commitment to Uruzgan increased to around 1100 soldiers, with an average of 1550 soldiers in Afghanistan at the peak of the commitment. Forty Australian soldiers have been killed in southern Afghanistan, while 260 soldiers and two Australian government civilians have been wounded.

As the broader mission evolved, it became clear that, important as the military effort was, the long-term solutions to Afghanistan's problems were political and economic. So civilians from the Australian Foreign Affairs Department (DFAT), AusAID and the Australian Federal Police were sent to Uruzgan province in 2009. These officers worked in an Australian run Provincial Reconstruction Team, responsible for assisting with the improvement of the provincial government and providing development assistance to the province in terms of roads, education, agriculture, and governance."

Fred Smith was the first DFAT officer (diplomat) to be sent to Uruzgan in July 2009.

NB: The notes above contain sections based in opinion and do not necessarily reflect the views of Regional Arts Victoria or its partners.

FRED SMITH'S NOTES ON AFGHANISTAN

DEEPER THINKING:

- Do the above statistics about the number of Australian casualties in Afghanistan surprise you? Why or why not? How these numbers compare to previous wars Australia has been involved in?

- There is much debate at the moment on the place of the Burkha (Burqa) in Western society and what it means to feminism and modern culture. Read the following article from the IISNA (http://www.iisna.com/articles/pamphlets/the-burqa-and-niqab-uncovering-the-facts/) and consider:
    - What is the difference between a Burkha and other forms of Islamic dress?
    - Why do you think it is so controversial?
    - What is your personal view on the Burkha? Why or why not?
    - What is your view on the Taliban's enforcement of certain types of dress? Why or why not?

- Imagine that you are a young person living in Afghanistan in 2001. Based on the ideas above consider:
    - How do you think your current lifestyle would be different?
    - What freedoms would you no longer have?
    - What attitude do you think you would have to NATO involvement in your country? Why or why not?

- Using Fred Smith's ideas above, as well as the information provided by the ABC (http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-29/was-australias-role-in-the-afghan-war-worth-it/5056376) consider:
    - Did the Australian government make the right decision (in 2001 and again in 2006) in deciding to get involved in the international community's missions in Afghanistan? Why or why not?

- Understandably, many people want to leave countries such as Afghanistan, which is in constant conflict.
    - How many refugees do you think flee Afghanistan each year?
    - How many refugees do you think flee other countries each year?
    - How many refugees do you think enter Australia each year? The US? UK? Other countries?

  Check the statistics at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/stat-int.php to see how close you were.
    - Does the reality surprise you? Why or why not?
    - Do you think Australia is doing enough? Why or why not?

- What do you think is the impact of ongoing conflict on the economy of a country? Why do you think this?

  Read through the information at (http://www.economicshelp.org/blog/2180/economics/economic-impact-of-war/) and (http://costsofwar.org/article/economic-cost-summary)
    - Do you think the economic benefits of war are worth it? Why or why not?
    - Which figures surprised you the most?

- Why do you think countries like Afghanistan experience constant conflict, while countries like Australia are relatively peaceful?

  Read the following ideas from the World Bank (http://www.worldbank.org/html/cgiar/newsletter Sept97/10ifpri.html) and consider:
    - What do you think can be done about the underlying problems that lead to instability?
    - Is it just the 'luck of the draw' or do you think countries like Australia and the US have influence over unstable countries?
    - What responsibilities do you think Australia has to countries such as Afghanistan? Explain.

FRED SMITH'S NOTES ON DIPLOMACY

I worked in Uruzgan province for 18 months from mid 2009 to the beginning of 2011, then returned in May 2013 and worked there until the mission ended in November 2013. I was sent by DFAT to work as a Political Adviser responsible for building relationships with provincial government officials and tribal leaders in order to understand what was going on in the province, build trust and cooperation with them, and where possible influence them in positive directions. This was what needed to happen for the broader mission to succeed, but it was also critical for the security of Australian troops. Security in Afghanistan is the product of being well armed, but also of good relationships. In the villages where, for whatever reason, we weren't able to build cooperative relationships with tribal leaders, the Taliban had a home ground advantage and Australian soldiers were in danger.

As the network of relationships spread, the safety and surety with which our soldiers were able to operate increased. This helped the soldiers and police mentors to set up the network of checkpoints and patrol bases through the valleys of Uruzgan, which are now manned by the Afghan forces.

…a typical day in Fred's own words:
Meetings and writing. For a while there I was based in a Forward Operating Base 40 km north of the provincial capital of Uruzgan province. I'd wake up in this 12-man tent that I shared with a team of 11 American soldiers who were effectively my bodyguards. We'd scratch and fart around till around 0930 then form up on the pile of rocks near the canvas shower block. Then the 'terp' (interpreter) would show up and we'd head out the gate and through the dusty town of Ali Sherzai in formation with the boys glaring outwards through their ballistic sunglasses directing traffic and sheep out of our way and me in the middle waving and smiling at the villagers like Ronald MacDonald. We would meet with the District Chief down at the District Centre and yarn with whoever else was there about what could be done about this problem or that, before heading home for lunch. In the afternoon, local leaders would come by the base to talk about projects they needed help with, or to see what we could do about Taliban harassment two valleys to the east, or to complain about other local leaders. At 1730 I'd go down to the Command Post for the daily brief/ debrief with the command team. I'd spend the night writing reports about all the conversations I had had for headquarters on main base in the provincial capital (Tirin Kowt).

That was a typical day, but every now and then, out of the blue, on a bright summer's morning, something would happen. One day a couple of guys from the tent next door got killed in an IED strike down in the valley just to the south of our FOB. Another day, a tribal leader we were working with was killed by a suicide bomber, another day 800 Afghans showed up in front of the base yelling, chanting and throwing rocks to protest about some wacko priest in Florida they had heard about who was planning a disproportionately publicised "International Burn a Quran Day". Weird stuff and hard to predict.

Watch this episode of ABC's Australian Story about Fred Smith's work as a diplomat (http://www.abc.net.au/austory/specials/asapperslullaby/default.htm)

- Why do you think government civilian officers are considered necessary to support a mission like this?
- What impact do you think their presence might have on communities after they leave?
- What, specifically, do you think makes Fred Smith's diplomatic impact unique?

THE SONGS

Track 1. Dust of Uruzgan
In July 2009, passing through the United Arab Emirates on my way into Afghanistan, I attended a memorial service for Ben Ranaudo, a young guy from Springvale, Victoria. This was the first of over a dozen memorial services and ramp ceremonies I went to in my 18 month stint working for Foreign Affairs in Uruzgan Province, Southern Afghanistan. You never really get used to them, but I had just arrived and was unprepared.

In the months that followed, through conversations with staff in the headquarters of the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force, I developed some understanding of what happened on the morning of 18 July, 2009, when Ben was killed. I read the unclassified version of the Commission of Inquiry Report into the incident when it was released in December that year, and found myself imagining an interview between the colonel who wrote the report and one of Ben's mates, a guy called Paul.

In the ring they called me "Warlord", my mother calls me Paul, you can call me Private Warren when you're filing your report. As to how I came to be here, this is what I understand, in this hospital in Germany from the dust of Uruzgan.

I had just turned 28, just bought a new car when I joined the first Battalion of the big 1 RAR. We were next up for deployment into south Afghanistan to combat the insurgence in the dust of Uruzgan.

It took seven months of training just to get into the joint, there were pushups and procedures, there was death by power point. Then the RSO&I course in Ali Al Salaam, but nothing can prepare you for the dust of Uruzgan.

Me and Benny sat together flying into Kandahar.
Sucked back on our near beers in the Camp Baker Bar. Then up at 0530, and on the Herc and out in twenty flying minutes we were into Tarin Kowt.

We shook hands as the boys RIPped out from MRTF 1 and pretty soon were out patrolling in the Afghan summer sun. Walking through the green zone with a Steyr in my hand. Body armor chafing through the dust of Uruzgan.

We started up near Chora working 14 hours a day
mentoring a Kandak from the Afghan 4th brigade.
Down through the Baluchi into eastern Dorafshan
working under open skies in the dust of Uruzgan
It's a long, long way from Townsville, not like any place you'll see – suddenly you're walking through the 14th century. Women under burkhas, tribal warlords rule a land full of goats, and huts and jingle trucks is the dust of Uruzgan.

And the Education Minister can neither read nor write, and the Minister for Women runs a knock shop there at night. They've been fighting there for ever over water, food and land, murdering each other in the dust of Uruzgan.

