



Fred Smith is no ordinary singer-songwriter...

And this is no ordinary show...

*Dust of Uruzgan* is a collection of songs Fred wrote while working as a tribal and political advisor alongside Australian Forces in Uruzgan Province for two years.

Add a collection of stunning visual projections of images donated by Australian Defence Force photographers who patrolled alongside our troops over there.

Add to that a band of two exceptional musicians...

...and that only begins to describe the evening that lies before you.

This show is moving in a way that creeps up and slaps the cynicism out of you before you know what's hit you, and suddenly you're seeing life from the perspective of the other; the other you have quite possibly never considered.

Fred is a true raconteur; a masterful, entertaining storyteller. His songs are stories put to well-crafted music; and what emotionally transcendent music it is. Fred weaves his stories and songs expertly alongside the backdrop of the evocative visual imagery, and you are instantly transported into the lives of soldiers, male comradery, victims, parents, yourself...

It isn't an easy show to describe, but it is spellbinding to watch.

Just ask the people who were at the Multinational Base in Tarin Kowt, where his music became legendary.

It isn't just entertaining and moving, it's informative...in the greatest way.

"It is important to me to tell this story, so that the 20,000 Australian soldiers who served in Afghanistan don't walk the land as strangers in the way that a generation of Vietnam vets did." (Fred Smith)

Do yourself a favour.

Get a ticket.

Today.

Media responses to the Dust of Uruzgan CD and show:

**“A great work of art, a great suite of songs...an amazing thing if you get to see him perform it in concert”**

**Richard Glover, Drive, ABC 702 Sydney**

**“An exceptional songwriter and certainly the equal of Bogle, Walker and Schumann... 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.”**

**Bruce Elder, Sydney Morning Herald ‘Review of the Week’**

**“... the music of Fred Smith comes straight from the front line...raw, ribald, but also capable of moving grown men to tears.”**

**John Huxley, Sydney Morning Herald,**

**“finely observed snapshots of a harsh, sad and funny reality, laced with an optimism that is probably the mark of the man...In concert he has a knack for balancing drama and humour ...towering artistic achievement”**

**John Shand Sydney Morning Herald,**

**“These 12 songs have a singular power and emotional honesty, because Smith was actually there... a triumph of poetic journalism and songwriting”**

**Warwick McFadyen, The Saturday Age,**

See overleaf for audience responses

### **Audience feedback for 2014 Tour:**

"That was one of the best shows I've seen in my life. It was informative, intelligent, insightful, it had humour, emotion and restraint. A story well told."

**Sharon Hope, Ballarat (email used with permission)**

"For someone uneducated on big picture Afghan it's a real eye opener. It was emotional, made us laugh just a great show...people will walk away having a clearer understanding of us and the environment we worked in."

**Paul Warren, returned soldier, Townsville (email used with permission)**

"It's a really different show, amazing songs, but also narrative and a big screen with stills from the war...amazingly moving. A great tribute to the young soldiers and also enlightening about why we were there.....I loved it." **Dave Jenkins, on Facebook**

"Sitting in the Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall on Friday night listening and watching Fred pour his heart and soul into the music, songs and stories from Afghanistan has left me with a new found respect and admiration for our diggers, their families, mates, and also the Afghan people." **Judy Morton-Stubbs, Kerang, posted on Facebook**

"Dust of Uruzgan is absolutely brilliant. By sharing your experience in a creative, honest, diplomatic and non-judgmental way, has allowed me (who was against the war) a totally different perspective of empathy, away from politics and religion."

**Jasper Peri-Stuart, Katherine NT, Posted on Facebook**

"Just a note to thank you for the wonderful concert at the Heathcote RSL last week. My son (currently ADF) recommended we go and I'm really pleased we did. Your performance seems to me to be in the millennia old tradition of the troubadour, bringing the stories of far off battles to the halls of those waiting and watching from home. The stories told help us to form an understanding of the people on all sides of the story."

**Eleanor Dempster, Fargum Pastoral Co., Tooborac (email used with permission)**

"Thank you for the exceptional concert and stories. I felt very privileged to be there. You should get this around far more. Our country needs to hear more than the shallow media slops we are brain washed with." **Liz Morton-Blake, Ballarat**

"I saw this show in Townsville on Monday 28 April. IT WAS BRILLIANT!!! I laughed, cried a little and learnt a lot. This is a show everybody must see. Before I attended Dust of Uruzgan I thought perhaps I might find the show too confronting, sad or possibly even boring given I personally have no military background. This was not the case at all. Fred is a marvelous storyteller, singer and songwriter and the team working with him is equally talented. The show is so much more than songs; it also includes images and video footage from Afghanistan, fabulous narrative and even a little history lesson. To any teachers out there - this would be a worthy inclusion in the curriculum." **Julie Brunner, Townsville, Posted on Facebook**

"Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable show in Exmouth last night. As a veteran of two tours to Afghanistan, I think you produced a very accurate portrayal of the country, the people, and the Australian men and women who have all experienced 'time' over there. I took my wife with me to your show, and she commented that it gave her a better appreciation and understanding of what I couldn't tell her about my experiences." **Shane Cheney, Posted on FB**

**Full review: *Dust of Uruzgan* at Courtyard Studio, Canberra Theatre Centre  
Review, 24 July 2014, By John P. Harvey, for BMA Magazine**

A typical Fred Smith song is deceptive in its beginnings. Hearing the opening line, you feel you can sing the next three lines with him (given that you know or can reinvent the lyrics). From its quiet, measured start, you sense both where the melody is going and for how long you will await a contrasting, rousing chorus.

