

RAE CORPS NEWSLETTER

Royal Australian Engineers Association (Vic) Inc



SAPPER SUMMIT

Vietnam Veterans' Day

Special Supplement 18Aug14



From The Australian War Memorial

Vietnam Veterans' Day

Vietnam Veterans Day is commemorated on 18 August every year. The day was originally known as Long Tan Day, chosen to commemorate the men of D Company, 6RAR who fought in the battle of Long Tan in 1966. On that day, 108 Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought a pitched battle against over 2,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops in a rubber plantation not far from the small village of Long Tan. The Australians prevailed, but only after fighting in torrential rain for four hours. They were nearly overrun, but were saved by a timely ammunition resupply, accurate artillery fire from the nearby Australian base, and the arrival of reinforcements by armoured personnel carrier. Eighteen Australians lost their lives and 24 were wounded, the largest number of casualties in one operation since the Australian task force had arrived a few months earlier. After the battle the bodies of 245 enemy soldiers were found, but there was evidence that many more bodies had been carried away.

On the third anniversary of Long Tan, 18 August 1969, a cross was raised on the site of the battle by the men of 6RAR. Veterans from the battle gathered at the cross to commemorate the fallen, and the day was commemorated by them as Long Tan Day from then on. Over time, all Vietnam veterans adopted the day as one to commemorate those who served and died in Vietnam. In 1987, following the very successful Welcome Home parade for Vietnam veterans in Sydney, Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced that Long Tan Day would be known as Vietnam Veterans Day. Since then, it has been commemorated every year as the day on which the service of all those men and women who served in Vietnam is remembered.



Turn on your computer's speakers and right click the photo below and click the open hyperlink option. Skip the advertisement if it appears and play whilst reading the rest of this supplement.



Special Theatrical Event in Melbourne to coincide with Vietnam Veterans' Day:

MELBOURNE

VENUE

Arts Centre Melbourne, Hamer Hall

SEASON

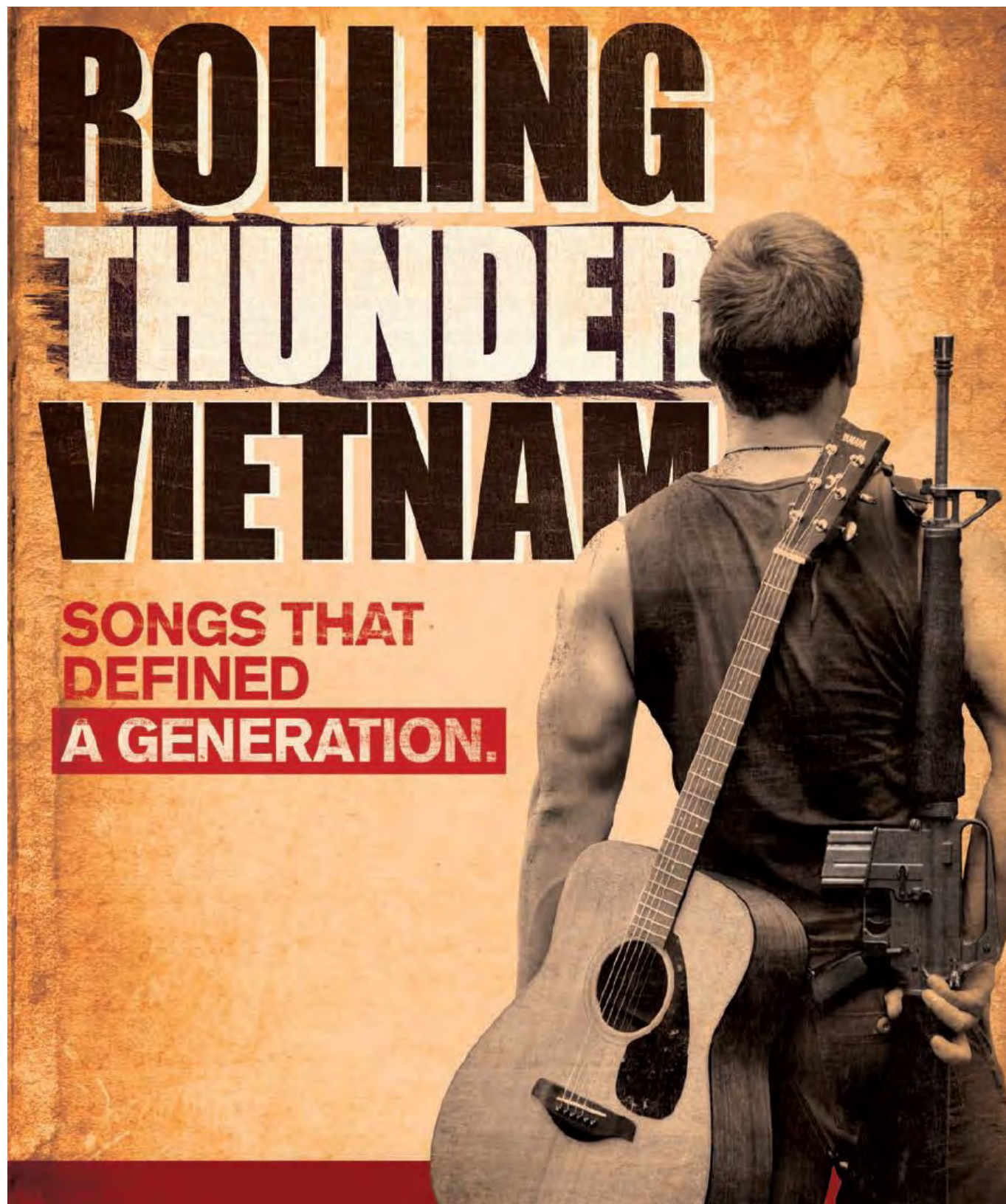
Friday 22 Aug 7.30pm, Saturday 23 Aug 2pm, Saturday 23 Aug 7.30pm

TICKETS

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE 1300 182 183 or

www.artscentremelbourne.com.au

Groups 10+ SAVE! Call Group Bookings 1300 002 787



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.

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, Cosi*). 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.



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

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

1969

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.

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.

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.

1970

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.



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 has been promoted because of the special interest it may have to the defence and veteran community in general and Vietnam veterans in particular. I am certainly aware of some groups of veterans who have made group bookings and are keenly awaiting the Melbourne premier. Editor



**For details on the Vietnam Veterans' Day Commemoration at
The Shrine of Remembrance—visit:**

<http://www.shrine.org.au/Remembrance/Ceremonies/Vietnam-Veterans-Day-Commemoration-Ceremony-2014>



Editor: Graeme Lambert

For the Royal Australian Engineers Association (Vic) Inc

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