

MEDIA RELEASE

15 May 2014



Rolling Thunder Vietnam **Songs That Defined A Generation** Tickets On Sale Monday 19 May

The powerful new Australian concert drama ***Rolling Thunder Vietnam*** will world premiere in Brisbane on 14 August 2014 prior to a national tour.

Set in the Vietnam War era, the evocative and stirring production showcases some of the greatest rock songs ever produced performed by some of Australia's greatest singer-actors and musicians.

The show features the music of **Steppenwolf, Joe Cocker, Buffalo Springfield, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Gladys Knight, Billy Thorpe, The Rolling Stones** and **Curtis Mayfield** just to name a few.

Rolling Thunder Vietnam brings to the stage a new generation of young musical talent under the esteemed music direction of **Chong Lim** (*Dancing With The Stars, John Farnham Band*).

The outstanding line-up of singer-actors comprises

WES CARR KIMBERLEY HODGSON TOM OLIVER MATT PEARCE
VANESSA KRUMMENACHER WILL EWING

Conscription, combat, protest and homecoming, ***Rolling Thunder Vietnam - Songs that Defined A Generation*** unites personal stories of young Vietnam War soldiers with classic songs of the era. This dynamic theatrical concert draws audiences inside the lives of men on the battlefield and their family and loved ones at home.

The Vietnam War was the world's first televised war. More than any other conflict it produced some of the most popular and enduring songs of the 20th century.

With stunning projected images and historic footage, ***Rolling Thunder Vietnam*** is a rich and emotional experience written by **Bryce Hallett** (*Freeway – The Chet Baker Journey*) and directed by **David Berthold** (*Holding the Man, Così*). Based on extensive research, actual letters and first-hand interviews with Vietnam War veterans, the stories reveal strained and loving relationships, the danger of combat, the rise of the anti-war protest movement in the late '60s and a bittersweet homecoming.

"The deeply personal stories have largely sprung from face-to-face interviews with Australian soldiers who lived in this era" said **Bryce Hallett, Writer**.

"I wanted the monologues between songs to be truthful and spare. Most of the songs in the show are essentially anti-war protest songs that brilliantly convey the rhythm, spirit and mood of the times. Many are epic in nature and the directness of the storytelling serves to bring a raw intimacy to the music."

David Berthold, Director said "This is music that sings out to every generation that believes in justice, equality, freedom and peace. We've shaped four very personal stories, inspired by real life experiences, into what I think is a musical event that will reach into the heart."

The "songs that defined a generation" include *Magic Carpet Ride, Fortunate Son, All Along the Watchtower, Help Me Make It Through The Night, Run Through the Jungle, Paint It Black, The Real Thing, Letter, People Get Ready*, and *Killing Me Softly With His Song*.

Music in the '60s meant liberation, not only for battle-weary young soldiers, but for a generation of artists whose timely yet enduring songs held a mirror up to the chaos, and expressed themes of love, betrayal and loss.

Chong Lim, Musical Director said "The Vietnam War gave rise to gutsy rock rhythms and emotion-charged guitar riffs that evoked something of the wild energy of the conflict itself. The era of Woodstock, of Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan, also produced many sensitive and poignant songs which have become classics because they remain relevant. **The irony is that out of the ugliness of war came songs of pure beauty.**"

Be among the first to see the exciting theatrical concert ***Rolling Thunder Vietnam*** in its Australian premiere season.

Rolling Thunder Vietnam is presented by **Blake Entertainment** in association with **QPAC**.

www.rollingthundervietnam.com

SEASON DETAILS

Tickets On Sale Monday 19 May

TOOWOOMBA

VENUE Empire Theatre
SEASON Friday 8 Aug 7.30pm, Saturday 9 Aug 7.30pm
TICKETS Empire Theatre on 1300 655 299 or www.empiretheatre.com.au

BRISBANE

VENUE Concert Hall, QPAC
SEASON Thursday 14 Aug 7.30pm Friday 15 Aug 7.30pm
TICKETS QTIX 136 246 or www.qtix.com.au
Groups 10+ SAVE! Call Group Bookings on 07 3840 7466 or www.groups@qtix.com.au