There's nothing about the province that's remotely fair or just, but worse than the corruption is the endless

THE SONGS

fucking dust. Fine as talcum powder on the ground and in the air and it gets in to your eyes and it gets into your hair.
And it gets into your weapon and it gets into your boots. When the bureaucrats all show up there it gets into their suits. It gets in the machinery and foils every plan. There's something quite symbolic about the dust of Uruzgan
Still the people can be gracious and they're funny and they're smart. And when the children look into your eyes they walk into your heart. They face each day with courage and each year without a plan beyond scratching for survival in the dust of Uruzgan.

But the Taliban are ruthless, they keep the people terrorized with roadside bombs and hangings and leaving letters in the night. And they have no useful vision for the children of this land, but to keep them praying on their knees in the dust of Uruzgan.

It was a quiet Saturday morning when the '2 Shop' made a call on a compound of interest to the east of COP Mashal. We had some information they were building IEDs so we cordoned and we searched it in accord with SOPs.

I was on the west flank picket, propped there with Ben, there to keep a watchful eye out while the other blokes went in. We looked for signs of danger from the TTPs we'd learned but the Nationals were moving back and forth without concern.

We'd been standing still for hours when I took a quick step back. Kicked a small AP mine and everything went black. I woke up on a gurney, flat out on my back. I had to ask them seven times just to get the facts.

I lived to tell the story through a simple twist of fate – the main charge lay ten feet away from the pressure plate. You see the mine was linked by det cord to a big charge laid by hand, hidden under Benny by the dust of Uruzgan.

I was a Queensland champ Thai Boxer now I look south of my knee, and all I see is bed sheets where my right foot used to be. Benny's dead and buried underneath Australian sand, but his spirit's out there wandering through the dust of Uruzgan.

Now I'm going back to Townsville it's the city of my birth. Some go back to Ballarat and some go back to Perth. I'll be living with my mother who's still trying to understand why we're spending blood and treasure in the dust of Uruzgan.

THE SONGS

Track 2. Live Like an Afghan
Working as a Political Advisor gave me cause and opportunity to spend a lot of time with Afghans. This was mostly a great pleasure. Afghan men are full of mirth, gracious and courteous (except for when they're not). One could swing between being full of admiration for their resilience and geniality, and appalled by their bickering and duplicity, or hearsay of their sexual practices.

In the end, it's better to understand than to judge and one thing that is certainly true about Afghans is that in a country with a life expectancy of 44 you are dealing with a race of survivors. In this fiercely competitive tribal environment, the management of allegiances and alliances is key to a person's survival. So if they seem a bit artful about it, it is because they probably need to be.

Working in Afghanistan, you learn something new and surprising every day. It's like peeling off layers of blindfolds. But in the end, we can never really know what it's like to live like an Afghan.

When I live, I want to live like an Afghan, live like an Afghan lives.
Walk tall as the rockets are falling around me, laugh as they barely miss.
If you meet me in the streets of Kandahar then greet me with a bearded kiss.
We shall live yes we shall live like the Afghans, live like the Afghans live.

When I dance, I want to dance like an Afghan, dance like the Afghans dance.
Never know what's going to happen tomorrow, this could be our last chance.
So shake your hips and swing my hands to heaven, let your feet pound the dusty floor
Wake in the morning to tea and some flat bread, get stuck back in to the war.

When I love I want to love like an Afghan, love like the Afghans do.
Everybody needs someone to love and today I'm in love with you.
Meet the boys on a Thursday evening but a man needs a wife or two.
When I love I want to love like the Afghans love like the Afghans do.

When I fight I want to fight like an Afghan, fight like the Afghans fight.
Kiss your cheek if we should meet in the market out in the broad daylight.
Cut your throat under the cover of darkness with a courteous flick of the wrist.
Manners matter when you fight like an Afghan, fight like the Afghans live.

When I die I want to die like an Afghan, die like an Afghan dies.
Hope there'll be someone present who loves me to brush away all the flies.

In the end you might go with a whisper, or a bang like our dear Massoud.
Either way I want to die like an afghan, die like an afghan would.
In the end you know these things happen and you'll want to get on with it.
When I die I want to die like an Afghan, die like an Afghan lives.

THE SONGS

Track 3. Taliban Fighting Man
There is a tendency in the folksong genre to depict soldiers as victims. Perhaps this is a fair take on past wars where conscripted men were sent to fight. Coalition soldiers in Afghanistan come from volunteer armies, and in my experience, a lot of them actually enjoy soldiering. The bonds of friendship formed in the intensity of these environments are like no other.

Having said that, the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan have put a massive strain on people in the U.S. military. In August-September 2010, I worked and lived mainly with American soldiers; many on their fourth tours of the Middle East doing year-long rotations with only two weeks leave. A lot of them were pretty tired, stressed, and traumatised and I reckon there's clearly3a lot of hurt on the home front too.

There's no airport bar in Kandahar where the C-130s land. It was hot as hell in that concrete shell where the Taliban took a last stand. I was staring at the screen of the Coke machine with a weariness deep in my bones. Waiting out there for a bird to take me home.

Onto the scene came a big Marine and sat down next to me. He said: "The name is Roy and I'm here deployed with the Delta Company. We had just got back from northern Iraq when the General got on the phone. Now I've got two weeks leave up my sleeve and I'm waiting for the bird back home.

Well I've fought this year from Kush Kadir down to Kandahar. A lot of fighting patrols but as far as I know I ain't been killed so far. Gotta trust in fate but step out the gate with my M4 clean and honed. So much fun who the hell would want to go home.

Us boys go strange living downrange no women there to keep you tame. You shit in a bag, gotta read your dog-tag to remember your own first name. And sharing a tent with 15 men means you never have to feel alone. So many friends who the hell would want to go home?!

But when the rounds come in and the 50 CALs spin and your bowels move with the fear. You learn to depend on those new best friends 'cause your mother can't help you here. If you come to harm it's those brothers in arms who pack your toothbrush and comb into a box, with your iPod and sox when they send your busted body back home.

I got a pissed-off wife but I guess that's life for a Taliban fighting man. She's got her hands full putting kids through school god I do my best to understand. When she gets on the phone saying 'how's it goin'?' man I don't wanna get her stressed.
But how to explain that the two-way range can put a boy a little on edge.
Home on leave brings some reprieve but the couple weeks can leave you cold. Get a new tattoo, jetlagged and confused not to mention my six year old. Who knows his dad from a photograph and a voice on the end of the phone saying 'pretty soon son your daddy'll be coming on home'.

Still this ain't no blues it's the life that I choose of a Taliban fighting man. Some days it's a joy being out here with the boys hanging with my brotherly band
I do my best and I don't forget it was them that threw the first stone. Man so much fun who the hell would want to go home."

Then his flight got called and he stood up tall and said "I'd best be on my way". I said good luck because I know it can suck being home for only 14 days. There's war and peace but the war don't cease when you're back in the domestic zone, so much fun who the hell would want to go home.

THE SONGS

Track 4. Sapper's Lullaby

My job in Uruzgan was to talk to provincial officials and tribal chiefs to encourage them to cooperate with us and, as much as possible, with each other. This meant getting out beyond the wire, which I couldn't have done without the protection and mobility provided by the Drivers, Gunners and Sappers (combat engineers). I had a particular respect for the Sappers whose role was to travel out the front of the patrol looking forward through the dust and debris for anything that could be an IED, and if they found one, to deal with it.

I was working in my office at 11:15am on 7 June 2010, when I heard someone up the corridor call out "two category A's!". Shortly afterwards, the welfare phone lines and internet were cut. This is one of the first things that happens on the Multinational Base in Tarin Kowt when a soldier gets wounded or killed, and often the first you know about it. It's done to enable the Commanding Officer to contact the families before they find out through social media or the Channel 7 News. The soldier's body gets flown back to the main base and placed in the morgue in the Role 2 Medical Facility. His mates post a vigil – a guard of honor – outside the morgue day and night for two or three days while arrangements are made for repatriation. A memorial service is held followed by a Ramp Ceremony at which everyone on base lines the road out to the flight line, saluting as the casket passes.

The northern summer of 2010 was particularly tough in Uruzgan. We lost 10 men in three months. Snowy and Smithy were the first to go on that June morning, killed by an IED while leading a patrol in the Mirabad Valley. I wrote this song after attending the ramp ceremony on 9 June, and we played it at a concert in the Poppy's barbecue area on 11 June.

Up past the Role 2, and down through the gate, out to the flight line. We stood in the sun, slouch hat and gun, as two caskets passed us by.
And followed the Padre, onto the 'Herc', and out into the pale summer sky. We walked back to Poppy's, then went back to work, with the dust still in our eyes.

So soldiers, sing me, a Sapper's lullaby
You give it your all, knowing if you should fall That all good things must die

These young engineers, whose job is to clear, the roads that we may pass. They're always out front, and when they bear the brunt, it happens fast.