But the song doesn't go that way. It builds melodic complexity; it introduces some new instrument or harmony; a lyric takes you by surprise. Rather than hear the song, you fall into it; it clutches you. It's rare, for instance, to hear songs more moving than Smith's "Sapper's Lullaby", one of several in memory of certain soldiers killed in action.

Such song ambush occurs despite Smith's having just spent time in setting the scene; perhaps portraying a society under siege, a land whose ghosts are as fresh as this morning's exchange of gunfire, or the song's genesis in unlikely conflict over toilet resources. Needing no rousing chorus, Smith's song ushers you through a door on the alien lives of people you're unlikely to meet. The surprise of finding yourself with them requires no dramatic alterations in melody or key; it arises from Smith's ability to put his bare feet in the footsteps of his song's subjects.

Photographs, most shot in Afghanistan, accompany Smith's introductions and songs with extraordinary precision. Smith's words unfolding their meaning, they document more than strife-worn Afghanistan's everyday life; they document also the everyday but fragile humanity that the Afghans and the Australian peacekeepers share, the atmosphere pregnant with contradictory violence and gentleness, the indescribable light, the everyday human vulnerability of children and adults living, in stone and sand, within arm's reach of the machinery of war.

Fred Smith is more likely to refer to a "wicked paradox" or "multiple tyrannies of complexity" than to fall into any current cliché. And you know exactly what he's talking about. He has a mischievous facility with words. This alone energises his performances and inspires interest in his subject matter. The man himself is plainly not sleepwalking through life; he is directing it as he should, and his genuinely attentive empathy for those suffering unenviable privations is refreshing. With his commonsense perspectives on Australia's peacekeeping missions to Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea and on life, Smith is a national treasure.

For much of the show, Smith is not alone. In this particular performance, he had the capable help of Penny Larkins, singing harmony and sometimes lead; drummer/keyboardist Carl Pannuzzo (throughout one song, memorably invoking a Hammond organ on the right hand and playing drums on the left); and Canberran bassist Tom Carruthers. All four musicians were, throughout, very tight. Pannuzzo and Carruthers played with the casual precision of jazz pros, easing new instruments into a song with effortless mastery and subtlety.

The atmosphere that the entire group created was due to everything, in concert: the lyrics' eloquence as well as the lyrical eloquence of Smith's introductory patter; the haunting voice that sings songs of loss or wonder; the suggestive rhythms in the guitar and in the tom-toms; the rapid, melodic bass lines; the photographs; the melodies. Unsurprisingly, the total effect was integrated, without a single jarring note.

A consistently able, entertaining performer, Smith has already reached that pinnacle at which his music, happy or sad, both matters and enriches. If you'll be in Sydney on Saturday July 29, or if *Dust of Uruzgan* returns to Canberra later in the year (July's performances have already sold out), I'd recommend unreservedly that you make the effort to let Smith's music steal into your soul.

Full review: *Dust of Uruzgan at The Street Theatre, 4 February 2012*  
by **Deborah Hawke** <http://www.thebarefootreview.com.au>

With every war fought comes a million stories that don't make it to the evening news. We've seen it with World Wars I and II, Vietnam, and now we're seeing waves of personal tales come out of the Middle East – ready to become the next generation of military legends.

Dust of Uruzgan is just such a collection of these stories, coming straight from the diary of musician-cum-diplomat to Afghanistan (and Canberra local), Fred Smith.

Self-described as an ethnomusicologist, Smith's songs capture his time working predominately in Uruzgan province with quirk, heart and a country twang. With the show accentuated by the powerful imagery of a photo journal, the audience was treated to a refreshingly candid narrative of life in a war zone - without fear or favour.

Accompanied by Liz Frencham (of the Frencham Smith folk duo) on back up vocals and double bass, Jonathan Jones on percussion, and Lachlan Coventry on electric and slide guitar, Smith introduces us to the "Acronym Rich Environment" of military life in Afghanistan before launching into the title track.

What follows is 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. And while the songs are unique, the larrikin spirit traditional to so many Australian songs of the past is well and truly alive in Smith's work.

From the sombre tone of 'Sapper's Lullaby' exploring the way soldiers grieve and farewell their mates after a casualty, to the zany antics embodied in songs such as 'Niet Swaffelen Op De Dixi' – inspired by a rather unusual past time of the Dutch in the base's portaloos – each song brought much needed humanity to the people and places with a distinctly dry humour and deep insight.

'A Thousand Splendid Suns' and the hauntingly beautiful finale 'The Trembling Sky' were both glorious vocal contributions from Frencham, bringing a poetic exploration of Afghani culture and history to the fore.

Unsurprisingly, the crowd had a thirst for an encore, and were happily obliged with the banjo number 'Taliban Fighting Man' and the high impact 'Century Girl' – an epic visual and lyrical montage of war and peace over the past 100 years.

The evening seemed to permeate deep into the audiences' psyche, with the hushed crowd lingering a little longer than usual at the conclusion of the show. In the unlikely event that Dust of Uruzgan didn't leave an imprint, then radio news reports of 3000 Afghani civilian deaths in the last year playing on the drive home certainly did.

This is an unforgettable night out with a relaxed vibe overall, and highly recommended for those who want a glimpse of Afghanistan beyond the headlines.