CALOUNDRA

VENUE The Events Centre
SEASON Saturday 16 Aug 7.30pm, Sunday 17 Aug 3pm
TICKETS The Events Centre 07 5491 4240 or www.theeventscentre.com.au

MELBOURNE

VENUE Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall
SEASON Friday 22 Aug 7.30pm, Saturday 23 Aug 2pm, Saturday 23 Aug 7.30pm
TICKETS ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE 1300 182 183 or
www.artscentremelbourne.com.au
Groups 10+ SAVE! Call Group Bookings 1300 002 787

SYDNEY

VENUE State Theatre
SEASON Friday 29 Aug 7.30pm, Saturday 30 Aug 7.30pm
TICKETS TICKETMASTER 1300 139 588 or www.ticketmaster.com.au
Groups 10+ SAVE! Call Group Bookings on [1300 889 278](tel:1300889278)

NEWCASTLE

VENUE Newcastle Civic Theatre
SEASON Wednesday 3 Sept 7.30pm
TICKETS CIVIC THEATRE ON 02 4929 1977 or www.ticketek.com.au

CANBERRA

VENUE Canberra Theatre
SEASON Sunday 7 Sept 2pm & 6pm
TICKETS Canberra Theatre on (02) 6275 2700 or www.canberratheatrecentre.com.au
or www.ticketek.com.au

PERTH

VENUE Crown Theatre, Burswood
SEASON Friday 12 Sept 7.30pm, Saturday 13 Sept 2pm & 7.30pm
TICKETS TICKETEK ON 132 849 or www.ticketek.com.au

ADELAIDE

VENUE Thebarton Theatre
SEASON Friday 19 Sept 7.30pm, Saturday 20 Sept 7.30pm
TICKETS VENUETIX on 08 8225 8888 or www.venuetix.com.au

OVERVIEW OF TICKET PRICES:

Booking and transaction fees may apply

Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide

	A Res	B Res	C Res (Sydney only)
Adult	\$99.90	\$89.90	\$79.90
Concession	\$89.90	\$89.90	\$79.90
Group 10+	\$79.90	\$79.90	\$79.90
ADF (Defence)	\$79.90	\$79.90	N/A

Toowoomba & Caloundra

Adult	\$65.00
Concession	\$55.00
Groups 10+	\$55.00
ADF (Defence)	\$55.00

Newcastle and Canberra

	A Res	B Res
Adult	\$89.90	\$79.90
Concession	\$79.90	\$79.90
Group 10+	\$69.90	N/A
ADF (Defence)	\$69.90	N/A

NB: Canberra Theatre will be promoting a small allocation of PREMIUM seats for \$99.90

FOR FURTHER MEDIA ENQUIRIES ONLY

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www.rollingthundervietnam.com

ROLLING THUNDER VIETNAM

**SONGS THAT
DEFINED
A GENERATION.**



MEDIA KIT

ABOUT THE SHOW

Conscription, combat, protest and homecoming... *Rolling Thunder Vietnam* - Songs that Defined a Generation unites personal stories drawn from real life experiences with classic rock songs of the era. The concert drama presents a new generation of Australian talent and some of Australia's finest rock musicians led by Chong Lim (The John Farnham Band, Dancing With The Stars).

Hot and stormy nights in the jungle reveal the dangers of combat, comradeship, the importance of letters, temptations of the flesh and questions of faith. The stories of country boy Johnny, his girlfriend Sarah, fellow digger Andy and the US marine Thomas, evoke a raw and immediate world of love, fear, courage, moral uncertainty and loss.

"*Rolling Thunder Vietnam* is set in the late '60s, a period of immense cultural and political change, but its stories are universal and resonate at a time when the cost of war continues to be counted." - Bryce Hallett, writer

THE VIETNAM WAR WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST TELEVISED WAR.

ABOUT THE TITLE

The phrase "rolling thunder" is taken from The Bible, Psalm 68:33. "There is a Sky-Rider, striding the ancient skies. Listen – he's calling in thunder, rumbling, rolling thunder."