Sapper D. Smith had a wife and a son, the apple of his eye. Snowy Moerland was just 21, way too young to die.

So go call your mother, call your old man, on that welfare line. Tell them you love them, while you still can, 'cause all good things must die.

THE SONGS

Track 5. Zeebrugge FOB

Just to the west of Uruzgan, Helmand province has been the scene of some of the toughest fighting in the Afghanistan war. It is Taliban heartland and the source of an estimated 42% of the world's opium supply. ISAF has devoted a lot of attention to the province. While the military aspects of the war get a lot of media coverage, part of what the Coalition is trying to do is help build the Afghan economy and state. A focus of these efforts in Helmand has been the Kajaki Dam, initially built by USAID in the early years of the Cold War.

In September 2008, more than 4,000 international and Afghan personnel took part in a five-day operation to transport a massive hydro-electricity turbine more than 100 miles through Taliban territory to Kajaki. The turbine is eventually expected to supply electricity to around 1.5 million people in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. The Taliban see any evolution away from subsistence agriculture and the narcotics economy as a threat, so British and American forces have been fiercely defending Kajaki ever since from a Forward Operating Base (FOB) called Zeebrugge. This song is based on a true story about some soldiers who are operating from Zeebrugge FOB in October 2010.

My name is Ryan Yeaton I'm from Maryland Heights. Born and raised in Missouri and I came out here to fight. With the India Battery, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marines. Now deployed here in Kajaki at Zeebrugge FOB.

This broken little province that I find I'm fighting for sends more opium than Burma to the ports of Baltimore and the Taliban and the drug lords keep the place a goddam mess. I swear I am a fighter but right now I must confess that

I've had enough I can't take anymore, right now I just want to be home far away from this forsaken war, not fighting from Zeebrugge FOB

USAID built the dam here back in 1953 to tame the Helmand river for the electricity. We were sent to Kajaki and its here we take our stand to defend the plant and turbine from an angry Taliban.

But if we stayed inside the FOB we would become a sitting duck. So we get out on patrol and trust our mettle and our luck. I got a sweet little daughter to a woman that I love. When a man's got a family feeling lucky ain't enough

We were out there patrolling on October 19
When they killed Francisco Jackson with another IED. We sent his body back to Dover and the sacrificial flame. Man I knew him as a brother now I fight on in his name

So when I've had enough and can't take anymore and home is where I want to be. I go clean my weapon and back up for more.
Still fighting from Zeebrugge FOB

THE SONGS

Track 6. A Thousand Splendid Suns
In my 18 month stint in Afghanistan, I can only remember talking to an Afghan woman once. That was up in Kabul, which is far more liberal than the Pashtun south. Women are very much confined to the home in Afghanistan, but this hasn't always been the case. Photos from Kabul in the 60's and 70's show women walking around freely, attending university and dressing in Western fashions. The Russians were actually quite proactive in promoting the rights of women in their ten year rule between 1979-89. That all went radically backwards when the Taliban took control of the city in 1996.

There is some good literature around on the lives of women in Afghanistan. I can recommend My Forbidden Face by Latifa, Bookseller of Kabul by Åsne Seierstad, the Kabul Beauty School by Deborah Rodriguez, and A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini. Be warned though, none of these make light reading.

"Ah! How beautiful is Kabul encircled by her arid mountains. One could not count the moons that shimmer on
her roofs, and the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls."
...from 'Kabul' by Saib-e-Tabrizi (17th Century poet)

I too had worked a long day, behind this high compound wall. Felt the evening breeze, and took some time to recall.

Seems like a long time ago, back when this city was green. We walked the streets of Kabul, were not afraid to be seen.

Now hid behind these walls a thousand splendid suns a mind and hopeful heart behind each veil.

The Russians came from the north, with their tanks and their planes. Kabul took no time to fall, for years the Communists reigned. But the countryside held, and killed enough of their men, until they finally left, then trouble started again.

The Mudj turned in on themselves, whoever guessed that they would. Dostum, Sayyaf, and Fahim, Hekmatyer and Massoud.
The rockets rained from the south, so many long nights of fear before the Talibs swept in, Kalishnikovs and long beards.

Why did this struggle begin? When will this war ever end? A time of triumph of sin, a time of dangerous men. The soldier down by the road, asked his friend for a light. Smoked a quick cigarette, then wondered home for the night.

THE SONGS

Track 7. Better Soldier

I was just a boy of 38, no one ever taught me to shoot straight
Getting by on spin and comedy, you made a better soldier out of me

I was just a jumping joking jock, could not get my shit into one sock
Now I even do my own laundry, you made a better soldier out of me

I was Superman without a cape, my mind was closed my fly always agape
A clever dick without a dictionary, you made a better soldier out of me
Was writing songs with words too long to face, now I write 'em all in TLA's
MSU was just my SOP, you made a better soldier out of me.

You came in and bashed down my front door, got me doing push-ups on the floor
Even made me turn off my TV, you made a better soldier out of me.

I've said most of what I've got to say, time to let the trumpet player play
Excuse me while I make a cup of tea …

So come on baby give me your best shot, do that and I'll give you all I've got
I ain't the type to get down on one knee, but you made a better soldier out of me.

THE SONGS

Track 8. Niet Swaffelen op de Dixi
In 2005, when NATO countries were called on to increase their commitment to Afghanistan, the Netherlands took the lead nation role in Uruzgan province. Australia took on a supporting role focused on infrastructure reconstruction and mentoring the Fourth Brigade of the Afghan National Army. The Dutch are pisstakers too, so we generally got on well with them.

There were, however, some aspects of Dutch culture that offended the refined sensibilities of the Australian soldier, including their fierce proclivity for wearing Lycra and the widespread practice of 'swaffelen'. This practice was popularized a few years ago in Holland when footage of a young Dutch tourist swaffelen the Taj Mahal went viral on YouTube. It is beneath the dignity of this project to explain what the verb 'swaffelen' means. You're welcome to Google it if you're curious.

Suffice to say, the problem was serious enough for me to write this song in an attempt to stop Dutch soldiers from swaffelen in the shared portaloos (known as 'Dixis') that proliferated around the base. While some blame the disintegration of the Netherlands' political coalition in support of the war, in fact it was my proscription of Dixi swaffelen that broke the will of the Dutch military, and they withdrew from Uruzgan province in August 2010.

I've heard that when the Taliban held power in Kabul they messed up people's lives with lots of silly rules.
Women were illegal and so was flying kites. And god defend the kind of men who like to dress in tights.
I wouldn't want to be like Taliban and tell you what to do I'm fighting here for freedom after all, just like you.
I respect your 'Lowlands' culture and I love you very much but there is one important thing I say to all you Dutch:

Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, it's against the law
Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, we're tryna fight a war
And if you're Swaffelen in that Dixi like a Dixi swaffelen man how the hell are we supposed to defeat the Taliban?!
So Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, niet, niet, niet!

Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, there isn't enough room
If I catch you swaffelen in the Dixi I'll tell Brigadier Van Uhm
And he will have you court-martialled and sent back to The Hague where they'll put your dick on a table and whack it with a spade
So Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, niet, niet, niet!

Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, it really isn't fair
There are people who need to use that Dixi and you could swaffel anywhere
You can swaffel in Paris, you can swaffel in Rome
You can swaffelen the Taj Mahal, or wait till you get home.
You can swaffel in the shower block with shampoo and soap. You can swaffel with the RSM, or with the #%#ing Pope*
But niet swaffelen op de Dixi, niet, niet, niet!

Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, did you hear me or are you deaf?
If I hear you have been swaffelen in the Dixi I will call in the SF
Task Force 55 and the boys from 66 go swaffelen at night with black paint on their dicks

THE SONGS

And they will find you swaffelen in that Dixi my friend and they'll hard knock on the Dixi door in which case I would recommend
That you immediately bend over place your chest upon your thighs, stick your head between your knees and kiss your arse goodbye!
So niet swaffelen op de Dixi, niet, niet, niet!

Niet swaffelen op de Dixi, it really is quite gross
Once a week they clean those Dixis with a great big vacuum hose
And if your swaffelen in the Dixi on a lazy Saturday
You may find yourself fellatiod in a most unpleasant way. It will grab you and it will suck you 'til there is nothing left. What's the BDA going to say about your cause of death?
That you died swaffelen op de Dixi, niet, niet, niet!

THE SONGS

Track 9. Christmas in Kandahar
Many ISAF troops in Afghanistan are concentrated on large bases. Kandahar Airfield (KAF) is now home to around 30,000 soldiers from thirteen different countries. This wouldn't be so bad except the sewerage system was only built to accommodate 5,000 bums. If you can get used to the fragrance though, the place could be worse. They have a Boardwalk with a Pizza Hut, a McDonald's, PX stores, TGIF, and Timmy Hortons for Canadians.

While the boys out at the FOBs are certainly at more risk, I never envied the Groundhog Day life at bases like KAF. The place reeked of boredom and loneliness. Whenever I passed through, after doing some shopping, I always found myself looking to get on the next flight elsewhere.

I am writing tonight, from the lines here in Kandahar.
Bunks beneath neon lights, hear the other guys snore and fart.
Planes take off in the night, on missions unknown.
While the rest of us turn away and face the night all alone.

Fighting season is through, and the winter seems here to stay.
Not like it was in June, ramp ceremonies every day.
Put the flag on the box, then fly the boy home.
We salute and then turn away and face the night all alone.

On the Boardwalk tonight, karaoke 'til half past ten.
Hockey under the lights, you just can't help those Canadians.
While the Yanks and the Brits, line up for the phones.
Make their calls and then turn away to face the night all alone.

Could do much worse I guess, than a Christmas in Kandahar.
I ate too much at the mess, then stumbled home to this cold guitar.
Someone turns out the lights, but I sit like a stone.
'Til I lay down and turn away and face the night all alone.

THE SONGS

Track 10. Woman in a War
In the second half of 2009, I made a few trips from Tarin Kowt up to Kabul to help out at the Embassy. At the time, the Australian Embassy in Kabul was a modest concern comprising a couple of blokes in a Donga (prefabricated container – the Americans call them "hooches") plonked on the grounds of the US Embassy. Coming from living in a shipping container with seven farting diggers down in remote Uruzgan, the US Embassy seemed to me a vision splendid. There was a pool, a tennis court, restaurants and a bar servicing 700 officers including five ambassadors.

Whatever Americans do they do with energy, but it can be hard to feel like you're getting any traction in a place like Kabul. The atmospherics around the compound were a weird combination of excitement and frustration. The US State Department classifies Kabul as an "unaccompanied post", so on a Friday night the Duck and Cover bar was often full of young, smart, single-ish folks looking to let off steam. It struck me as a place where a boy from the provinces could get into trouble.

This song uses a literary device known as the "dubious narrator". The views expressed by the singer/male character are not necessarily those of the author.

I was working up in Kabul in the last years of the war.
Karzai had decided he didn't love us anymore.
The Town was full of checkpoints and security companies,
and everyone with money had an exit strategy.

She came in in December to work for State
On her second posting across from Kuwait
I met her at a briefing down at ISAF HQ,
some Colonel was pretending that he knew what to do

There's nothing quite as sexy as a woman in a war
A delicate reminder of what we're all fighting for.
She said the word "kinetic" like she'd seen it for real
She was her Daddy's daughter with her Daddy's ideals, but she said:

"Pay no heed what people say, notice only what they do"

There's no-one quite as horny as a woman in a war
The sugared instant coffee, the adrenalin and more
Nothing like the hunger for some softness in the night,
when you wake up every morning with a war to fight. Still she'd say:

"Pay no heed what people say, notice only what they do"

Couple of months later in the Duck and Cover bar.
We'd been on a trip together with the General in Mazar.
We got talking about the problems of the ANSF,
it was gettin' late, and the others all had left

I came a little closer and to her I said:

THE SONGS

"We could die tomorrow, tonight I need you for my bed
Back in my 'hooch' I've got a bottle of Jack"
My dick was claiming victory, like Bush did in Iraq. But she said:
"I've enjoyed our conversation and your offer is bold.
Your loquacious admiration, of the problems you can't solve.
But these are not your problems this is not your war.
You only really came here because you were bored.

So get back to your family, and your ordinary life.
Your ordinary children and your ordinary wife.
I am not your mother your virgin or your whore.
Only a survivor, I am a woman in a war.

THE SONGS

Track 11. August 20 (FOB Mirwais)
When the Dutch pulled out of Uruzgan, we needed to replace their Provincial Reconstruction Team mission teams in the districts of Chora and Deh Rawud. So it was that in it was that in August 2010, I went up to FOB Mirwais in Chora, 40km up the Baluchi Valley from Tarin Kowt, with a force protection team of 15 American shooters commanded by Lieutenant Willard Cooper.

We took over half a shipping container for an office and two tents in the Aussie accommodation lines. To our right were a tent full of Sappers and to our left some infantrymen from callsign I36. We inherited a great interpreter and a bunch of contacts from the Dutch. But apart from that it was pretty hard going settling the Team in and getting on with the job of building relationships with the local community in the middle of a hot fighting season.

The FOB Mirwais Command Post was headquarters for the Australian Mentoring Team–Charlie, which had Combat Outposts down through the contested Baluchi Valley and into eastern Dorafshan. It was staffed by guys from Brisbane-based 6RAR. They had been there for six months and were pretty tight. I wrote this song from my diary entry on August 20, when Grant Kirby and Tomas Dale were killed while manning an overwatch position for an Afghan Army patrol in the Valley.

An August summer's day, a morning clear and bright, a week after Ramadan, the lines were nice and quiet. The Sappers were away and from the tent next door some boys were down in the valley on an op. at COP Mashall.

I went to find my 'terp' to call the district chief. Walked past the Afghan's kitchen stuck my head in the CP.
I heard a call come in from India 36
Through the static of the iCom saying something about a TIC. Another IED a couple of category A's
MO'D called in a medevac and I got out of the way.
Went up to my desk to type up a report of a conversation I had had the day before. Willie wondered in to call his missus dear, found that the phones were cut confirming what I'd feared

Two choppers circled in, from Tarin Kowt they said through the Chora saddle, to our dirt and stone LZ.
The MP got off first he'd done all this before. A brick of boys got on the bird to reinforce Mashall

The MP came around, by then it was half past three. Those who'd stayed from the tent next door helped him with the inventories. Packed all their effects, less pornos and their fags, ready for Sunday's chopper in white painted Eshelen bags.

I went back to the CP for the 1730 brief. The staff were sitting quietly the room was thick with grief.
'Til Dukesy arched up red saying "let's go settle scores!" The OC said "we keep our heads and crack on like before".

And all through dinner time and that evening warm and still, quiet speculation about what happened on that hill. 'Til Willie briefed the Team and laid the facts out cold, then went through the orders for the next day's foot patrol.

THE SONGS

Track 12. Trembling Sky
When the Taliban took power, many Afghans held hopes that, for all the severity of their approach, they might at least bring some order to the country wracked by conflict and predatory warlordism. But the Taliban period was an awful time in Afghanistan. Their zealous anti-modern approach combined with three years of severe drought caused what was left of the economy to disintegrate. The regime was harsh, decreeing that women were to wear full chadris or burkhas outside the home and banning all nonreligious social activities including films, music, kite flying and poetry (Afghans love poetry and will take great risks to travel to a poetry meet). These rules were enforced by summary beatings, sham trials and public executions.

A result of this was a continuing flow of refugees out of Afghanistan. By mid-2001, an estimated 3.6 million Afghans were living outside their national borders — mainly in Pakistan and Iran.

This song is written from the point of view of one of those refugees, a woman in self-imposed exile.

For my homeland I am pining
I will keep this letter rhyming, they can decode, what is written in prose

So they tried me in my absence, when I heard about my sentence, I had to smile, here in exile
For you know from your excursions if the truth has many versions
then what is a lie, to the trembling sky?

As our nation looked for heroes we both fell in with the weirdoes all of our peers, artists and queers
As I recall we still were kissing, as our friends were going missing spit in the eye, of the trembling sky

If you are taken for correction, they will ask about connection. Just play the game, slander my name
And don't ask them for a reason, or they'll have you tried for treason
Never ask why of the trembling sky

As our countrymen all hardened, Esmat found me in my garden
Gave me the queue, time to slip through
So I hope you understand there was no time to touch your hand
When I had to fly from the trembling sky
Never say die to the trembling sky

INSIGHT - FRED SMITH ON WAR

Why did Australia get involved in the war in Afghanistan in the first place?

Twelve years ago Afghanistan lay bleeding. There were compelling humanitarian reasons to do something about it. But also, in an increasingly connected world, the problems of Afghan state failure had become everyone's problems - terrorism, narcotics, massive refugee flows.

The terrorist attacks in Manhattan on September 11, 2001 made this impossible to ignore and sparked a UN sanctioned international mission to do something about it. 50 nations joined the mission: all of NATO, the Kiwis, the Canadians etc. (Iran, India, China could not get involved but have been supportive.)