On March 2, 1965, the United States President, Lyndon B Johnson, approved Operation Rolling Thunder. It involved the bombing of industrial targets in North Vietnam. It was planned as an eight-week assault but lasted three-and-a-half years.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Chong Lim

DIRECTOR

David Berthold

WRITER

Bryce Hallett

CONCEPT

Scott Barton



THE SONGS

In the immortal words of the German Romantic writer Jean Paul Richter, "Music is moonlight in the gloomy night of life".

And so it was that the '60s and early '70s inspired songwriters to reflect on the Vietnam War, particularly the involvement of the United States in a conflict that became known as "America's first rock 'n' roll war".

Music meant liberation, not only for battle-weary young soldiers, but for a generation of artists whose timely yet enduring songs held a mirror up to the chaos, expressed themes of innocence, love, betrayal and loss, and gave rise to gutsy rock rhythms and emotion-charged guitar riffs that evoked something of the insistent and wild energy of the war itself.

The era of Woodstock - of Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan and Paul Simon - also produced many sensitive and poignant songs which have become classics because they remain relevant.

"The irony is that out of the ugliness of war came songs of pure beauty."
- Chong Lim, musical director

OUT OF THE UGLINESS CAME SONGS OF PURE BEAUTY.

ACT ONE

Magic Carpet Ride

Steppenwolf

Fortunate Son

Creedence Clearwater Revival

Most People I Know

Billy Thorpe

The Real Thing

John Young/Russell Morris

All Along The Watchtower

Bob Dylan/ Jimi Hendrix

The Letter

Joe Cocker

Black Magic Woman

Santana

Nowhere To Run

Martha and the Vandellas

Help Me Make It Through The Night

Gladys Knight

ACT TWO

Run Through The Jungle

Creedence Clearwater Revival

War

Edwin Starr

For What It's Worth

Buffalo Springfield

People Get Ready

Curtis Mayfield

Get Together

The Youngbloods

What's Going On

Marvin Gaye

Paint It Black

The Rolling Stones

Killing Me Softly

Roberta Flack

Bridge Over Troubled Water

Simon & Garfunkel

MEET THE CAST



WES CARR

Wesley Dean "Wes" Carr is an accomplished singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. He records under the name of Buffalo Tales. Wes is perhaps best known for winning the sixth season of Australian Idol in 2008.

Upon winning, Wes signed a record deal with Sony Music Australia and released his debut single You. The song went to No 1 on the ARIA Singles Chart and was certified Gold. Wes's second studio album *The Way the World Looks* was released in March 2009 and debuted at No 2 on the ARIA Albums Chart. The singles *Feels Like Woah*, *Fearless* and *Love Is An Animal* also made the ARIA charts.

In November 2011, Wes left Sony to release his albums independently, first an EP titled *Blood & Bone* under the pseudonym Buffalo Tales. His third studio album, *Roadtrip Confessions* was released in June 2013.



KIMBERLEY HODGSON

Kimberley is a musical theatre graduate from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University. She was awarded the Bachelor's Excellence Medal for her Academic achievements. At the Conservatorium, Kimberly featured in a range of roles, including as Dulcie in *Summer of the Aliens*, Hodel (*Fiddler on the Roof*), Judith (*Elegies for Angels Punks & Raging Queens*) and Kim (*Miss Saigon*).

Other performances include Harvest Rain's *Cats* (Brisbane Convention Centre, 2014), *The Spirit of Christmas* (QPAC, 2013), Queensland Tourism Awards (2013), the John Kander & Fred Ebb Musical Revue: *The World Goes 'Round* (2013) and the Con2Cabaret (Judith Wright, 2013).



TOM OLIVER

Tom Oliver is one of Australia's brightest rising talents. He was a member of Kylie Minogue's debut team on *The Voice Australia* (Shine/Nine Network). Tom performed the lead role in *Thomas and the Hidden Treasure* (Smile Entertainment) in Hong Kong, Dubai and Singapore.

Tom appeared the world premiere of the one-man show *The Empty City* directed by David Fenton and also in *Rumour Has It: Sixty Minutes Inside Adele*, for the little red company.

Other theatre credits include *Next to Normal*, *Spring Awakening* (for Oscar Theatre Company, QPAC), *Grease*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* and *Dirty Apple for Opera Queensland*. Tom has toured Queensland and Victoria for shake & stir theatre co, and recently completed actor training with Richard Sarrel at The Rehearsal Room in Melbourne.



MATTHEW PEARCE

Matthew is a 2013 graduate from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA).

Whilst at NIDA he played Brabantio:Lodovico in *Othello*, directed by Jennifer Hagan, Clive/Cathy in *Cloud 9*, directed by Kip Williams and the role of Mark in *Osama - The Hero*, staged by Nicholas Bone. Matthew's other theatre credits include the role of Curly in *Oklahoma*, Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Gaston in *Beauty and The Beast*, all for the Playhouse Theatre, Bundaberg.

In 2013, Matthew filmed a lead role in Sam Curtain's short film *Brothers* and took part in Heinz Schweers's workshop performance of *The Fat and The Fit*, directed by Mackenzie Steele. Most recently he filmed a guest role in the series *Home and Away* for Network Seven.



VANESSA KRUMMENACHER

Vanessa began her training in the arts on the Gold Coast in her early teens. She began studies in 2011 at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music where she graduated with a Bachelor of Musical Theatre degree in 2013.

Whilst at the Conservatorium, Vanessa performed a range of roles, including Beatrice in *Summer of the Aliens*, Chava in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Sally in *Elegies for Angels, Punks & Raging Queens* and Kim in *Miss Saigon*.

Other theatre credits include the role of Bobalurina in *Cats* for Harvest Rain and touring with Artslink Queensland's production of *Sarah's Heavy Heart*.



WILL EWING

William is a graduate of the National Theatre in Melbourne, for which he received three scholarships: the Basin Theatre group scholarship and the G&E Jones scholarship for two consecutive years.

William's credits include the recurring role of Griffin O'Donohue on the TV series *Neighbours*. He played the role of Kevin in *The Chocolate Frog* directed by Malcolm Robertson and recently had a guest role as Oliver Armitage in *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* for ABC-TV.

BACKGROUND

The Vietnam War lasted for 20 years between 1955 and 1975. More than 2 million lives were lost and 3 million people were wounded. Hundreds of thousands of children were left orphans.

Between 1963 and 1973 almost 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam. 521 died more than 1000 were wounded.

About 9 million Americans served on active duty during the official Vietnam War era between 1964 and 1973. 58,151 died and 153,303 were wounded.

Rolling Thunder Vietnam is predominantly set in 1968 and 1969 amid momentous change....It was an era when leaders were killed in their prime and young men were losing their lives in war.... The world appeared to be spinning out of control.

Many of the songs in the show are anti-war protest songs penned directly in response to the ongoing conflict in Vietnam. Others, such as *Real Thing* and *Some People I Know Think That I'm Crazy* are synonymous with the counter-culture generation, The late '60s and early '70s, in particular, was a time of immense social, political and technological change. The Vietnam War was the world's first televised war and many of the satellite images and photographs had a confronting and profound impact on the public and its perceptions of the Vietnam War and Australia's involvement in what was widely viewed as "a political war".

TIMELINE

1965

On March 2, 1965, the United States President Lyndon Johnson approved Operation Rolling Thunder. The name was taken from a psalm in the Bible. The operation involved the bombing of industrial targets in North Vietnam. It was planned as an eight-week assault but lasted three-and-a-half years.

1966

On January 26, Harold Holt becomes Australia's 17th Prime Minister.

In March, Holt announced that National servicemen would be sent to Vietnam to fight in units of the Australian Regular Army. Between 1965 and 1972, more than 800,000 men registered for National Service, of which 63,000 were conscripted and more than 19,000 served in Vietnam. Although registration was compulsory a process of selection by ballot determined who was called up. The ballots were conducted using a lottery barrel and marbles representing birthdays.

MARTIN Luther King's voices his opposition to the Vietnam War. It angers US President Lyndon Johnson but prompts many white activists to switch to anti-war activities.