We simply could not have stood by idly. For a middle sized power like Australia with the interests, alliances, and allegiances we've got, doing nothing wasn't an option. The only question was going to be the scale and focus of our contribution, and this is what the government has been wrestling with ever since.

Contributing nations other than the U.S. have focused their military efforts on particular provinces as part of a sensible enough international division of labour in Aghanistan. We went to Uruzgan in support of a larger Dutch mission in 2006. The Dutch withdrew in the summer of 2010 and since then we have stepped up to lead a joint U.S.-Australian effort in the province.

As the broader mission evolved, it became clear that, important as the military effort was, the long- term solutions to Afghanistan's problems were political and economic. That's why DFAT and AusAID were there in force, as were the Foreign Affairs and aid agencies of other contributing countries. And we'll be working in Afghanistan for years to come.

How long were you in Afghanistan and what was your role?

I worked in Uruzgan province for 18 months from mid 2009 to the beginning of 2011, then came back for more in May 2013 and worked there till the mission ended in November 2013.

I was working there with Foreign Affairs as a Political Adviser. My job was to work closely with provincial government officials and tribal leaders in order to understand what is going on in the province, build trust and cooperation with them, and where possible influence them in positive directions.

This is what needed to happen for the broader mission to succeed. But it was also important for the security of our troops. Security in Afghanistan comes from being well armed, but also from relationships.

In the villages where, for whatever reason, we weren't able to build cooperative relationships with tribal leaders, the Taliban had a home ground advantage and our troops were in danger.

As our network of relationships spread, the safety and surety with which our soldiers were able to operate increased, and conversely, where our troops were able to secure an area, we were able to get in and establish relationships. This helped the ADF to set up the network of checkpoints and patrol bases through the valleys of Uruzgan which are now manned by the Afghan forces.

What are some of the problems you face in doing your job?

It can be a little difficult there. Day to day it's heat, dust, living in cramped accommodation with communal ablutions, working on dust caked old laptops across mutually incompatible Australian- American computer

systems, talking through interpreters to people from a profoundly different culture who themselves are struggling to survive in a fiercely competitive tribal environment.

Then the mission itself is fairly involved: to build some resilience in to a society where trust has been smashed by 35 years of ruthless war and where government and civil society institutions are growing from a very low base.

All the while we're dodging incoming fire from a loose syndicate of foreign funded terrorists too small to take on Afghan security forces directly but big enough to harass and intimidate everyone with roadside bombs and assassinations.

Apart from that though, it's pretty straightforward. And for all that, we've had our successes: built roads, schools and health clinics and hospitals, and brought a reasonable level of security to the main valleys of the province.

Afghans I talked to were grateful for all this. They would have liked more, and most of them would have liked us to stick around, but they were grateful.

Do you have a sense that the Australian public knows what was happening there and understood why it was necessary?

Touring the Dust of Uruzgan album around Australia last year got me talking to a wide range of people from folk festival lefties to Vietnam vets at the Hervey Bay RSL.

Australians are deeply curious about the Afghanistan mission. They want to and feel they should know more about it. They sense the complexity, are sort-of supportive, but at the same time generally skeptical in an understandable post Vietnam-era kind of way.

Ministerial statements, plus maybe 30 seconds of ramp ceremony footage on the News every time a soldier gets killed, have been all that most people have had time to digest about our involvement in Afghanistan.

But this hasn't been enough for them to feel they really understand. That's why an exhibition like this matters.

What did you take away from the experience in terms of Australia's input to Afghanistan and its future?

Australia has been one of 50 countries involved in a UN sanctioned mission to take Afghanistan out of the parched-earth Taliban years and in the general direction of an uncertain but hopefully better future.

The initial and enduring purpose of the mission has been to prevent Afghanistan from being a safe haven for terrorists. But to achieve this, we have had to work with the Afghans to build some resilience into their society, government and military. Terrorists thrive in lawless ungoverned spaces and impoverished and poorly educated societies.

We Australians have focused our military efforts on Uruzgan province, one of the poorest and most tribally fractious provinces in a poor and tribally fractious country.

When we got here, the valleys beyond Tarin Kot were dominated by marauding Taliban. There were very

few schools, no hospitals to speak of, and the roads were little more than goat tracks.
Now there are government checkpoints throughout the main valleys of Uruzgan. The security they provide has allowed schools and health facilities to get up and running. Villagers now travel freely in to Tarin Kot on paved or otherwise half decent roads. These are things that people desperately want from their Government – they don't expect the NBN, but they do hope for basic services.

Anyway, it's not Switzerland yet, there's a way to go and the future is uncertain. But we've made a difference, and given them the tools to move forward – an army, police force, and some basic Government structures. It's up to them now.

How do you feel about the Australians you have met and worked with on the ground there?

A consistent trait amongst Australian soldiers and civilians I have worked with here in Uruzgan has been a steady though not humourless dedication to task in what is a difficult, ambiguous and occasionally dangerous environment.

Afghans I speak to like dealing with Australians and are grateful for what we've achieved in making the province more secure and a little more liveable.

Australian soldiers have earned a reputation in Uruzgan for being appropriately aggressive in going after the Taliban. In this environment, and in their line of work, controlled aggression is a virtue. It's what most Afghans have wanted from our soldiers, and want from their own security forces.

There's a general kind of post-Vietnam scepticism in the Australian public about all that we doing here - a lazy assumption that nothing has been achieved. To my knowledge, that's simply not accurate, and the Afghans I talk to everyday say as much.
Has it been worth it? I think so, but don't take my word for it. Australians need to make their own minds up about this. And as a songwriter, my first priority is not to tell anyone what to think.

In songwriting, it's the revelation of details that tells the story. This showers about bringing out a few of the details, letting people see them, and then come to the right conclusions.

What do think about the Taliban?

The Taliban are a parasitic and predatory network of hypocritical wowsers and thugs. They endure because their highly decentralized structures and tactics suit a fractured and inherently fragmented country – they are able to threaten people where they live - in the villages. And of course they invoke the name of Islam in a deeply Islamic country to try to make what they do say morally legitimate. They have nothing to offer the Afghans except perhaps a rough and quick village level justice system.

Of course people don't do things without reason, and there are reasons why young Afghan men join the Taliban. The Taliban syndicate has money. Countries like Pakistan and Iran want Afghanistan to be weak, unthreatening and unstable so they give Taliban money to undermine the Afghan government. People in Afghanistan are very poor, so young men will take money to plant a bomb on a road or ambush the coalition patrol.

But there's more to it than that. Because government is weak in Afghanistan, many areas are dominated a local warlord who will try to monopolise all the business in the area. That warlord would take care of his friends and fellow tribesman - basically look after all the people in his own network, while trying to weaken or

kill people outside his network. If you were a young Afghan man and you were not in the friendship network of the local warlord, you would be looking for help. So if the local Taliban leader came and offered you money and weapons to defend yourself and attack the warlord's network, you might consider taking it.

That said, in my experience the difference between good people and bad people is not what they believe in, but what methods they're prepared to use to achieve their ends. The Taliban's main method of gaining influence is assassinating people and scaring people. For this reason, it's hard for me not to think they are evil. But of course the warlords are pretty evil too. In a country where the government is not strong enough to make sure that everyone plays fair and by the rules, aggression and violence (evil) tends to prevail as a way of influencing things. That's why the only long-term solution to Afghanistan's problems is to build their government. But it's a difficult job on the work of decades if not centuries.

In the end, the bottom line is that the Taliban offer no future for Afghanistan. The new generation of Afghans have no time for the Taliban, so if we can hold the place together for long enough I think they will fade from their own inbuilt obsolescence.

Are we being shown anything close to the full picture from Afghanistan. Can us civilians say we have any idea about what is happening over there?

I think the news coverage we get is pretty candid, and there is an ongoing stream of good quality reporters and crews coming through and operating on a fairly long leash. They are only ever constrained in what they send home on operational security grounds – i.e.: if the information they are sending would put soldiers or operations at risk. So I don't think Australians are under the illusion that we've got it all sewn up or that we are on the verge of turning Uruzgan Province into Switzerland. We are doing what we can under difficult circumstances and things are moving slowly, but not irrevocably, forward is my assessment.

How did you become involved in the situation you now find yourself as 'political negotiator' both in the Solomons and Afghanistan?

I joined the Foreign Affairs Department in January 1996, after an exhaustive selection process, only to discover that I didn't like desk work and that I needed to write songs. Ever since I have run two careers: writing, recording and touring; and then taking postings to some of our Foreign Ministry's less salubrious missions. Through this I have developed a real interest and something of a specialization in conflict and post conflict situations. But these are also narrative rich environments, which, I suppose, saves me from having to have a divorce or a drug problem to write songs about. So, I go to these places, work my arse off, then find myself hemorrhaging songs on the plane home.