Lyndon Johnson and Harold Holt

On June 28, the Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt pledges support to America. In his controversial speech at the White House, he told the US President Lyndon B. Johnson:

"You have in us not merely an understanding friend, but one staunch in the belief of the need for our presence with you in Vietnam...And so, Sir, in the lonelier and perhaps even more disheartening moments which come to any leader, I hope there will be a corner of your mind and heart which takes cheer from the fact that you have an admiring friend, a staunch friend that will be all the way with LBJ."

IN August, 18 young Australian soldiers lose their lives in a rubber plantation in the Phuoc Tuy Province in what became known as the Battle of Long Tan.

1967

THE continued presence of American troops in Vietnam increased to more than 470,000.

AMERICAN boxer Muhammad Ali was stripped of his boxing world championship for refusing to be inducted into the US Army.

On December 17 Prime Minister Harold Holt disappears off the Victorian coast near Portsea. Two days later it is declared he has drowned.

1968

On January 10, John Gorton becomes Prime Minister of Australia. He was elected Liberal Party leader to replace Harold Holt. Labor Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam proves a formidable opponent. Through 1968 he gains increasing public support.

THE Tet Offensive is launched in late January.. Vietnamese leaders in Hanoi and Saigon planned the operation in the hope of achieving a decisive victory that would end the grinding conflict in Vietnam. The Tet Offensive played an important role in weakening US public support for the war in Vietnam.

MARTIN Luther King Jr is murdered in Memphis on April 4 during a visit to support striking black garbage collectors. Violent riots erupt in more than 100 cities throughout the United States



Robert Kennedy

ROBERT (Bobby) Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles on June 6. He was a leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 1968 election.

After more than six months, the Battle of Khe Sanh in the northwestern Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam, ends on July 9. Both sides, America and North Vietnam, claim victory. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) strengthen their hold as the conflict worsens.

The tribal rock musical HAIR opens on Broadway. It runs for 1,750 performances.

PEACE rallies in the United States and Australia multiply as the number of protestors against the Vietnam War increased.

1969

RICHARD Nixon becomes President of the United States on January 20. He serves until 1974 when he resigns amid the Watergate scandal. Nixon initially escalated America's involvement in the Vietnam War. He subsequently ended US involvement by 1973, the year the last remaining Australian troops returned from service in Vietnam.

ASTRONAUT Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. It is a monumental achievement watched by thousands on TV throughout the world.

US President Richard Nixon and South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu meet in June at Midway Island. Nixon announces that 25,000 US troops will be withdrawn from Vietnam by September.



Neil Armstrong

The counter-culture Woodstock Festival is held in upstate New York, featuring some of the top rock musicians of the era, including Jimi Hendrix., Creedence Clearwater Revival and Janis Joplin.

IN August, US representative Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese representative Xuan Thuy meet in Paris for secret peace talks. They fail because both sides cannot agree to terms.

1970

HUNDREDS of thousands of people take part in the Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam demonstrations across the United States and in Australia.

THE first draft lottery in the United States is held on December 1. It is the first since World War II.

The Isle of Wight Festival takes place. 600,000 people attend the largest rock festival that had yet been staged. Artists include Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, Joan Baez and The Who.

Simon and Garfunkel release their final album together, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. The title song wins the Grammy for Song of the Year.

The US lowers the voting age to 18 from 21 when President Nixon signs the bill into law on June 22.

PRESIDENT Richard Nixon addresses the nation in November on TV and radio asking the "silent majority" to join him in solidarity with the Vietnam War effort, and to support his policies.

Jimi Hendrix dies of a barbiturate overdose in London.



Moratorium demonstration

Postscript

1,875 Americans are still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

On August 17, 2006, then Prime Minister John Howard, apologised to Australia's 50,000 Vietnam Veterans on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. In his speech to Parliament, Mr Howard said the Government regretted that those who served in Vietnam were not welcomed on their homecoming or given due acknowledgment for the contribution they made, and continue to make, to our nation.

The motto of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia is:

**Honour the dead but
fight like hell for the living.**

Rolling Thunder Vietnam is presented by Blake Entertainment in association with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC).



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