Apart from writing songs what do you actually do there - your daytime job as were?

In Afghanistan my work involved building relationships with provincial and tribal leaders to improve our understanding of the environment and to get them cooperating with us and as far as possible, each other. In this there is a lot of reporting which is a useful way of forcing the mind to pay attention and then organize the experience in prose.

What was it like playing with Afghan musicians?

We got a band together for Afghan New Year's celebrations, which happens in March every year, from amongst the Afghan guys working on the base – cleaners, tower guards and interpreters ('terps'). We'd

rehearse every Saturday night but the rehearsals would disintegrate into dance parties 'cause 30 odd guys from the 'terp' pool would show up en masse and start reeling around the room.

It took some adjustment to play with the Afghans because their musical tradition is so different from ours. Western music is all about melodies over chord changes whereas their songs power along in the same chord which is neither a major nor a minor. What we had in common though is a feeling for rhythm and an appetite for the release and community that music brings.

I developed a way of playing with them by tuning my guitar to whatever key they happened to be playing in that night and strumming along frenetically. And I introduced tunes from the western canon that I thought they could digest, like I got them singing and happy clapping along to shout songs like 'Minnie the Moocher'.

Clearly the experience has influenced your music. How do songwriting and being a diplomat sit together? Are they complimentary?

Songwriting and diplomacy are complimentary vocations in that they involve the same tendencies and procedures: engaging on a personal level with people and really listening to understand their worlds - their perspectives, motives, fears, or simply their stories.

Then there's process of converting the understanding gained from those conversations into portable chunks of communication, shifting back and forth between the general and the specific, that enlighten and influence others, all the while remaining respectful enough of the confidences of the interlocutor that they won't punch you in the nose the next time they see you.

There's a bit of showbiz involved in both professions. The main difference between writing a cable and writing a song is that the former process is a purposeful exercise in explanation and persuasion, while in the latter process it pays to keep your hands a little loose on the reins and see what comes out the other end.
Perhaps my songs are just the unclassified end of the reporting I get paid to do anyway.

How did the songs come?

I am note keeper. I kept notes in a series of red and black hard-back note books. I ended up with about 20 of them from that 18 month period. They are full of notes from the daily 'Battle Update Briefs' and records of meetings with Tribal Leaders, interspersed with lyrics and reflections.

All the melodies and basic ideas for the songs busted down the door when I was trying to sleep or get some work done. But the lyrics and stories came differently. *Sapper's Lullaby* fell straight into my notebooks the afternoon after Snowy and Smithy's ramp ceremony in June 2010. We played it at a concert at Poppy's BBQ area two nights later.

Lyrics to *Dust of Uruzgan* started to come to me the night after I read the Commission of Inquiry Report into Ben Ranaudo's death. I happened to be heading out on leave the next day. Half a dozen verses came to me on the Hercules C130 aircraft out of Tarin Kowt and I finished it in a hotel room in Dubai.
August 20 came to me earlier this year while I was reading my diary entry for that date last year in the comfort of my living room in Canberra.

Other songs were informed by reading books like *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *An Unexpected Light*

which helped me understand the Afghans' world a bit better.

Life over there is busy – like 12-14 hour work days. So you don't really have time to feel your feelings. I finished most of the songs during periods of leave and they would come pretty quick, so they'd been bubbling away at the back of my brain and were a way of processing it all. But then that's what music is for – to help people feel their feelings – which is not really what soldiers are trained to do, or diplomats for that matter.

Many wars before these presently fought have been the catalyst for much great music. Why are so few like yourself, documenting today's troubles in song?

I think the impulse to document will always be present in these war zones, but the technology has changed and with it the modes of capturing and expressing the experience. Wilfred Owens didn't have a digital camera on him in the trenches in Flanders so he wrote poems. I suppose that's what that generation did, along with letters home. The diggers I worked with out there are of the laptop generation, and are taking some good photos and video. But none of them seemed to be drawn to writing prose let alone poetry. Just thinking about it, in my experience, the Queens English took a bit of a caning out at the forward operating bases, so perhaps its just as well! Not that the language out there lacked colour.

You also managed to deftly inject humour in your lyrics. Do you find penning such lyrics a fine line to tread?

There's plenty to laugh about over there, and if you didn't you'd snap. It's blokes pissing around in the desert trying to do a difficult job with finite resources – perfect material for slapstick…hilarious, until all of a sudden it isn't!

But there's a lot to deal with emotionally and not much time to deal with it, so with guys living and working under one anothers' armpits, often four guys sleeping in a shipping container, doing frustrating work, humour is important currency. Of course, preserving that for posterity needs to be done carefully when you are talking about the lives, and in some cases the deaths, of real people. The advantage of song-writing is that you can put a red pen through anything that goes a bit too far and leave it in the notebooks for historians to be appalled by.

You got to play and experience vast types and styles of musical cultures. How did that rub into your own playing and songwriting style?

I played a lot with Afghans around the main base in Tarin Kowt. There's some youtube footage of me and the Afghan band linked to my website: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?p=PL63E4011BBE4B677D Some of the Afghan music found its way in to the album, particularly on the song Dust of Uruzgan, which peddles along under a long yarn in that kind of unresolved, neither major non-minor, middle eastern scale. But most of the songs are within western genres, so the main influence was really in the stories that unfolded around me. And I think the spirit, attitudes and language of the soldiers and the Afghans I worked with also found expression in these recordings.

You're also coupling the music with photos from Afghanistan. Do you feel that together the pairing provides are more powerful piece than the individual parts?

The general rule with songwriting is that the lyrics should paint the picture, but with this tour I have been

complementing some of the songs with a sequenced series of projected photos up on a wall or screen near the stage. I'm doing this because Afghanistan is a difficult place to picture unless you've been there. People in the audiences so far have commented that the photos have given them the opportunity to really see and feel the place in their mind's eye. Music and art have the power to take people, through their own imaginations, to places they've never been. It allows them to feel and comprehend things at a deeper more intuitive level than the 7:30 News. I want to give people every chance to get a sense of what its like over there, in all its complexity, if only to have them walk away saying "Gee its complex!".

Do you play live concerts there and who for? Are the locals invited? What kind of places?

I put bands together from soldiers on the main base who could play a bit. The quartermaster played guitar and had a P.A. System in his shed, one of the Dutch nurses could really sing, and a few of the American soldiers had some chops on guitar. There were always some decent players around, but never a bass player when you needed one (until recently). I'd put on concerts at the Poppies BBQ/ping pong area every couple of months. Nothing else doing on a Saturday night in Tarin Kowt, so the concerts would always be packed. And I suppose I was telling the soldiers stories they could relate to.

Do you have feedback from locals and soldiers to what you do...musically I mean?

I remember one soldier after a concert saying that it was like I'd read his diary, and certainly the songs were on the iPods of a lot of the Aussie soldiers serving over there. The Dutch soldiers liked my music, in particular *Niet Swaffelen op de Dixi* admonishing them for perpetrating obscene Dutch cultural practices in the portaloos that proliferated around the base. I toured Holland in November last year on the strength of that song. The locals seemed to enjoy my offerings too, or maybe they were just amused to see a white bloke bashing away on an instrument.

I didn't know about your Bougainville project* Songs Of Peace *- tell us about that.

The early days of the Bougainville Peace Process were a time of consolidation – we weren't trying to force the issue of disarmament, the situation was too raw for that – we were mostly an unarmed peacekeeping force there to provide a stabilising influence. So the idea was to get out in to the villages and communicate with the nationals as much as possible. Bougainvilleans love music so I developed a patrolling pattern with the soldiers I was working with that centered around getting out in to the villages with a kind of travelling road show. We'd arrive at a village, I'd get up under a tree or in the school yard and play a few songs, the soldiers would do backing vocals, then I'd talk to the villagers assembled about the peace process. So I wrote a few songs in Papua New Guinea pidgin for these road shows and the army Psyops (psychological operations) team heard about what I was doing and flew a recording desk and some mikes in. I set up a makeshift studio in a school library working with a local sound engineer who had worked in Port Moresby before the conflict. He had never seen digital recording technology before but had read about it and worked it out quickly. We got local bands in, recorded them, then mastered 5 of my songs and five of theirs on to a *Songs of Peace* Tape. The army distributed 20,000 copies around Bougainville Island.

Tell us about the film* Bougainville Sky*.

A documentary film maker who used to come see me in pubs in my home town caught wind about what I was doing in Bougainville and he talked the army in letting him fly in and follow me around for a couple of

weeks with a camera. This was in my last rotation on Bougainville in the month leading up to our withdrawal from the island – so it was a dramatic and emotional time for all concerned. The film ends with a handover ceremony and concert where for better or worse we handed over to the Bougainvilleans full responsibility for their future and security. It's an optimistic film about the power of music, and things have gone reasonably well in Bougainville since then.

Will you or someone do a similar doco about your Afghan tour?

ABC's Australian Story is making a documentary about me. One thing about this war is it is been highly documented by cameramen journalists. Everyone's got a camera these days. So there is plenty of footage.

What is your intent with this collection of songs ...?

There are about twenty thousand young Australians who have lived a very particular experience in Uruzgan province. My intent is to tell their story so that the rest of Australia understands that experience, in all its complexity.

What is your approach to songwriting?

I suppose what differentiates me from a lot of other songwriters is that I'm more interested in the world around me than on my own internal world, though the latter inevitably comes through in the songs. So I get on with living and working, in the case of Uruzgan, quite intensely, and the music and songs just seem to come out through a process I cant control and don't understand. The seed of an idea for a song will come to me when I'm doing other things – a melody, a lyric idea, a story –and then I'll expand on it in my notebooks until the song is fully formed.

So I suppose the process of song writing causes me to pay more attention to the world around me.
As the famous painter Degas once said: "see that you may paint, paint that you may see".

Can you briefly describe the process you use or go through to distil the content?

Each of the stories in the songs on this album is far more complex than the song format can deal with. Every song has a "right" length, which in general is "as short as possible". So I try to cut out everything that isn't necessary to the telling of the tale, and leave the rest to the listener's imagination.

What does your 'other' life as a diplomat bring to your songwriting?

My job gets me engaged with the world around me, in the case of Uruzgan, intensely. I wouldn't want to be writing songs as a tourist.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Point of view:** While most contemporary songwriters tend to write songs from their own point of view, in Dust of Uruzgan, Fred Smith looks at the situation through the eyes of different people involved in or affected by the war in Afghanistan.

ACTIVITY 1: Many of the songs are written in the first person - using the pronoun "I".

- **For each song, identify who, or what kind of person, the narrator is. (Answers listed and explored at the end of this section).**

2. **Narrative Arc:** Perhaps the job of a song is to take a listener away from where they are in 'the here and now' and show them part of a bigger world. Each of the songs on Dust of Uruzgan does that differently. In the songs *Dust of Uruzgan, August 20,* or *Zeebrugge FOB*, there is a clear chronological sequence of events for the listener to follow in this journey. With Live Like an Afghan the listener is invited to wonder about the different aspects of the way Afghans live, and eventually die, in a violent and poor country where life is hard. So whilst the journey isn't always a literal or logical one one, each song begins somewhere and ends somewhere else.

ACTIVITY 2: Each song has a tale to tell, whether it be linear or abstract.

- **Working in pairs, choose your favourite track from Dust of Uruzgan and create a storyboard of its narrative. You could even film your ideas creating a 'film clip' for one of Fred Smith's songs!**

3. **Description and details:** How does the listener get brought along on a journey to a place like Afghanistan where they has never been before? The answer is: the only way they can - through their imagination. How does our imagination work? A big part of the word imagination is the word "image" - the words of the song trigger images in our mind's eye, whilst we are sitting there, wherever we are, listening to the words of the songs. The words present a sequence of images, which we follow on a journey in our imagination.The mind's eye does a better job of imagining specific objects in the physical world because they can be seen and touched - because they stimulate the senses and are therefore interesting to us. Therefore, it is by describing the specific details of the situation that the listener is drawn into the journey. This is why Canadian songwriter Leonard Cohen once said: "in song writing the most specific solution is the most universal" - because we all have imaginations, and those imaginations are attracted to details in the physical world, specific objects e.g.: dust, an M4 Rifle, a police checkpoint, rather than general concepts (grief, tactics and strategies, post traumatic stress).

ACTIVITY 3: A listener needs certain information to trigger their imagination when listening to song lyrics. These can include WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and WHO.

- **Examine the first verses of three songs on the album – perhaps *Dust of Uruzgan, Taliban Fighting Man,* and *Thousand Splendid Suns.***
  - What is the starting context of each song?
  - Where is the narrator?
  - Who is he or she?
  - What is the situation?
  - What picture is evoked in your mind's eye?
- **Choose one song and write a newspaper article from the perspective of a reporter who has witnessed the same events described. Think about how the tone and language would differ and which details would be expanded upon or edited.**

ACTIVITIES

4. **Centre of Gravity:** Songs seem to need a centre of gravity - a repeating chorus, a phrase or central image, from which the song can 'roam' then come back to. People like to take journeys, but they like to come home too!

ACTIVITY 4: Listen again to the three songs chosen earlier.
- **What is the central recurring theme in each of these songs?**
- **Which songs have a chorus?**
- **Which songs have a repeating phrase or image at the end of each verse?**
- **What about the song August 20? Where is its 'centre of gravity'?**

5. **Musical accompaniment:** Each song has a musical accompaniment that matches the mood and emotional content of the words. For example, *Christmas in Kandahar* has an aching melancholy melody reflecting the state of mind of the storyteller. Likewise, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* with its atmosphere of sorrow and reflection. *Dust of Uruzgan* has a fast tempo and a somewhat Middle Eastern scale reflecting events spinning out of control in an exotic and strange environment. *Niet Swaffelen* has a jaunty polka feel reflecting the comic and slightly military tone of the song. The music also not only works to set the mood of the song, but is also curated to help tell the story – to support the narrative arch. For example, *Dust of Uruzgan* is loud in the middle when the narrator is talking about the broader situation in Uruzgan and the storyteller's adventures working in the valleys. Then it draws down and gets quieter as he tells his own personal story, before exploding into a final turbulent instrumental where the storyteller is coming to terms with the grief, anger and confusion over what has just happened.

ACTIVITY 5: Go through all 12 tracks on* Dust of Uruzgan *and come up with one sentence to describe the TONE of the musical accompaniment, as Fred Smith has in the underlined sentences above.
- **Do you think there is an overall story within the album?**
- **How do you think these ideas could be similarly expressed using other artforms?**
- **Work in groups to create a visual, media, drama or dance-based representation of *Dust of Uruzgan.***

6. **Issues in Art:** The Arts can be a great way to convey your personal ideas about issues that matter to you. Fred Smith has spent many years immersed in war and civil unrest, so has written songs about some of the issues that arise from these events, such as the way we remember fallen soldiers and the empathy we have (or don't have) towards civilians in wartime.

Thinking about issues that are current in your life, consider:
- If you were going to write a song about an issue that you are interested in or troubled by what would that be and why? You might think about things such as resources for young people, LGBTIQ rights, climate change or the education system, whatever issue is 'close to home' for you!
- How would that issue benefit from being discussed/communicated through song?
- Do you think song might make it easier for people to understand your point of view?

ACTIVITY 6: Write the lyrics to a song that explores your chosen issue.
- **Try re-listening to Fred's songs for ideas on how to go about this. Think about the traits of musical storytelling explored earlier. Your song might be satirical, heartwarming, joyful or pointed, it is entirely up to you! You may even wish to collaborate with music students within your school to create musical accompaniments for your lyrics!**

ACTIVITIES

ANSWERS TO ACTIVITY 1

Track 1 - *Dust of Uruzgan*
The narrator in this song is a Young soldier, Paul Warren, who has just had his lower right leg blown off by a small landmine. The explosion also killed his friend Ben, as the mine he stepped on was linked by detonation cord to a bigger one hidden under the ground where Ben was lying. The context of the narrative here is that Paul is lying in a hospital bed in Germany talking to an officer who has been sent to write a report on the in¬cident. The story goes from there. It gives us a broader sense of the operating environment in Uruzgan, the heat, the dust, the ambiguity - before telling us what actually happened on the day leading up to the explosion that changed Paul's life forever.

Track 2 – *Live Like an Afghan*
The "I" in this song is probably Fred himself. He is using the song to describe the fierce and hardy race of people - the Afghans - who he has been working with. Do you believe the narrator when he says he wants to live like an Afghan? Perhaps he admires them, but does not really want to live the harsh and competitive life they live. Perhaps he is using "irony", defined as "the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect." Or perhaps he means what he says - the listener has to come to their own conclusions about this.

Track 3 - *Taliban Fighting Man*
This song is a duet. There are two narrators here - Fred, and a US Marine. They're talking in the rudimentary departure lounge of the military base at Kandahar Airfield. The marine is describing what it has been like for him fighting in Afghanistan-the hardships, the dangers, the difficulties it is causing for his family back home, as well as the camaraderie of working with his fellow soldiers. When the Marine says "so much fun who the hell would want to go home", does he mean it?

Track 4 - Sappers' *Lullaby*
With this song, Fred is telling a story through his own eyes. He wrote this song after attending a ramp cer¬emony for Sappers Jacob Moerland and Darren Smith on 9 June, 2010. He first performed the song in a concert at Poppies, the barbecue area on the base in Tarin Kowt, on 12 June. In the audience were friends of the two sappers (combat engineers), as well as other soldiers who had attended the ramp ceremony. Per¬haps that explains why the song is directed directly to other soldiers, rather than then to a general audience.

Track 5 – Zeebrugge *FOB*
This song begins with a clear statement of who the narrator is: "my name is Ryan Yeaton, I'm from Maryland Heights…". Ryan was a US Marine working at the Zeebrugge Forward Operating Base in Helmand province in October 2010 when his friend, Fransisco Jackson, was killed. We hear that story at the end of the song, but before that we get a lot of description in context about Helmand province, its history, - which explains why they're there, and the situation and challenges they face. Is this a true story? Perhaps look it up on the Internet.

Track 6 - *A Thousand Splendid Suns*
This song is written from the point of view of an Afghan woman who has just finished working a long day behind high compound walls in Kabul. She takes time to pause and reflect on the last 35 years of violence and turmoil that have plagued her city. Fred never actually met this woman, because he didn't work in Kabul for very long, and in any case, because of the way things are with women in Afghan culture, men generally don't work with all get to know women unless then married to them. Women are generally housebound. He did however read a book called "A Thousand Splendid Suns", which enabled him to imagine the situation a woman like this might find herself in, and the way she might think about the chaos unfolding beyond the walls of her compound. Perhaps this is one of the main powers of art and literature – it enables us to

understand the lives and realities of people we can never meet thereby expanding our sympathies and comprehension for the world we live in.

Track 10 - *Woman in a War*
This song is a duet with two narrators, which automatically raises the interesting possibility of two compet¬ing perspectives on the same situation. The male narrator becomes attracted to a woman who shows up to work in Kabul during the later years of the war, but his attitude towards is not very respectful. Perhaps he is caught up in the romance and excitement of being in a war zone - away from his ordinary life. Perhaps he is projecting his feelings of excitement and intrigue onto the woman. As the song approaches its climax it seems inevitable, through his eyes at least, that the two will become lovers. But suddenly we get her full point of view – "no thanks, not interested". And by the way, "go home to your wife and family!". Do you like the male narrator in this song? Perhaps he is what Los Angeles songwriter Randy Newman described as a "dubious narrator".

Track 11 – *August 20*
Fred wrote this song after reading his diary entries from 20 August, 2010. At the time he was working at a Forward Operating Base 40 km north of TK a place called Chora. He describes the events of the day, as he saw them unfold, during which two soldiers who were living in the tent next door to his were killed down in the Baluchi Valley. We don't find out what happened to them, but we sense the grief and confusion back on the Forward Operating Base as the troops come to terms with the news that two of their friends have been killed.

Track 12 – *Trembling Sky*
This song, sung by Liz Frencham, is written from the point of view of an Afghan refugee who has run away from the Taliban regime, which dominated Afghanistan in the late 1990s. They were going to put her on trial. The lyrics are a poem to a lover in Afghanistan who she had to leave.

DEEPER THINKING:

- Thinking about the impact these songs have on the listener, consider:
  - How does telling a story through music assist the audience to understand and feel empathy towards the characters within it?
  - How is the impact different when reading the lyrics on their own?
  - How would the impact be different if only factual accounts of these events were represented?

- Thinking about the impact the performance has on the audience, consider:
  - Which songs/stories from Dust Of Uruzgan can you particularly remember and why?
  - Why do you think they have stuck in your mind?
  - Consider Fred's storytelling manner: was it the lyrics, photos, his expression (or a combination of all three) that told the story

GLOSSARY

This album is full of TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms). This is the language spoken on the militarily bases in Afghanistan. It quickly becomes second nature, even for civilians working there. Here are some terms that might be helpful to you in understanding the lyrics in Dust of Uruzgan.

1 RAR	First Royal Australian Regiment
2 Shop	Intelligence cell
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AP mine	anti-personnel mine
BDA	Battle Damage Assessment
Brick	team of 5 men
Category A's	the highest category of wounds
COP	Combat Outpost
CP	Command Post
Det cord	detonation wire
Herc	Hercules – C130 transport plane
iCom	radio
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
India 36	call sign I36
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
Kinetic	In the parlance used as an adjective for involving violence, as in 'kinetic operations'
Medevac	medical evacuation (by helicopter)
MO'D	Captain Michael O'Donnell
MP	military police officer
MRTF 1	Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force 1
MSU	Making Shit Up
OC	Officer Commanding
Op	operation
OPSO MT-C LZ	landing zone
RIP	Relief in place
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RSO & I course	Reception, Staging, Onwards movement, and Integration course
SF	Special Forces
Steyr	standard issue assault rifle
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
Terp	interpreter
TIC	troops in contact
TLA	Three Letter Acronym
TTPs	Techniques, Tactics and Procedures
TV	Television

FURTHER READING

WEBSITES:

Regional Arts Victoria
www.rav.net.au

Fred Smith
http://www.fredsmith.com.au/
http://www.abc.net.au/austory/specials/asapperslullaby/default.htm

AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN
Exit Wounds, by John Cantwell
Uncommon Soldier, by Chris Masters
Afghanistan Exhibition at the Australian War Memorial
http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-29/was-australias-role-in-the-afghan-war-worth-it/5056376

THE HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Afghanistan http://www.afghan-web.com/history/
An Unexpected Light, by Jason Elliott
Travels into Bukhura, by Alexander Burnes

THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN
Little America, by Rajiv Chandrasekaren

RETURNED SERVICEMAN'S LEAGUE
http://www.rsl.org.au

WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN
My Forbidden Face, by Latifa,
Bookseller of Kabul, by Åsne Seierstad,
Kabul Beauty School, by Deborah Rodriguez,
A Thousand Splendid Suns, by Khaled Hosseini
http://www.afghan-web.com/woman/afghanwomenhistory.html
http://www.iisna.com/articles/pamphlets/the-burqa-and-niqab-uncovering-the-facts/

REFUGEES
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/stat-int.php

WAR AND UNREST
http://www.economicshelp.org/blog/2180/economics/economic-impact-of-war/
http://costsofwar.org/article/economic-cost-summary
http://www.worldbank.org/html/cgiar/newsletter/Sept97/10ifpri.html

Contact the Performing Arts Touring team at mnutt@rav.net.au with further questions or, even better, examples of your work!

ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

Regional Arts Victoria is the peak Victorian agency resourcing and supporting contemporary and innovative regional cultural practice. In the more than 40 years since its establishment, RAV has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the concept that art practice is critical to building capacity and self-determination in communities. It is proud of its reputation as a contemporary, inventive and responsive organisation working with vision, passion and a strong understanding of the challenges and aspirations of the communities that form its regional constituency.

Regional Arts Victoria initiates, facilitates and celebrates the arts in regional Victoria through Creative Communities Victoria, Education and Families, Performing Arts Touring and Regional Arts Development programs.

We do this by:

- Working with artists and regional communities to create high-quality art.
- Playing a major role in developing regional arts networks, tours, projects, programs, skills development, and funding.
- Providing leadership and support to our networks in regional Victoria.
- Celebrating the diversity of cultural experience in regional Victoria.
- Collaborating with partners in business, local, state and federal government, sponsors and education organisations.
- Striving for excellence through benchmarking and continuous improvement processes.

Performing Arts Touring is Regional Arts Victoria's tour coordinating program that works to broker agreements between presenters and producers resulting in tours of a diverse range of performing arts productions.

Touring forums such as Long Paddock and Showcase Victoria introduce presenters to a diverse range of producers and their work, offering new Australian drama, theatre classics, children's theatre, contemporary dance, comedy, musical theatre, physical theatre, world music, circus, opera, ballet and classical music.

Working side-by-side with PAT is Education and Families, Regional Arts Victoria's program for children and young people. Each year we take a variety of arts experiences on the road across Victoria, from Mallacoota to Murrayville and Heywood to Corryong, reaching over 25,000 young people.

Education and Families tours are AusVELS and VCE linked and include drama, music, dance, literature, visual arts and multimedia activities, and connect with curriculum areas such as Humanities, English and Citizenship.

Regional Arts Victoria provides young people across Victoria with the opportunity to experience, engage with and participate in high-quality live performing and visual arts. Our school incursion program is an inspiring, contemporary, and educational way to promote the value of the arts to young people within communities.

REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA