

D A N G E R
C L O S E
T H E B A T T L E O F L O N G T A N

DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan

PRODUCTION NOTES

PUBLICITY REQUESTS:

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Images:

High res images and poster available to download via the DOWNLOAD MEDIA tab at:

<https://www.transmissionfilms.com.au/films/danger-close>

Running Time: 118 mins

Distributed in Australia by Transmission Films



SHORT SYNOPSIS

South Vietnam, late afternoon on August 18, 1966 - for three and a half hours, in the pouring rain, amid the mud and shattered trees of a rubber plantation called Long Tan, a dispersed company of 108 young and mostly inexperienced Australian and New Zealand soldiers are fighting for their lives, holding off an overwhelming enemy force of 2,500 battle hardened North Vietnamese soldiers.

SYNOPSIS

Based on a true story: DANGER CLOSE begins with Major Harry Smith [Travis Fimmel], the strict and highly motivated commander of Delta Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, on operation in Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam. Delta Company is made up four platoons; 10, 11 and 12 platoons and a Company HQ, a total of 108 men.

Harry is a career officer and he has no time to 'coddle' or befriend the men in his company. He feels that 'babysitting' these young men - half of which are conscripts - is beneath his special forces skills and previous combat experience.

But with a point to prove, Harry is keen to show what his men, and importantly, he can do to make the best of a harrowing situation.

Harry is keen on getting closer to the fight, to put his unique skills to full use, and he feel he's being held back by his direct superior, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Townsed [Anthony Hayes], the commanding officer of 6RAR.

Harry, never taking a step backwards, makes a direct request for a transfer back to special forces with the Task Force Commander Brigadier David Jackson [Richard Roxburgh].

We meet the gruff, 21-year old conscript, country boy Private Paul Large [Daniel Webber] and his buddy Private Noel Grimes [Nicholas Hamilton]. Large is a typical young Australian man of that era, who doesn't suffer fools lightly and will always be there for his mates.

At 2.43am on August 17, 1966, the North Vietnamese launch a surprise mortar and rocket attack on the Australian base. The incoming explosions send everyone scrambling to their defensive positions.

Treating the potential danger somewhat nonchalantly, Large negligently discharges his weapon in all the confusion. Large is summoned to answer for his negligence in front of Harry and we witness a very tense exchange.

Harry's loyal and very experienced Company Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Jack Kirby [Anthony Hayes] is concerned Harry is driving his men too hard, but Harry shows nothing but disinterest in the emotional plight of his men.

The morning after the attack, 18 August 1966 an understrength Bravo Company, 6RAR are sent out to find the enemy mortar positions. After a fruitful search by B Company, Harry and his men are ordered out on patrol to take over the search.

Harry's men are deeply annoyed as they will miss the first ever concert at the base by Little Pattie [Ammy Dougall] and Col Joye. Harry informs his men they are heading out on a 'seek-

and-destroy' mission and whereas Bravo could not find the enemy, Harry assures his men they will. Harry and his men leave Nui Dat and upon relieving B Company they follow enemy blood trails and tracks into a rubber plantation called Long Tan.

With all the infantry platoons spread out over a kilometre, 11 Platoon who is leading the patrol runs into a small patrol of Viet Cong and immediately fires on them. With the enemy patrol quickly retreating, Harry orders the 21 year old Platoon Commander Gordon Sharp [Mojean Aria] to chase them. Not long after, 11 Platoon are suddenly attacked by a massive force. They immediately suffer significant casualties and are pinned down on three sides.

As the battle rages, support from Australian, New Zealand and American artillery back at the 1st Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat is called in.

Monsoonal rain hits the plantation and it soon becomes apparent that D Company have stumbled into the large North Vietnamese force.

Harry continues to push his company onwards towards 11 Platoon.

As enemy attacks intensify and with casualties mounting, 11 Platoon is close to being overrun.

Harry detaches 10 Platoon to try and reach the beleaguered 11 Platoon, but they too soon end up in a substantial firefight with the enemy, begin taking casualties, and are eventually pinned down themselves. At this stage 10 Platoon's radio goes off the air after being damaged and both Harry and Gordon Sharp have no way of knowing if they'll reach 11 Platoon.

11 Platoon commander Sharp is killed and Sergeant Bob Buick is forced to take command of 11 Platoon. With less than half killed or wounded, with the survivors running out of ammunition and almost surrounded, Buick asks Harry to bring artillery down on his position.

When Harry loses radio contact with 11 Platoon, it seems the platoon he fired on is now lost.

With the tide of the battle turning against the ANZACs, Jackson now fearful for the Nui Dat base, orders Harry and his company to withdraw. Harry must now decide between the mission, his orders or his men. Harry refuses, and disobeying his new orders he instead pushes forward to recover his lost platoon.

Back at Nui Dat, Jackson is incensed. He now sees Harry as a threat to the base. Jackson refuses to send out ground reinforcements and the APC's (Armoured Personnel Carriers).

But some of the Australian officers, once allied to Jackson, now begin to take matters into their own hands, disobeying orders, as they cannot stand by and watch Delta Company be annihilated.

RAAF chopper pilot Frank Riley [Myles Pollard] takes it upon himself to fly his Huey chopper out to assist Delta Company with an ammunition drop.

The battle continues to escalate, and the men of Delta Company fight bravely as they, with the help of the artillery, barely hold back an almost overwhelming enemy. All seems lost as more of Harry's men are killed and wounded, yet more and more enemy appear around them.

After radio contact is re-established with 10 Platoon, Harry orders them to return to the Company HQ position and he then orders the 21-year old commander of 12 Platoon Lt David

Sabben to try and rescue 11 Platoon. But not before leaving a third of his platoon behind to defend the growing numbers of wounded. 12 Platoon head out and soon surprise a large enemy force and they decimate them. Continuing towards 11 Platoon they are soon pinned down by large numbers of enemy and cannot move. Through sheer will and determination however, they find and recover the survivors from 11 Platoon and they all withdraw to the D Company defensive position.

With the miraculous rescue of 11 Platoon, Townsend finally convinces Jackson that he can take the fight to the enemy thereby protecting the base by reaching D Company with reinforcements. Jackson reluctantly relents and releases the APCs.

As APC commander, 24-year old Lieutenant Adrian Roberts [Stephen Peacocke], races across the Vietnam rice paddies and countryside towards D Company, Townsend orders him to return to the base to pick him up. Knowing how crucial it is to get to D Company quickly, Roberts disobeys two direct orders to halt and return to pick up Townsend.

For the first time all of Delta Company are now together in one defensive position but the North Vietnamese have located them.

Harry and his men are pinned down, almost surrounded, and continually attacked by waves of hundreds of enemy soldiers. Harry is unaware of the APCs location and how long it will be until they arrive, if they arrive.

It has taken an hour for the APC relief force to arrive at the edge of the Long Tan rubber plantation, but they soon stumble into a large group of enemy and are instantly bogged down in a raging firefight.

With little more than 10 rounds of ammunition left per man, some already out of ammunition and gripping their bayonets and butts of their rifles, Harry and his men make their last stand and prepare for their inevitable destruction.

As the enemy makes one last major assault on D Company - which will surely overwhelm Harry and his men - the APC's arrive in the last minutes of daylight and drive them back. With their powerful .50 calibre machineguns blazing away, it is finally too much for the Vietnamese and they retreat.

Harry and his men are saved. And as quickly as it started, the battle is over. There is nothing but silence.

The next morning Delta Company conduct a roll call and the missing soldiers reveal the true cost of the battle. As Harry stands with his men he speaks to them not as a commander but as a brother in arms. The men are no longer led by Harry, they follow him.

Upon returning to the battlefield the Delta Company survivors go through the highs of discovering wounded still alive, and the lows of the many friends who have died.

Kriby suggests that Harry leave his men and join the top brass for a debrief. Harry refuses and stays with his men, his 'family', as this is where he needs to be.

The film ends with a somber roll call listing the 18 young Australian dead and statements about the number of opposing forces and the injustices of not being properly recognised by the Australian Government.

The Battle of Long Tan is one of the most savage and decisive ANZAC engagements in Australian military history, earning both the United States and South Vietnamese Presidential Unit Citations for gallantry along with many individual awards.

DANGER CLOSE: THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN is a nail biting and dramatic exploration of war illustrating heroism, tragedy and the sacrifice of battle.

CASTING AND CHARACTERS

- MAJOR HARRY SMITH – portrayed by **TRAVIS FIMMEL**
- SERGEANT "BOB" BUICK – portrayed by **LUKE BRACEY**
- WARRANT OFFICER CLASS 2 "JACK" KIRBY – portrayed by **ALEXANDER ENGLAND**
- PRIVATE PAUL LARGE – portrayed by **DANIEL WEBBER**
- BRIGADIER DAVID JACKSON – portrayed by **RICHARD ROXBURGH**
- LIEUTENANT COLONEL COLIN TOWNSEND – portrayed by **ANTHONY HAYES**
- CAPTAIN "MORRIE" STANLEY – portrayed by **AARON GLENANE**
- SECOND LIEUTENANT "DAVE" SABBEN – portrayed by **SAM PARSONSON**
- BOMBARDIER RAY NGATAI – portrayed by **ULI LATUKEFU**
- GUNNER MURRAY WATENE – portrayed by **RICHARD TE ARE**
- GUNNER KEN DEACON – portrayed by **BEN ESLER**
- PRIVATE NOEL GRIMES – portrayed by **NICHOLAS HAMILTON**
- CORPORAL "PHIL" 'DOC' DOBSON – portrayed by **SAM COTTON**
- LANCE CORPORAL "WILLY" WALKER – portrayed by **JAY KIRIONA**
- PRIVATE "BILL" 'YANK' AKELL – portrayed by **TOBY BLOME**
- CORPORAL "BUDDY" LEA – portrayed by **LASARUS RATUERE**
- LITTLE PATTIE – portrayed by **EMMY DOUGALL**

CREDITS

SCREEN QUEENSLAND
SCREEN AUSTRALIA
SABOTEUR MEDIA
PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
RED DUNE FILMS
AND DEEPER WATER FILMS

DANGER CLOSE - THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

TRAVIS FIMMEL LUKE BRACEY DANIEL WEBBER ALEXANDER ENGLAND
AARON GLENANE NICHOLAS HAMILTON MYLES POLLARD MATT DORAN
WITH ANTHONY HAYES AND RICHARD ROXBURGH

CASTING BY KIRSTY MCGREGOR CGA C.S.A STEVIE RAY CGA

SOUND DESIGNER & SUPERVISOR LIAM EGAN

MUSIC BY CAITLIN YEO

VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR SCOTT ZERO

COSTUME DESIGNER LIZZY GARDINER

PRODUCTION DESIGNER SAM HOBBS

FILM EDITING BY VERONIKA JENET ASE

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BEN NOTT A.C.S.

LINE PRODUCER PETA ROSS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JUSTIN BOYLSON ANTON ROSENBERG DENNIS KARP JIMMY
COSTAS JOE SIMPSON JOHN JENCKS JAY TAYLOR CHARLES DOMBEK ALASTAIR
BURLINGHAM VERONICA SIVE MEYER SHWARZSTEIN CHARLES HANNAH PETER
WETHERELL SIMON WILLIAMS ANDERS ERDÉN NICK QUESTED DAVID KENNEDY

PRODUCERS STUART BEATTIE TONY H NOUN SILVIO SALOM ANDREW MANN

PRODUCED BY MARTIN WALSH JOHN SCHWARZ MICHAEL SCHWARZ

SCREENPLAY BY STUART BEATTIE

DIRECTED BY KRIV STENDERS

INTRODUCTION

Based on the true story of The Battle of Long Tan which took place in South Vietnam on 18 August 1966, **DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan** is directed by Kriv Stenders (**RED DOG**) from a screenplay by Stuart Beattie (**COLLATERAL**, **AUSTRALIA**, **PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN**) **DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan** stars Travis Fimmel (**VIKINGS**, **WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING**), Luke Bracey (**HACKSAW RIDGE**, **POINT BREAK**), Daniel Webber (**THE DIRT**), Alexander England (**ALIEN: COVENANT**, **GODS OF EGYPT**), Aarone Glenane (**SNOWPIERCER**, **PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK**), Nicholas Hamilton (**IT:I**, **THE DARK TOWER**) with Anthony Hayes (**WAR MACHINE**, **ANIMAL KINGDOM**) and Richard Roxburgh (**MOULIN ROUGE**, **VAN HELSING**).

DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan was developed and produced by Sydney-based Red Dune Films and Los Angeles and Sydney-based Deeper Water Films in association with Screen Queensland and Screen Australia. **DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan** was Produced by Martin Walsh, John Schwarz and Michael Schwarz with Producers Stuart Beattie, Tony H Noun, Silvio Salom and Andrew Mann with Executive Producers Justin Boylson, Anton Rosenberg, Dennis Karp, Jimmy Costas, Joe Simpson, John Jencks, Jay Taylor, Charles Dombek, Alastair Burlingham, Veronica Sive, Meyer Shwarzstein, Charles Hannah, Peter Wetherell, Simon Williams, Anders Erdén, Nick Quested and David Kennedy.

Transmission Films acquired **DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan** for the Australian and New Zealand markets. Saboteur Media represents the sale of the film internationally. The film was co-financed by Screen Queensland, Screen Australia and a number of private Australian investors.

BACKGROUND TO THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

In May and June 1966, the soldiers of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) arrived in South Vietnam. By August, the Australian task force base at Nui Dat was just three months old, and from it, the Australians sought to assert control of Phuoc Tuy, the province for which Australia had operational authority in South Vietnam.

Concerned at the establishment of such a strong presence in their midst, the Main Force Viet Cong (Vietnamese Communist) was determined to inflict an early defeat on the Australians. Top Secret Australian Radio Signals Tracking indicated the presence of a Main Force Viet Cong Regiment within 5 kilometres of the base, but a number of Australian patrols found nothing. For the first time, the VC attacked the Nui Dat base during the early hours of 17 August.

While the attack wounded 24 Australians and caused only limited damage, it perturbed the Australian Task Force Commander, Brigadier Oliver Jackson, as he recognised the base's potential vulnerability to a more significant attack. In response, B Company, 6RAR was directed to patrol and locate the VC's firing positions. C Coy achieved this task, before being replaced by D Company, 6RAR at midday on 18 August. D Company followed parallel bullock cart tracks leading away from the firing positions into a rubber plantation towards the abandoned village of Long Tan.

It was here - four kilometres to the east of Nui Dat whilst the first ever music concert was taking place with Little Pattie on stage at Nui Dat - that the battle of Long Tan took place.

As D Company moved through the plantation, in three separate Platoons (10, 11 and 12) and a HQ Platoon, 11 Platoon ran into a small group of VC soldiers. After a short exchange of gunfire, the enemy fled and 11 Platoon was ordered to pursue them, not knowing they were about to collide with a major enemy force.

From the battle's outset, an intense afternoon storm added to the noise and terror in the plantation, as well as the rise of a 'mud mist', which made it difficult for both sides to visually identify targets. D Company was splintered into separate groups, each harassed by determined VC attacks. 11 Platoon's predicament was dire. Isolated, more than half the platoon's strength of 28 men had been wounded or killed within 20 minutes of the first exchange of fire.

D Coy commander Major Harry Smith sent 10 Platoon to try and support 11 Platoon but they too soon came under heavy enemy attack, but not before inflicting significant casualties of their own. At this stage both 10 and 11 Platoon's radios were damaged and out of action, adding to the stress and confusion of the battle.

Back at Nui Dat, the base buzzed as reports from Long Tan kept increasing the estimated number of VC opposing the Australians.

A young 21 year old signaller, 'Yank' Akell was ordered to try and find 10 Platoon with his spare radio. Yank made it to 10 Platoon but not before engaging and killing three enemy with his WWII sub machinegun. With radio communications re-established and because 10 platoon were pinned down and taking casualties, Major Smith had no choice but to order them to withdraw to his position. Major Smith then sent 12 Platoon from his right flank to try and break through to 11 Platoon but not before leaving an entire section behind to help defend the increasing wounded.

24 guns of Australian, New Zealand and American artillery was already firing on the VC when the daring pilots of two RAAF Huey choppers flew through atrocious weather at tree top level to drop boxes of ammunition down to D Company, whose supply was alarmingly low.

US air support was also requested with the Americans enthusiastically agreeing to help. However, when three F4 Phantom jets responded, they could not identify targets on the ground through the thick cloud, Major Smith ordered them to drop their ordnance enemy on the rear areas of suspected enemy positions.

As 12 Platoon at only two thirds strength made their way towards 11 Platoon, they were able to surprise a large enemy force crossing their front right. They decimated this enemy group and continued to move towards 11 Platoon, but soon they were also pinned down by heavy enemy contact. With 12 Platoon successfully holding their ground, they threw a yellow smoke grenade towards where they thought the survivors of 11 Platoon were positioned. Just before 6pm, the surviving thirteen members of 11 Platoon were finally able to fire and move back from their position to 12 Platoon. The combined 11 Platoon survivors and 12 Platoon were able to regroup with the rest of the company, consolidating the strength of D Company for the first time in the entire battle.

The following half an hour saw relentless waves of attacks on the D Company position. The VC attacks were determined, with their courage proven by their willingness to continue the attack even as large numbers of their own troops fell under relentless artillery fire.

24 artillery guns were firing 6-8 rounds per gun per minute.

As darkness fell, with many of the Australians down to their last few rounds of ammunition, some out of ammunition and gripping bayonets and entrenching tools to fight with, and with the enemy massing for another major assault, D Company's relief finally appeared in the nick of time with the arrival of the ten Australian APCs. The heavy .50 calibre machine guns on the APCs blasted through the rubber, breaking up the attacking ranks of the NVA and VC, sending them scattered into the darkness.

At 7.10pm, the Battle of Long Tan was over.

The Australians actually believed they had suffered a terrible defeat. However, over the following days, the outcome of the battle began to crystallise. An Australian infantry company of 108 young men had survived an unexpected encounter with 275 Viet Cong Main Force Regiment, from which as many as 2,000 probably came into direct contact with the Australians.

Australia's casualties were 18 killed and 24 wounded. Although that number exceeded any other single day loss in the Vietnam War, the number could have been much higher given the disparity in opposing troop numbers.

This single engagement was so significant in August 1966, U.S. Commander General Westmoreland flew to the battlefield to confirm the incredible victory with his own eyes. In 1968, U.S. President Lyndon B Johnson awarded Delta Company, 6RAR with the highest United States military unit award, the U.S. Presidential Unit Citation for Gallantry.

The Battle of Long Tan is now remembered as an exemplar of Australian and New Zealand soldiers channeling the same attributes of bravery, teamwork and endurance that their forbears displayed in earlier conflicts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STORY AND THIS FILM

DANGER CLOSE is an important and timely film because the facts of this battle are so remarkable, and ANZAC participation in the Vietnam War is either largely unknown internationally or mostly forgotten.

A surprising fact is it's been more than 30 years since Australia's last epic ANZAC films; GALLIPOLI in 1981 and THE LIGHTHORSEMEN in 1987. And almost all major Australian war films have all been about World War I.

The Battle of Long Tan is a specific but also an eternal story, of dogged persistence, unyielding valour, and an underdog prevailing against what looked like certain defeat. This battle saw 108 young and largely inexperienced ANZACs fight 2,500 battle hardened soldiers, echoing the march of 300 Spartans against a mighty, populous enemy.

"It's vital that we continually remind ourselves that this kind of union, these bonds between individuals who will not accept defeat, is what makes us survive," asserts Kriv Stenders.

“The soldiers that went to Vietnam were never really understood,” he continues. “They were spat on, they were called mercenaries. They weren’t even allowed in RSL clubs. When you realise what these guys did, not only in the Battle of Long Tan but what their service was throughout the entire Vietnam war, and look at the way they were treated, enough time has passed for us to realise that this battle that was fought for four hours on that afternoon in August 1966 has haunted these men for over 50 years and has left many scars.

This film exposes the horror of it all and it shows the audience what these men went through and what they have had to hold onto, mostly silently, for more than 50 years.”

For producer Michael Schwarz: “DANGER CLOSE is a very important film at this moment, particularly for Australia and New Zealand. We don’t get these movies often; America makes these movies well. Often when we celebrate our war heroes, we do it in a classic Australian self-deprecating way - we celebrate losses, and Vietnam gets swept aside as a politically unpopular war. Celebrating these guys who didn’t choose to be there but stood their ground and did everything and more than was asked of them, is the kind of thing that Australia needs right now. They’re not superheroes, they’re heroes.”

Actor Alex England feels that there’s a respect that’s overdue for the veterans of the Battle of Long Tan, as well as for those who died that day.

“The idea of the Digger, shaped by World War I and World War II, is of leaning on each other, and disregarding higher command in those moments where you need to look after your mates,” he says. “All of these elements are tied up with the Battle of Long Tan. I think it’s an important part of the fabric of us.”

Luke Bracey adds: “It’s so important to know our history. If we don’t learn from our mistakes, we’re doomed to repeat them. We should never forget all the things that these men did for us.”

“Hopefully this story, and the way we’re telling it, can be a vehicle to expose the lessons of the Battle of Long Tan to audiences of different ages,” says Lasarus Ratuere. “It’s the story of a very brutal situation, but there’s something amazing that comes through the mateship and camaraderie between these men that was incredibly inspirational.”

Producer Martin Walsh adds: “It is crucial that we continue to create our new ANZAC myths and legends. This film not only helps us immortalise an entire generation of mostly unrecognised ANZAC Vietnam veterans, it might help to close some old wounds. It really is the true story of ordinary boys who became extraordinary men.”

NEW ZEALAND AND THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

The New Zealand Defence Force played an important role in the Battle of Long Tan. One of the four batteries of artillery guns supporting D Company, 6RAR – there being four batteries with six guns in each - was New Zealand’s 161 Battery.

Two others were Australian and the fourth was a United States Army battery. In addition, a three man Forward (artillery) Observer (FO) party from New Zealand’s 161 Battery was attached to Delta Company to execute artillery fire missions and artillery coordination in the

field. And because New Zealand didn't have conscription, their contingent of purely professional soldiers brought an entirely different quality to the Battle.

"We were able to cast some great young New Zealand actors," says producer Michael Schwarz, "including RICHARD TE ARE, as well as JAY KIRIONA, who plays WILLY WALKER; a radio operator in the New Zealand Forward (Artillery) Observer party. Jay brings a really great quality to the film; a real sweetness, but there's a hardness that the real Willie Walker had, that he is able to sort of put in front of him without hiding that sweetness."

"I had the privilege of talking to Willy, to try and get an essence of who he was as a person," says Kiriona. "Understanding the relationships that Willy had with the superior officers around him was crucial. Because Willy is a radio operator, he's always working alongside his boss NZ Captain Morrie Stanley and Major Smith. I needed to have a feasible idea of what his relationship was with Stanley and with Harry Smith. Being a small section of New Zealanders in amongst a predominantly Australian company was also interesting to me; how their dynamic would have worked."

Kiriona didn't know about the Battle of Long Tan before coming to the film, and as does with other Australian actors, he sees it as "a vital piece of our history that we just don't know enough about. I think that New Zealanders should know about it because we were a small contribution amongst a big community of Australian soldiers, but we played such a vital role."

THE CHARACTERS

MAJOR HARRY SMITH – PORTRAYED BY TRAVIS FIMMEL

Major Harry Smith, the Commander of Delta Company (6RAR) was known as a hard, uncompromising taskmaster. He trained his men harder than any other company in the regiment, which built an aspect of respect but also an underlying resentment among his junior soldiers. Especially for conscripts, his approach created tension and clashes as no other regular infantry company was being trained as hard as Delta Company.

Major Smith was a professional, career soldier who served in the Special Forces and in Malaya in the mid 1950s. Smith is infinitely more experienced than almost all of his men, but also more experienced than some of his superiors. He's seen war and carnage that they haven't yet seen. Smith's complex character informs the narrative arc of DANGER CLOSE.

Martin Walsh has known Harry Smith for almost 16 years, since he began exploring the story of the Battle, but the two were also connected by their army service.

"We served in the same unit, 2 Commando Company, 1 Commando Regiment but 30 years apart," explains Walsh. "Because Harry came from Special Forces to regular infantry, if it wasn't for that background, and his training Delta Company to Special Forces level, they definitely would not have survived the Battle of Long Tan."

To portray this singular man, Stenders and the producers looked at a number of talented actors, before producer John Schwarz suggested Australian actor TRAVIS FIMMEL, star of the hit History Channel series VIKINGS as King Ragnar.

"Suddenly, something clicked," says Stenders. "I loved Travis' work as Ragnar in VIKINGS, and his screen presence. There is an animal quality to him. I thought that idea, superimposed over the character of Harry, was really exciting and lifted the character off the page. Travis brought that animal quality – that mercurial, unpredictable quality that he has – to the role."

"Harry Smith has a fierceness which Travis Fimmel has onscreen," adds Walsh. "In VIKINGS, when Travis needs to be fierce, he's fierce. But when he needs to be compassionate and fair, he is that. There's also that little bit of self-doubt that Travis portrayed in King Ragnar, which is a key quality that Harry has too. When I saw that, I couldn't imagine anyone else playing Harry Smith."

On reading the script, Fimmel recognised that there were many great characters in DANGER CLOSE, but he was drawn to Harry and the challenges the character and the real man, faced.

"As an actor, there's a lot more you can dive into to play somebody with so much responsibility and pressure," says Fimmel.

"I also recognised how important it was to make audiences aware of this battle. Young kids, all of us, should all know what happened, out of respect for the soldiers who fought in the Battle of Long Tan. Some sacrificed their lives, and a lot of veterans from the Battle are still alive. None of them should be forgotten."

“Travis Fimmel brings both a quietness and complex hardness to the character of Major Harry Smith that was vitally important. Travis did it effortlessly. He can convey complex emotions with little dialogue and that’s what we needed for Harry Smith. He’s not a character of many words,” says Walsh.

Fimmel spoke to Stenders from the USA, then arrived in Australia a month before production to meet the director and commence training and rehearsals. In fact Travis was sent over to Perth in Western Australia to train with Australian Special Forces veterans from the SAS and Commandos.

“Kriv is such a character, a great fellow and a very, very nice human being,” says Fimmel. “Everybody was great on DANGER CLOSE; the producers, all the actors and crew. It was a fun and very hard working set.”

For fellow actor RICHARD ROXBURGH (BRIGADIER OLIVER JACKSON): “There’s a very big presence in Travis, but being from the bush, like I am, I understood him. We grew up not that far apart. There’s an innocence still there in what he does, which was great for the role, because a lot of those guys were innocent, led off out of their home pastures to terrible things.”

PRIVATE PAUL LARGE – PORTRAYED BY DANIEL WEBBER

Paul Large was a country boy from Coolah, in central-western New South Wales, who was conscripted to serve in the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Vietnam. Through his experiences in the Battle, and through his character in the film, Large encapsulates and personifies the experience shared by many of the young Australian soldiers.

“He embodies the story that many young conscripts experienced in Vietnam,” says DAN WEBBER, who portrays Large. “He’s resistant to being there, but in the end creates a family with the soldiers in his platoon. He’s a beautiful character, and his is a beautiful journey.”

Large is transformed through the film by his interactions with two very different men; his commander, Major Harry Smith, and a young recruit, NOEL GRIMES (portrayed by NICHOLAS HAMILTON).

“Paul Large believes in family and taking care of everybody in it, and that’s partly his flaw; he cares too much about looking after the guys,” continues Webber. “He and Noel Grimes have a wonderful older brother, younger brother relationship. Paul coaches Noel, making sure he’s safe, making sure that he is doing the right thing.”

Large perceives that Harry Smith is not taking care of his men, that he regards them like cannon fodder, but through observing the other’s acts of bravery and self-sacrifice demonstrated during the fierce Battle, Smith and Large come to understand that each are working for the best of their fellow soldiers.

“Kriv wanted to bring out the spirit of these young men and the camaraderie that they had,” says Webber. “These men continued the ANZAC spirit; we really wanted that to be present within the film and so as actors we worked hard at creating those bonds on and off-set; these relationships between us were going to be essential to the filmmaking.”

When Webber was cast, he was proud to be playing a role in expanding the knowledge of the story of the Battle, and the role that men like Paul Large played in it.

“The men who are still alive who fought in the Battle of Long Tan have experienced years of trying to gain recognition and commendations,” the actor says. “They’ve had to fight for public acknowledgement about the battle; it’s not one we grew up learning about. I think it’s an essential story and hopefully our film can help locate it within the same context as the Somme, Gallipoli, Tobruk, and other battles that Australian soldiers demonstrated great courage in.”

WARRANT OFFICER CLASS 2 JACK KIRBY – PORTRAYED BY ALEXANDER ENGLAND

Jack Kirby was a career soldier, who by the time he reached Vietnam was 32 years old and had seen active service in Korea and in Malaya. Called ‘Big Jack’ because of his stature, Kirby was well-loved, and as a Company Sergeant Major, played a role that required a disciplinarian aspect, to keep his men in order, but also a supportive quality.

Actor ALEX ENGLAND, who portrays Kirby, says he was: “very happy to read that Jack was big, gruff guy, but who had a sense of humour as well. In some ways, Jack Kirby represents the heart between these guys. Throughout the film, he puts himself at personal risk to look after them. He was there for a reason, and I believe he was there because he deeply cared about the people around him, and about doing the right thing.”

Because Jack Kirby was in a position of responsibility, Alex England mirrored that dynamic with his fellow cast members.

“On the shoot, were all away from home,” he says, “and it was a cast of largely young actors, because conscription was in-force, so the process of getting to know the other actors, bonding with them, ensuring that everyone was alright, was key.”

Between Harry Smith and the soldiers, Kirby plays a crucial role. Smith represents authority, decision-making and the more impersonal elements of battle. Jack Kirby acts as a conduit between Harry and the men of Delta Company, helping to soften the often harsh communications coming from Harry.

Michael Schwarz adds: “Jack Kirby is very loyal to Harry Smith, and Alex portrayed that perfectly. He took on a leadership role with the younger actors, on and off-camera. He’s the guy that you want giving you encouragement while you’re under pressure. That’s what Jack Kirby did and what Alex does. While these guys are in gunfights, he’s running around handing out ammunition, giving them encouragement, telling them it’s going to be all right. Alex was perfect in the role. That’s who he is.”

Kriv Stenders and England had not worked together, and first met via a Skype call.

“Even through the computer screen I thought: ‘It’s going to be a pleasure to work with this guy,’” says England. “Kriv’s passion for storytelling was infectious. It was always going to be a big shoot, with so many moving pieces, so many cast and crew, but he approached it with an excited energy and was clear about saying: ‘Let’s make this together, and let’s do what we need to do to tell the best possible story we can.’ It was great to be invited into such a collaborative experience.”

SERGEANT BOB BUICK – PORTRAYED BY LUKE BRACEY

We meet 26 year-old Sergeant Bob Buick as the Second in Command of 11 Platoon. His temper is short, partly because he's a professional soldier who is answering to a younger and less experienced conscript Lieutenant, GORDON SHARP (portrayed by MOJEAN ARIA) who his too close to his men both in age and personality.

When the 21-year-old Lieutenant Sharp is killed during the Battle, Buick must take over command of the surviving men of the Platoon, many of them killed and wounded, and with no operational radio to communicate with Major Smith or call in and adjust artillery.

"It was very interesting to play Bob Buick," says actor LUKE BRACEY. "It was a very interesting dance with Gordon Sharp. They're very different men, so Mojean and I worked together on finding those tiny moments where animosity gives way to the reality of the situation. At the end of the day, being the professional soldier that Sergeant Buick was, he knows that external personality conflicts have to be left at the door. This is about survival."

Bracey found a rich amount of archival material of Buick; talking about the Battle, his time in the army, as well as his experiences growing up and the struggles in his life. Everything Bracey learned about Buick was that he was a divisive character.

"I wanted to get to the pure essence of who Bob Buick was as a man and the actions he took," Bracey says. "Buick was put in an extraordinary situation. His Commanding Officer was killed he had to assume extraordinary responsibility. Through his actions many of his men made it out of that rubber plantation.

I think Bob Buick is the epitome of the idea of leaving yourself at the door when an extraordinary situation comes to you. You have to look beyond yourself. I think he's a hero. It was an honour to play a man who went through many things not just during the battle but since."

Producer John Schwarz recognises that: "Luke Bracey brought something to the role that I didn't expect; leadership. He brought it in front of the camera and behind the camera."

"We shot most of the 11 Platoon sequences first, so those actors arrived a week earlier than the other Platoons. Bracey said to them: 'when the other actors turn up, we're going to show them how 11 Platoon does it. We're going to be on set before them, we're going to work longer than them.' He built a culture of dedication around the actors. A lot of the actors had never been in a feature film before, so Luke embraced a leadership role, and it shows on screen beautifully."

BRIGADIER DAVID JACKSON – PORTRAYED BY RICHARD ROXBURGH

Brigadier Oliver Jackson is a second-generation military professional, who believes in the importance of the military and what it represents in a society. Vietnam was a complex war, dominated by politics and America's strategic priorities in Southeast Asia, so it was a difficult war to 'sell' to Australians, but as part of the military apparatus, Jackson's job was to engage in the mechanics of the War, not its reasons.

Veteran actor RICHARD ROXBURGH, who portrays Jackson, says he: “was drawn to the story because it’s an important one to tell. Australia’s involvement in Vietnam was complex and controversial, and remains so, but these guys still haven’t achieved the recognition they deserve.

“The script captured the awful mechanics of war beautifully. The characters were beautifully drawn by Stuart Beattie. That’s where you need to be when you’re telling a story within the big compass of a war; the small, human stuff is where you need to be within the horrible atrocity of war.”

Brigadier Jackson is faced with difficult command decisions, recalling B company in order to help protect the base, which intelligence points to being under threat, leaving Harry Smith and Delta Company to fend for themselves in the rubber plantation.

“Jackson has an enormous amount of respect for Smith because of what he achieved in Malaya, but he’s cut from a different cloth,” continues Roxburgh. “Jackson is the person that you want in the backrooms making those decisions because they’re impossible decisions to make.”

“I had many conversations with Kriv and with Stuart Beattie about making sure that the audience knew that Jackson was not somebody who took decisions lightly, who could easily dispense with a company of men under his watch. It’s a terrible decision for any military Commander to have to make. It was important that it’s done because there’s a bigger picture that needs to be considered. I wanted that moment in there where you see the cost to Jackson.”

The Vietnam War had come close to Roxburgh’s family.

“One of my older brothers was conscripted for Vietnam; luckily he didn’t end up going but he maintains that every guy he trained with who did go, came back a completely different person,” Roxburgh continues.

“There was something about the Vietnam campaign that turned it into a very different thing. The returning soldiers were not given ticket-tape parades; they were, if anything, paraded as enemies of the people. That’s a terrible thing to face; to go away, to suffer through hell, to come back and be ostracised. How is that fair? And so, I think a degree of recognition for what those guys went through is really important historically.”

Roxburgh had never worked with Kriv Stenders, but was struck by the parallel between the filmmaking and the subject matter.

“Kriv is terrifically personable, but what hit me was the level of mental organisation that he did for the film; I find it astonishing how ordered his mind is to achieve something like this. Directing a film about a military campaign is like running a military campaign.”

Producer John Schwarz adds: “I think Richard Roxburgh is one of the best character actors working not just in Australia but in the world. This is a film of exciting action and special effects, but I was just as excited to see what Richard Roxburgh was going to be doing with Brigadier Jackson, and he delivered. He brought really fascinating layers to the character. It was really exciting to have Richard working on this.”

CORPORAL BUDDY LEA – PORTRAYED BY LASARUS RATUERE

Corporal Buddy Lea symbolised, in the Battle of Long Tan and in DANGER CLOSE, an important aspect of the Australian representation in the Vietnam War. As a South Sea Islander man and as an Indigenous Australian, his presence was historically contentious.

“It stems back to World War I where you had to sign a waiver form denouncing your Aboriginality to go into the Army,” explains LASARUS RATUERE, who portrays Lea. “The presence of Indigenous soldiers is important because a lot of them served without the same sort of respect and without the same reimbursements when they came back from the War. To have Buddy Lea’s story told is very honouring and important.”

“What’s interesting though is that Buddy was so positive and forward-thinking; he focused on the objective at hand and fighting for his brothers and sisters regardless of colour. He saw Australia as one country, and the Company as one communal force. It’s a wonderful spirit that Buddy Lea had.”

Producer Martin Walsh adds: “I had met Buddy Lea a number of times in Queensland at Long Tan reunions and he was such a larger than life character. Buddy was extremely proud of his indigineous culture and heritage, his broader community and of Australia. Anyone who met him always remembers his huge and infectious laugh. As soon as I saw Lasarus I immediately knew he was the right person to portray Buddy and Lasuras’ performance is second to none. He steals many of the scenes he is in. I was also lucky to be there when Lasarus met Buddy’s son on set, a fantastic memory.”

DEVELOPING THE FILM

The idea for a movie on the Battle of Long Tan seeded with Producer Martin Walsh way back in 1990. Walsh says, “I was serving in 2 Commando Company, 1 Commando Regiment, Australian Army Reserve when one of my fellow soldiers showed me a copy of the book, *The Battle of Long Tan* written by Lex McAulay which was in our unit library. He strongly recommended reading it. But I’ll be honest and say that as a 23 year old, one of my priorities at that time was not reading! However, he was adamant that I would enjoy the book, so I took it home. Well I could not put it down and I think I finished it within four or five nights. At first, I was blown away by the sheer incredible details of this story - 108 young ANZACs fighting and defeating 2,500 experienced North Vietnamese - but that quickly subsided to a strong feeling of incredulity and then anger, as I’d never been taught anything about it at school. I was also astonished that we could watch American, British and European films on the Vietnam War and other conflicts but there was nothing about any contemporary ANZAC conflicts on the big screen.”

“I immediately thought it would make an incredible and important feature films but at that young age I had no path to achieve that, it was just a dream. So that very youthful and naive idea sat in the back of my mind for another 14 years.”

Martin was enjoying his successful career as a senior marketing executive when in 2004 he read an Australian newspaper story that the seven principal Long Tan commanders were releasing their own book on the battle. The next day, Martin decided the time was right to try and make a feature film on the story of Long Tan.

However, being a professional marketer first and foremost, Martin quickly realized that older audiences had completely forgotten about this battle and younger generations had never even heard about it. So Martin approached and persuaded a friend of his, Graham Cassidy, a well-respected publicity professional and at that time a co-worker, to sit down together and write a marketing plan to raise awareness of the story in order to generate interest and demand for a film.

Martin then approached the Long Tan veterans through their publisher and pitched the idea for a film, and in the short-term a feature length documentary.

“I knew I wanted to do everything possible to set an eventual feature film up for success by elevating awareness of this story and the principal characters. I’d seen many good Australian films suffer with poor and outdated marketing and I wanted to make sure this didn’t happen with this film.”

“Throughout 2005 I developed and refined a pitch for a documentary as well as a comprehensive marketing plan for the 40th Anniversary of the battle. In late 2015, Graham and I presented it to Brian Walsh – no relation – then Executive Director of TV at FOXTEL. The primary essence of the pitch was about creating our new ANZAC myths and legends, modernizing our ANZAC narrative, and that we’d begin to do this around the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan on August 18, 2006. Simultaneously, Graham Cassidy setup a meeting with his friend John Hartigan, the then CEO of News Limited, and we pitched a media/promotional partnership across News Limited using the documentary and the 40th

anniversary. Both FOXTEL and News Limited loved the idea of the documentary and all the potential stories, interviews and more,” Producer Martin Walsh says.

Between January and August 2006, in addition to his full-time role as Head of Digital at Microsoft, Martin Walsh researched, co-wrote, produced, partly financed and marketed the award winning and critically acclaimed documentary, THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN narrated by Sam Worthington. Walsh says, “We went into production and literally within our first week the East Timor Crisis broke out. As a result, we lost the Australian Army APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers) and the RAAF Huey (Bell UH-1 Iroquois) helicopters, which were so crucial in the Battle. That was quite a dramatic moment, but we managed to resolve it with the help of the Australian Army and with a non-operational RAAF Huey from the Nowra Air Museum.”

To date this award winning and highly acclaimed documentary is still the highest rating documentary ever broadcast on FOXTEL and it’s generated around 2.5 million views organically on YouTube and Vimeo.

Through the partnership with News Limited and other publicity efforts funded and generated by Martin and Graham between 2005 and 2019, including multiple 60 Minutes stories and thousands of TV, radio, print and online stories, the Battle of Long Tan has moved from being a mostly forgotten and even unknown story, to a story which is now widely known and well respected - not just in Australia and New Zealand but all around the world.

After the success of his documentary, Martin began to work on finding a writer, a director and private investors for a feature film on the Battle of Long Tan.

In 2010, Martin came across a group of film professionals in Sydney who’d setup a company called The Story Shop. Martin approached them and after a number of conversations about their methodology and approach, he engaged them to write an outline. Martin then further engaged them to write a treatment and then he worked with them on developing a first draft script for the movie. Martin felt he needed a strong foundational script which would be good enough to attract and secure a Director. He could then work with the Director on further development of the script.

With a first draft script in hand in 2011 and shortly after seeing RED DOG directed by Kriv Stenders, Martin approached Kriv to direct a film on the Battle of Long Tan. Impressed by Kriv’s stunning work on RED DOG, Martin didn’t hesitate to offer him the opportunity to direct DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan.

“I followed my instincts. I loved the visual aesthetic of RED DOG, the casting, performances, the cinematography, the score, the combined magic of it all and I felt Kriv might be the right director for the film,” says Walsh.

Kriv immediately responded to the story and the draft script. “I couldn’t believe this was a true story,” says Stenders. “It was so compelling, almost unbelievable. When I read more about the battle and watched Martin’s excellent documentary, I was blown away. It was an extraordinary story of heroism, ingenuity and survival. I knew I had to be involved; it was a once in a lifetime project.”

Stenders continues, “At its core this movie DANGER CLOSE is ultimately a universal and elemental story that celebrates life and the bravery, brotherhood, unity and loyalty men are capable of when thrust into even the most terrifying and extraordinary circumstances. I saw it as a thrilling, propulsive and suspenseful ACTION movie, underscored by a powerful emotional resonance. Like BLACK HAWK DOWN, DANGER CLOSE will not be a "war movie", but rather an exciting, nail-biting roller-coaster ride, rich with visual spectacle - a modern Australian legend that celebrates our distinctive and unique sense of unity, loyalty and mateship.”

Walsh emphasizes, "You need someone inspirational as your director, you need someone confident in their vision, but at the same time, collaborative in their process, with emotional sensitivity and who really understands what type of performance they're looking to put on the screen. After my initial meetings with Kriv, I felt completely confident in his vision for the film."

Around this time Producers John and Michael Schwarz who ran Full Clip Productions with Australian Actor Sam Worthington, later starting their own company Deeper Water, were also speaking to Kriv about directing one of their film projects. During a meeting between Kriv, John and Michael, the three ended up speaking about the film on Long Tan.

Shortly after, John and Michael Schwarz came on board the film as producers alongside Martin Walsh and together with Kriv Stenders, they decided to approach Australian Writer Stuart Beattie (COLLATERAL, AUSTRALIA, PRIATES OF THE CARIBBEAN) to write the screenplay. At that time Stuart had recently written an episode of John & Michael’s award winning TV Mini-series DEADLINE GALLIPOLI.

Unbeknownst to the producers and Kriv, coincidentally, Stuart Beattie had been interested in writing a screenplay on the story of Long Tan for many years and so he was very familiar with the story.

Martin Walsh was stunned to learn that Beattie had been considering writing a script about the story of the Battle of Long Tan for the past ten years.

“People might believe in fate,” Walsh says, “but that was definitely fate. Stuart quickly wrote an amazing script while he was doing post-production on I, FRANKENSTEIN, which he had written and directed.”

Writer Stuart Beattie, “I first learned about the Battle of Long Tan in my High School Year 10 Modern History Class. It struck me as such an incredible story of sacrifice and mate ship and survival that I wondered why it hadn’t been made into a film. More than that, I wondered why we as an industry don’t make films like this more often. Why don’t we do more to recognize the young men and women who give their lives in service of their country?

I was lucky. I never had to go to war. But many others were not so lucky.

Almost half of the ANZACs who fought at Long Tan were conscripts. 19 years old. Just two months in Vietnam. They didn’t want to be there. They went because we as a nation told them to. And they found themselves in the fight of their lives, outnumbered 10 to 1. Running low on ammo and losing mates by the hour. And yet, they won.

I understand that Vietnam was an unpopular war (though no war ought to be “popular”). But that doesn’t make their sacrifice any less meaningful. Their courage weaker. Or their pain smaller.

Over the years, I did all I could to learn about the Battle of Long Tan with a goal to make it into a film. Eventually, I heard about producer Martin Walsh’s “competing” Long Tan film. He seemed to be struggling to get a script. While I was struggling to get a producer.

When I was approached by producers John and Michael Schwarz with whom I’d just worked on DEADLINE: GALLIPOLI, Producer Martin Walsh and Director Kriv Stenders, it just seemed silly not to team up. Making this film was never about me. It was always about those young men trapped out in the rubber that day.

My biggest fear though was that it wouldn’t be done right. That we wouldn’t have the money. Or the VFX. Or the locations. That it would look cheap and insignificant and not do justice to those ANZACs. None of those fears came true as Martin Walsh persisted over 5 years to raise an adequate budget. Led by our brilliant director, Kriv Stenders, everyone at every level of the production stepped up and gave above and beyond to get this film made right.”

Kriv Stenders adds: “The script was constantly being refined, because there were a lot of army personnel involved and it was a very complex battle. Trying to distil that into a screen story that could capture an audience’s attention and articulate the mechanics of the battle in a cinematic way was a real challenge.”

A key structural element that Beattie devised was to centre the narrative around MAJOR HARRY SMITH, who was in charge of the three rifle platoons (10, 11 and 12) and one Headquarters platoon of D (Delta) Company, including the young conscript, PRIVATE PAUL LARGE.

“When Stuart came on board, his skills came to the fore and he focused the story on Harry and on Delta, the key company that came under attack,” continues Stenders.

“At the heart of our story is the conflict between Paul Large and Harry Smith. At the beginning, Harry is a commander who doesn’t believe his men are worthy of him, that he should be somewhere else and not babysitting conscripts. Through the battle, he finds his grace and realises that the men he’s trained are worthy, and he’s humbled by that fact. Harry realises he’s created a brotherhood who fight fearlessly and loyally. The film is about the intense love that’s shared amongst people when they’re thrust into an impossible circumstance.”

Producer John Schwarz adds: “What Stuart brought to the script – and some might see this as a dirty word, but he helped to ‘Hollywood-ise’ it. He didn’t change things, he didn’t make the characters untruthful, but he added an urgency that American films tend to have. That helped to get to the crux of what the story is, and who the characters are. What Stuart did, on the page, is helped identify every single character and gave each an individual voice.”

For Martin Walsh, Beattie helped craft a compelling underdog story, in the vein of the 300 Spartans.

“I describe it as a true story of ordinary boys who become extraordinary men,” Walsh notes. “They were everyday Australians and New Zealanders. Half of them were conscripts. One of

them, GORDON SHARP, was a cameraman on The Mavis Bramston Show, which won the Gold Logie that year. Suddenly he's ripped out of that world, put into Vietnam, and is dead at the age of 21. Stuart nails this essence throughout the film.”

The film is also an exploration of the particularly Australian concept of ‘mateship’.

“I've spoken to a lot of people – Americans, English, Germans, Dutch – who said they never understood what the word mateship meant until they heard the story of the Battle of Long Tan,” says Walsh. “This film would also help modernise the ANZAC narrative. It's very important for us to immortalise the Vietnam generation because we haven't done that in Australia, yet it was the most socially defining period of Australian contemporary history. If we don't understand why we went there, or why we shouldn't have gone there; if we haven't properly debated that, then we haven't honoured those families that made the ultimate sacrifice, and we don't learn for the future.”

The creative team were cognisant that the Vietnam War had never been a politically unpopular war and hence it had always been problematic to tell stories about it that could stand separate from the politics. DANGER CLOSE would not be about the politics leading up to the War, nor its aftermath, but about a group of people who find themselves in a very difficult situation, and who need to fight with great endurance to survive.

“What we did was to focus on those soldiers who didn't want to be there, and recognised the heroism that they showed by being there and showing up on the day,” says Michael Schwarz. “These were regular guys, not career soldiers, who showed up and did their job. Hopefully we can recognise the heroism that they demonstrated on that day.”

Walsh sees the spirit of heroism and resilience displayed at the Battle of Long Tan encapsulated in Private Barry ‘Custard’ Meller, who is still living.

“They went out with little ammunition,” Walsh notes. “They had no heavy weapons. They fought against hundreds of waves of enemy attack, with Australian, New Zealand and American artillery guns firing six to eight rounds a minute in support. Lightning hit the artillery positions twice. Artillery guys were passing out because of the cordite fumes. The guys in Delta Company were preparing to use their bayonets, to swing the butt of their rifles, but ‘the cavalry’ arrived in the last minute of daylight, and the enemy had had enough.”

“Before they went back into the battlefield the next day, there were 15 missing Australians. They found two, wounded. One of them, Custard Meller, was leaning up a tree and his greeting to them was: ‘you took your fucking time, didn't you?’”

In late 2013, Stuart delivered his screenplay to Director Kriv Stenders and Producers Martin Walsh, John Schwarz and Michael Schwarz. Walsh says, “Our immediate reaction was wow! Stuart absolutely nailed this story in a highly dramatic, emotional, suspenseful and energetic way.” Director Kriv Stenders adds, “Stuart's script really brings home the raw emotion, the visceral and intense action and the conflict, but also the intrinsic love and mateship between the soldiers who were desperately trying to survive an incredible onslaught. In Stuart's script, every bullet and every event mattered.”

In late 2013, the Producers reached out to Andrew Mackie and Richard Payten, joint Managing Directors of Transmission Films sending them Stuart's script. Within just a few days, Andrew and Richard replied that they'd love to be involved. Andrew Mackie says, "After reading Stuart's superb script, we immediately wanted to distribute it as we thought it would be an extremely powerful and historic film. It is gripping, dense, emotionally charged and a worthy tribute to the memory of all those lost in the battle."

After securing an Australian and New Zealand distributor, the producers began the process of seeking locations and breaking down and scheduling Stuart's script.

Producer Martin Walsh began researching alternatives to Rubber Tree plantations as none existed in Australia. The Battle of Long Tan was fought in a rubber plantation with a very symmetrical layout of trees and it was an important point of difference for the film. Eventually he stumbled upon Paulownia Tree plantations as a worthy substitute. With the help of Screen Queensland, Martin travelled to Brisbane to scout potential locations around Queensland. A high potential principal location was found and scouted at Nerang on the Gold Coast, Queensland so Martin knew it was possible to recreate the look of the crucial rubber plantation setting and importantly the owner of the private property was keen to support the film.

Between 2014 and 2017 the Producers tried time and time again to raise the required private investment component needed to greenlight the film but without any success. Walsh says, "Stuart's ambitious script and our expectations meant we needed a higher than average budget to realise the film. However, most potential partners and investors did not see the potential in an Australian War film at that time, particularly one set in the Vietnam War. It has been over 30 years since our last large scale war films being; GALLIPOLI and THE LIGHTHORSEMAN and almost nobody thought it would have any appeal. And therefore nobody thought we could raise the large budget needed to actually realise Stuart's ambitious script."

It wasn't until early 2017 when Producer Martin Walsh decided to quit his daytime marketing executive job to work full-time on raising the private investment necessary for the film, that things started to finally gain the right momentum. Walsh says, "After I quit my job in March 2017, I was determined to try everything humanly possible to raise the significant private investment for the film, or die trying! In early 2017 I was introduced to some former Australian Army officers who knew other former veterans who were now working in financial investment. Between March 2017 and January 2018, I continued developing and refining the investment presentation and then spent months pitching the film to various high net worth individuals all around Australia, mainly in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. By January 2018 I had secured the amount of private investment we needed to partially finance the film."

Simultaneously across the latter half of 2017, the Producers began discussing the prospect of bringing the entire production to Queensland with Tracey Viera, the CEO of Screen Queensland, the Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and with the team at Screen Australia. They all indicated their strong support for the project, particularly because of the film's historical and cultural importance.

Attention now turned to casting the role upon which the entire film rests. The film needed an actor that could synthesize Major Smith's exterior toughness, internal compassion, his

humanity and myriad complexities. "Having watched the Vikings series and keeping tabs on Travis Fimmel's career, I suggested to Kriv Stenders and my producing partners that Travis would be ideal to play Major Smith," remembers Producer John Schwarz. Producer Martin Walsh adds, "I think Fimmel has that mix of warrior strength and conviction but also sensitivity and there are not too many people who can portray a soldier leader for it to become believable. There's so much inner arrogance, doubt and conflicting conviction that he conveys. You really believe that Fimmel becomes Major Smith and you one hundred percent believe that this man is capable of leading these young men into battle."

Kriv Stenders recalls his excitement of finding the match for Major Smith. "Fimmel coming on board felt like winning the lottery. He is in almost every frame of this movie. There are very few actors in the world who can handle a part like that."

"You have to believe the actor playing Smith is incredibly strong, determined and resilient in the face of extreme danger – and with Fimmel that's never in question," echoes Producer Michael Schwarz. "You can see how focused he is, how professional he is and also how mysterious and enigmatic he is." It was a unanimous sentiment.

The next challenge was finding the actor to play the young conscript Private Paul Large, Smith's sparring partner, and a head strong, determined young man in his own right. A young man who is thrust into an overseas conflict direct from the rural farm life of country New South Wales. Large is a multi-faceted character that would require an actor of great skill. Enter rising Australian star Daniel Webber. "I was thrilled that Daniel wanted to play Paul Large," says Kriv Stenders. "He brought so much innocence, strength, but also vulnerability to the character. He steals the scenes he's in. He's marvelous and I think quite different from his performances in other films. He is able to portray someone who is as capable, brave, stubborn, caring and as genuine as Large himself. And it is because he possesses these qualities that he becomes so important for Major Smith to finally realise the truth of why he and not someone else is commanding these young soldiers. There's such a great chemistry between them."

Building the rest of the ensemble led to an embarrassment of riches of Australian talent. "I have the perfect cast," Stenders says. "It's impossible to look away from the young Nicholas Hamilton or the seasoned Alexander England - in every scene they're in. Richard Roxburgh brings such authority to his role, he's born to be the military commander. Anthony Hayes gives such a layered performance as Colonel Townsend. Aaron Glenane is superb as the New Zealand Artillery Forward Observer Captain Stanley. I'm so lucky to have worked with this group of actors. I can't praise them enough."

While historical accuracy was paramount on the filmmakers' agenda, Writer Stuart Beattie's screenplay highlights the drama, emotion and action that heighten the experience of the film.

In February 2018, with the support of Screen Queensland, the Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, Screen Australia, Transmission and Saboteur, the producers were able to greenlight the film.

In February 2018, producers were able to announce the lead cast, production dates and the Queensland location to the media in Los Angeles with Travis Fimmel, Queensland Premier

Annastacia Palaszczuk, Screen Queensland CEO Tracey Vieira, Writer Stuart Beattie, and Producers Martin Walsh and Michael Schwarz in attendance.

With the necessary finance in place, the Producers and Director set out to assemble an artistic team as passionate as they were. “We knew we had a script that was very special, but we knew we had an enormous challenge trying to make this epic screenplay within the restrictions of the schedule and budget. We just knew we had to secure some of the best creative heads in the industry, people who could truly bring to life and showcase this epic screenplay,” says Producer John Schwarz.

The search for the perfect fit of cast and crew was of critical importance but so was time. After spending years finding an alternative tree plantation to Rubber Trees, the Paulownia Trees identified by the Producers and Director with the help of Screen Queensland were deciduous. By June 2018, most of the leaves on these trees would be dropping off which of course would be an extremely costly barrier to an already unbelievably tight budget.

So, the race was on to begin pre-production in March 2018 to enable a successful shoot before all the leaves dropped off.

A first step of pre-production was conducting a formal scout of the intended principal location at Nerang on the Gold Coast and this scout quickly revealed a significant problem. Adjacent to this private property was a major horse agistment and horse hospital. This facility quickly highlighted the problems of gunfire and explosions happening within earshot of very valuable horses. This immediately threw a huge spanner in the works but with the help of then Screen Queensland Locations Manager Neil McGregor, Neil quickly identified a large Paulownia Tree Plantation at Wooroolin, near Kingaroy in Queensland.

So the creative team and producers went on a three hour drive to Wooroolin to formally scout the location and it was instantly agreed it was perfect for many, if not all the battle scenes. The only downside was the impact on the budget as it was at least a three hour drive away from Brisbane/Gold Coast. In the end it was determined the production could only afford a two week shoot in Wooroolin and the production would have to make do with the limitations at Nerang. However, after working closely with the neighbours around the Nerang private property, the production was able to secure some dispensation for limited explosions and gunfire to enable filming of all the necessary scenes.

A key focus for Kriv during pre-production was articulating his vision of the film to the entire creative team and the producers. Line Producer Peta Ross helped to find the extremely talented Queensland storyboard artist Graeme Callender to work with Kriv Stenders on the scene by scene storyboarding of the film.

Kriv says, “Working with Graeme was an incredible experience. He was able to instantly understand, interpret and draw what I could see in my head and whatever I described to him. Graeme’s storyboards are a unique piece of artwork in their own right and I’m proud to say I ‘own’ them.”

Working with Kriv Stenders, Production Designer Sam Hobbs and his team began assembling mood boards to ensure they were on the same sheet of paper, so they could clearly articulate to the rest of the crew the overall design aesthetic they wanted to achieve.

Over a non-stop six week period, Sam and his team became the world's best detectives hunting down and then borrowing, renting and buying, everything they needed to bring the Vietnam War in 1966 to the screen.

Kriv Stenders, "The extreme detail and passion for accuracy Sam and his team brought to Danger Close is simply extraordinary. I mean they had the period correct June 1966 Playboy magazine in tents, we have the perfectly correct street signs on the roads at the Nui Dat base set, we had the right biscuits and tea and coffee implements in command tents, the right toothbrushes, radios, notebooks, lighting, everything you may and may not see on screen. In fact, it was so accurate when the Long Tan veterans came and visited the sets, they were in tears as they said it instantly looked like and smelt like 1966. That is the ultimate test for me."

But some critical items would not be as easy to find. Where do you find at least two operational 1966 Huey UH-1B helicopters? Where do you find working 1966 L1A1 105mm Artillery Guns and fully operational Vietnam era M113 Armoured Personnel Carriers?

A key member of Sam's team was Action Vehicle Supervisor Steve Taylor. Together, Sam, Jodie Whetter (Art Director), Steve Taylor and Producer Martin Walsh set about tracking down these crucial assets.

Martin and Sam identified a number of private helicopter operators in NSW and Queensland and eventually were able to work with McDermott Aviation on supplying two suitable Huey choppers. One of their Bell 204 choppers was the civilian equivalent of the military UH-1B and McDermott had another, at the time non-operational UH-1B, which they soon rebuilt and had operational. At the same time, Martin had been working with the Australian Defence Department on securing support for the film. The Chief of the Royal Australian Air Force, Air Marshall Gavin Davies quickly gave approval for these two civilian choppers to carry the actual aircraft tail numbers of the two choppers which they represent in the story.

Sam, Jodie, Steve, Martin and Armourers Allan Mowbray and John Bowring were also working on finding and securing at least five L1A1 105mm Howitzer Artillery guns. Eventually they secured five artillery guns and with considerable work by armourer John Bowring and the production team, they added massive hydraulic infrastructure to a number of the guns which enabled the barrels recoil when the blank rounds were fired. Even the same artillery guns used in the Hollywood film *The Thin Red Line* could not get the barrels to recoil when firing. But, it was such an important element of dramatic realism for the story and film, the Danger Close team pulled out every stop to make it happen.

Early on, Producer Martin Walsh knew the only place they could get operational Vietnam era M113 A1 APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers) was through the Australian Army. However, the Australian Defence Force has had a tumultuous relationship with the Australian film and television industry and initially knocked back a request for the APCs. However, through dogged persistence and the assistance from influential individuals like Australian War Memorial Director Brendan Nelson, Labor Leader Bill Shorten, and a chance meeting between Martin and Deputy Chief of Army (now Chief of Army) Major General Rick Burr, the production eventually secured the use of the now stretched, M113 AS4 APC's.

DESIGNING THE FILM

Kriv Stenders admits that on commencing pre-production, he was concerned that creating DANGER CLOSE was going to be near on impossible.

“There were so many moving parts - getting hold of the APCs, the choppers, artillery that worked,” observes the director. “Dealing with the number of extras that we had. Costuming them and working out how to choreograph them. When you do films like this, all you must think about is the day ahead or the problem at hand. The minute you think about the whole thing, you're overwhelmed. I was surrounded by a great bunch of people who enabled me to just focus on the job at hand, day by day.”

One of the greatest challenges for the film's creative team was the main location. The Battle of Long Tan didn't take place in a jungle, but in a rubber plantation, in which very thin trees are laid out symmetrically, roughly two metres apart, across a vast area.

“We don't have rubber trees here in Australia, but what we do have is paulownia trees, which are almost identical,” says producer Michael Schwarz. “They were bred for light timber, so they're planted in the exact same manner as rubber trees are. We were able to find a massive plantation in Kingaroy, about three and a half hours out of the Gold Coast in Queensland. There's something really eerie and beautiful about these perfectly symmetrical battlefields where there's no cover, nowhere to hide, but that was a big challenge, because it's a visual touchstone of what the battle was.”

Stenders and the producers selected Australian BEN NOTT (WINCHESTER, PREDESTINATION) as the film's Director of Photography. The fact that the film would shoot in Queensland created a neat synthesis, with Kriv Stenders and Ben Nott both hailing from that state.

“I'd never worked with Ben before, but I'd loved the work he did with The Spierig Brothers,” says Stenders. “They're really beautifully crafted, big films, and DANGER CLOSE was going to be a big film. Like me, he was from the part of the world where we were going to shoot, so it was very much a return home. Ben came at it with such a fantastic energy. For me as a director, to have a Director of Photography who was that engaged, that willing to go beyond what had been done before and push the film to a higher level, was really exciting.”

The film would shoot for two weeks in the paulownia plantation in Kingaroy, which gave the scope that the team needed, before moving for another six weeks to the Gold Coast, to a smaller plantation in Nerang as well as locations at Pimpama, Green Meadow in Queensland.

“The beauty was that we only had to do three location moves,” says Stenders. “We were able to meticulously approach each section – the artillery, the helicopters, the explosions in the plantation – in a very compartmentalised way. It was a very ordered shoot, but incredibly stressful because we could only shoot during daylight hours. It was winter, so we had very short days. We shot ‘French hours’, where you don't break for lunch and wrap at 5pm. By three o'clock, I had so much more to shoot and I don't know how I'm going to do it. But we managed, through planning, ingenuity and focus. JAMIE LESLIE, my First Assistant Director, was extraordinary in what he was able to plan out and orchestrate.”

Recognising that the film's schedule was going to be tight, Stenders and Nott came up with a series of creative methodologies. One was that they were going to keep the camera very active, and shoot with as many cameras as feasible to get the coverage needed. At the same time, they were adamant that the vision onscreen would be cinematic.

"At the eleventh hour, Ben proposed to shoot the whole film on anamorphic lenses," says Stenders. "I was surprised by that, and thought: 'how are we going to move quickly with anamorphic lenses?' Ben convinced us to embrace the approach, and I'm so glad we did because it gives the film a beautiful depth and an epic quality. Even though Ben was struggling with available light, he managed to sculpt beautiful lighting into complex battle scenes. I think it's a remarkable piece of work that he delivered. His enthusiasm and bravery; nothing was too complicated. Nothing was too scary."

SAM HOBBS, who Stenders had worked with before on RED DOG: TRUE BLUE, came on board as the film's Production Designer.

"Sam is production designer who is a filmmaker as well, so he brought to the project, as Ben Nott did, an enthusiasm and an understanding of screen language that's very special," notes Stenders. "He invested himself one thousand per cent into the project. He was so stressed out, but he never, ever dropped the ball and never lost sight of what was important to have on screen."

The most challenging set that Hobbs and his team would construct was the base at Nui Dat, which was built in Nerang. The veterans from Extra Specialists helped the Art Department and the Construction Department to create an expansive and highly detailed set, which was nearly 150 metres long by 50 metres wide.

"The work that they achieved on the Nui Dat set was mind-blowing," comments Richard Roxburgh (Brigadier Jackson). "The Tactical Operations tent was a thing to behold, with an actual topographical map from the period, the type of biscuits they had at the time; the minute detail was incredible."

Visiting the Nui Dat set triggered a profound emotional reaction in the Long Tan veterans.

"The smell of the sandbags, the detail that Sam put into the sets, down to the playing cards and matchboxes – the veterans literally had an out of body experience," observes Kriv Stenders. "They felt they were back in Vietnam in 1966, and were in tears. I think it provided some closure for them. What Sam achieved in a back property somewhere just off the Pacific Highway was incredible."

Production Designer Sam Hobbs says, "My job is to respond to the script and, with my various teams, to create the world or stage in which the drama is to unfold. For me the most important thing for a drama based on real events such as this one was to create an overall aesthetic for the film that has a technical and emotional veracity. That is to say it needs to look and feel truthful to the time and place as much as possible.

"Many of the participants in these events are still alive and we had to express the raw physical truth of the world as experienced by these men as well as how it felt to be a young man (average age 20) living in sweltering tropical conditions under WW2 canvas. A poignant image I

kept coming back to into our research was of a very young soldier sitting in a truck reading a novel. His uniform looks ill fitting - almost ridiculous on him. He feels to be very lonely and he was very probably a conscript. A key part of our work is to imagine, as far as is possible, how it felt to be this young man. Questions we asked such as where did you sleep?, how did you eat and what was the food like?, how did you wash and shower and go to the toilet?, what was being on patrol like?, how often would you get letters from home and how often?

“We had at our disposal an incredible resource of reference photos assembled by Martin Walsh over many years which we studied very closely. These only tell part of this story and they often only show happy emotional states ie poses for camera. We talked to some fantastic veterans who were able to really help us understand how this life was – how tough, terrifying and visceral it could be - the lack of privacy, bullying, brothels on leave, how our troops were hated by the local population because of the forced dislocation from their homes with the creation of the Australian base.

“So in putting this world together we were mindful of all the details, the mouldy World War II canvas of the tents the men lived under, the public showers, the open mess halls, the culture of alcohol, photos of loved ones, old playboy magazines, cigarettes The other part of what we had to understand was the incredibly technical part of the experience – the use of maps, navigation, weaponry, artillery, radio communications, engineering, sandbagging, mechanics, catering and many more. All aspects of this life were highly regulated and everyone there was skilled in their particular field – from rifleman to APC commander, from cook to truck driver.

The Battle of Long Tan used iconic military hardware of the period, including APCs (armoured personnel carriers), Hueys (Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopters) and 105 Howitzers, along with armoury including M60s and M16s. Hobbs and the producers went to great lengths to secure as many accurate pieces as possible for the production’s depiction of the Battle.

Sam’s team were blown away by the collaboration with the Australian Army crews that brought the APC’s to the production. “What was so moving was how these guys cared so deeply for their heritage. They wanted their machines to look the part and we worked together to make this happen in an incredibly short period of time. This was the typical experience we had with the military past and present – we learned an enormous amount from them and the film looks and feels the way it does because of their care, love and input.”

Through the incredible work of the Production Design team and the troopers and soldiers of the Australian Army, these modern versions of the M113 were modified, dressed and propped to look as close as possible to the shorter Vietnam era M113 A1 APCs.

“The way the military hardware worked in symphony in the battle was quite extraordinary and the film would look at this dance between them,” says Stenders. “Therefore, it was critical that we get the correct APCs, the Hueys and the Howitzers, otherwise we wouldn’t have a movie.”

Stenders’ and Hobbs’ ‘wish list’ was ambitious, and it was doubtful whether the budget would extend to enabling repainting the Hueys, and whether they could secure Howitzers that were in working condition.

The director continues: “But, by using the day-by-day mentality, and through the amazing work of the producers, Sam Hobbs and the Army, we were able to bring these fantastic assets to the Gold Coast and on the screen in a way that is breathtaking.”

“We had a 1966 bulldozer in one scene in the background, bulldozing a tree with another one behind it,” adds producer Martin Walsh. “You could see four or five layers of background in every shot. I am so proud of Sam Hobbs, who led production design, and Jodie Whetter, who led our art department. The level of accuracy and the layers were incredible.”

The Australian Army were also able to help the producers secure some hardware actually used in the Battle of Long Tan.

“We were able to use one of the actual APCs used in the real battle, as well as an enemy machine gun that Company Sergeant Major Jack Kirby captured in battle, brought back to Australia and was kept in a museum,” says Walsh. “Additionally, one of the two Hueys that was actually used in the Battle was brought into the studio from up on a pole out front of the Caloundra RSL and used for blue screen interior scenes. To have that history ingrained on our film is just amazing.”

“But one of the great things about this film is that we were also able to give something back to the community of veterans, in this case we were able to fully restore that Huey we borrowed which was used in the battle for the Coloundra RSL.”

Oscar winning Costume Designer Lizzy Gardiner also found herself challenged to present the most dynamic version of the period. In order to recreate the historical event with accuracy, Gardiner did a vast amount of research. Lizzy has designed several war films, so she knew how to put herself into the period, trying to understand the climate of the world during combat. “There was actually quite a lot of information available,” she explains.

“Tracking down and securing enough military uniforms, boots, webbing and other accessories of the period was a huge challenge. The team and I have done a lot of research and we’d worked on other war films such as THE RAILWAY MAN and HACKSAW RIDGE and luckily we were able to track down and secure everything we needed from around Australia.”

This abundance of information assisted Gardiner in fleshing out each person who, for the entire duration of the film, wears a uniform. In order to create a particular personality, which is near impossible with everyone in the same uniform, Gardiner worked closely with each lead actor.

“Generally after they’ve been to boot camp during pre-production, they’ve become accustomed to wearing their uniforms and they begin to develop their own little distinctions within the uniform that they like, which makes it more individual. I let them go for it,” says Gardiner.

Gardiner and her team mirrored the arc of the character in the breakdown of his costume. There were about four or five stages, which began with a pristine uniform and ended with complete devastation, to reflect emotional and physical distress. Because of the movie’s lean budget, Gardiner had to strategise with the many multiples of soldier costumes, giving the

leads more backups with subtler changes and the background about two iterations each. She had the costumes aged accordingly.

Despite the scope and complexity of the film, Gardiner says it was “a fantastic, really enjoyable ride.

“Generally on war films, you get left alone by directors and producers because it is factual. It’s not about my personal taste. Sometimes it’s an enormous relief. That’s why I do war films from time to time because they are a break from Gucci, Prada, and everyone having an opinion. You really get to invest yourself completely in the time and period.”

Walsh notes that the level of authenticity achieved in the production design and in the staging of the scenes created an emotional impact not just for the veterans but for the filmmakers.

“When we were filming the initial big contact between 11 Platoon and the VC, seeing the first two characters die was very emotional,” Walsh recalls. “There were no theatrics, no stunt wires, they just dropped to the ground when the gunfire erupted. It affected me for quite a few days. It was very tough to watch.”

For Stenders and the producers, respecting not just the fallen Australians, but the fallen enemy was necessary to convey.

“The Australian veterans who fought at Long Tan have immense respect for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong,” continues Walsh. “To continuously charge into the explosions from 24 artillery guns firing six to eight rounds a minute is pretty amazing. It was an important objective not to demonise the Vietnamese. I’ve been to Vietnam shooting for my documentary and I’ve met with them. They were incredibly accommodating and hospitable when I made my documentary and we all have a fantastic relationship with them now, including the veterans.”

TRAINING FOR BATTLE

To prepare the actors for the many battle scenes, a boot-camp was engineered by the film’s military advisor, JOHN ILES.

All three platoons and the HQ element of Delta Company attended the week-long camp on the Gold Coast in Queensland. The focus was not just on the physical side of being a soldier but also the procedural and the psychological; how the platoons would have interacted with each other and with the other companies, general military vernacular, vocabulary and gesticulation.

“John put us through our paces,” says Alex England (Jack Kirby). “We focused on military formation and lines of command, not so much on push-ups. The aim was to understand the mindset of these soldiers and how they would interact with each other so that we could convey as much authenticity as possible.”

“A lot of it was structured around learning about this particular battle, why the decisions were made and how they were made,” adds Dan Webber (Paul Large). “John Iles coached us through the minute-by-minute battle strategies, ambushes and attacks.”

The cast were also trained in an understanding of the context of the Vietnam War within the time period. The depth of training enabled a very specific, collegiate atmosphere to develop on set.

Luke Bracey (Bob Buick) says: “Everyone left their ego at the door. We were in this for each other and for the responsibility of telling this story.”

“In our downtime we would do a crossword or simply converse; it was great to see the actors not sitting on their phones, but getting to know each other rather than just turning it on when ‘Action’ is called. We’d come back to our accommodation together, have dinner together, go to work together, have a beer on the weekend, so it became a family. That boded well for the film; you see that on camera. You see the care, the loyalty, the worry when other soldiers are injured or killed.”

FILMING THE BATTLE

Given the majority of the scenes take place during messy, brutal combat, how to manage the geography of the set, the numerous actors located across it, and the film technicians was always going to be a staggeringly complex undertaking.

Not many people outside of the production believed that the team could pull off filming Stuart’s ambitious script within just eight weeks and certainly not within the budget.

Several aspects contributed to easing the challenge, the first being Kriv Stenders’ precise vision and the second being First Assistant Director JAMIE LESLIE’s incredible scheduling.

“One of Kriv’s best qualities is the way he visualises a scene geographically,” observes Michael Schwarz. “Rather than traditional coverage of close-up, mid shot, wide shot, he always knows exactly where to place the camera and where to place his actors within a scene that best captures the drama and the action economically.”

One innovative tool that also helped the execution of the scenes was that Stenders and Jamie Leslie both had microphones hooked up to a ‘Voice of God’ public announcement system on set, allowing for an open communication during the expansive, complex scenes.

Michael adds: “It also allowed Kriv to add to the scenes himself. He would at times explain live to the actors what the sequence of the scenes was, but as we didn’t have artillery fire and mortar fire on hand, Kriv supplied that through his voice. He was tucked away by the monitor, providing machine gun fire, explosions, whistles through the air.”

“The PA system enabled us to react to Kriv in real time,” says Luke Bracey. “It was very helpful to know his timing and his vocal depiction of the battle sounds. It was funny the first day, but we quickly got right into it and I couldn’t have imagined making the film without Kriv on the microphone saying: ‘Boom! And now they’re coming! Aagh!’

For Dan Webber: “Being on set was an immersive experience. For 90 per cent of the film we were in a tropical monsoon, so we were constantly wet. It was freezing-cold. Many disparate things added the sense of reality. When you have so many stimuli you don’t have time to lie; as an actor it makes you very honest with yourself because you’re feeling everything around you; the cold, the dirt splattering in your face, the sounds, you’re responding to the environment, and so it gives it a very honest and immediate feeling within the film and within each scene.”

Because there were often four cameras shooting from different angles, there were no moments for the actors to be 'off'; even if they were in the background of a shot, they couldn't know what the cameras were picking up.

The film's most striking moment of joyousness; an impromptu concert staged for the soldiers just after Delta Company had departed to fight in the Long Tan plantation, featuring Australian singers Col Joye and Little Pattie, took on a profound meaning due to the presence of Long Tan veterans in the audience of the recreated concert.

"We'd been shooting scenes of death and destruction, and then to film this one happy moment that had hundreds of extras cheering, the energy was completely wonderful," recalls Michael Schwarz.

"To add to it, we had a several Long Tan veterans, guys that missed the concert the first time, experiencing the concert for the first time. It was a moment that crept up on me. I didn't expect to be affected as deeply as I was."

The producers credit Kriv Stenders, his preparedness, methodology and dedication for the success of the complex shoot.

"Kriv is incredible," states Martin Walsh. "He's such a collaborative director; calm but nervous at the same time. He chewed through 100 pens because he channels all his nervous energy into the pen, so none of it is experienced by the crew."

"Kriv, Ben Nott and Jamie Leslie hadn't worked together before, so as producers that made us a little nervous, but they did the most incredible job telling the story, managing an amazing crew, a huge cast. They nailed the schedule every day when everyone said we couldn't and wouldn't. In the end we were able to make the film within our budget and our schedule, something we're extremely proud of. We literally only dropped one scene on one day, which we immediately picked up the next day. The love, the attention, the skills, professional and the enthusiasm of our crew and cast was remarkable."

Luke Bracey adds: "Kriv was so prepared and so invested in the film. When you're an actor it's invaluable to have complete trust in your director. You need to know that when you finish a take and the director says, 'That was good' that you believe it and you can move on from that. Kriv will tell you if he didn't like it and he'll tell you what he needs, and when you give a little more you can see that he's very excited."

For Stenders, the most moving moments came at the end of the battle shoot.

"The way the shoot was scheduled was that we grouped all the enemy shots together over two days," recalls Stenders. "The Asian extras were wonderful, so committed. This was not only a battle about the Australian and New Zealand soldiers but about the North Vietnamese soldiers, and it left scars on both sides. That day I realised the importance and the weight of what we were doing. We weren't just making a gratuitous action movie. I realised what a gift and what an incredible opportunity this film was, and I felt very humbled and blessed to be doing what I was doing."

Producer John Schwarz adds, "One of the incredible blessings we had shooting Danger Close was our locations at Wooroolin (Kingaroy), Queensland, Nerang in Queensland and Pimpama in

Queensland and the amazingly cooperative weather. It really only rained one day in the entire eight week shoot which is extraordinary. Our schedule was ambitious to begin with and any delays would have hit us really hard but we had none.”

“And the council and people of Kingaroy in particular were so warm and inviting, helping us in every way possible. Our film was the first time any production had filmed in that region and they lapped up every second of it. Our entire cast and crew had a fantastic time there.”

The story of the Battle of Long Tan made a deep and lasting impression on the director, producers, cast and crew, and Travis Fimmel and Daniel Webber relished the opportunity to walk in these great men's shoes. "Filming a true story about incredibly gallant, but ultimately ordinary people, was extraordinary.

“It’s such an important part of our history and it is a story that was largely lost to history. There were many moments when you'd think there was something rather spiritual about what we were doing," says Kriv Stenders.

Walsh reflects on his 16 year journey to get DANGER CLOSE made, “Seeing the film come to fruition has been a dream come true. To know that we have produced an epic film of this quality with so much love and energy, knowing it all started with me 16 years ago, has given me a feeling of great personal pride. To walk around the Nui Dat film set in Nerang, Queensland, witnessing the first action scenes with young Australian’s ‘dying’ in Wooroolin, Queensland was a very personal and emotionally charged experience for me.”

“To see the excitement and exhilaration of our crew, our cast and extras dressed in their Vietnam era uniforms as they worked and moved around the film sets made me feel incredibly happy. But what hit me the most was seeing the young Australian military veterans working to help build our sets and even participate as extras. These young veterans, many of who had participated in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan brought so much to this film. We could never truly quantify or convey what they contributed to the film and to the experiences of our cast and crew.”

“I also felt very proud that we’ve created an opportunity for the Australian film industry to demonstrate and prove the right story with the right script, the right director, and a great cast and crew, can appeal to Australian and international audiences. I wanted to reset the expectations of Australian audiences towards Australian films and simultaneously set up our amazing cast and crew for further career success. “

Writer Stuart Beattie adds, “It’s been the greatest and most humbling honour of my career to be a part of DANGER CLOSE. I hope that Australians and New Zealanders across the spectrum come out and see the film not only to acknowledge what these men did, but so that we can all understand just what it is we ask of our nation’s youth when we send them off to war.”

Producer John Schwarz sums up the feelings of the entire cast and crew, “I am confident we have achieved what this film was intended to do...to finally recognise, honour and immortalise an entire generation of Australian and New Zealand veterans and their families.”

WORKING WITH YOUNG AUSTRALIAN ARMY VETERANS

For Kriv Stenders and the producers, involving Australian military veterans, both people who had fought in the Battle of Long Tan as well as contemporary male and female veterans of the same age as those returned from the Vietnam War, was a crucial aspect of not just research, but realising the film.

“The film is about a seminal, significant Australian battle,” explains Stenders. “In military circles, it’s an iconic battle; one of the largest and most savage that was fought in Vietnam. For those reasons, having the military and veterans involved was vital.”

The aim was not just to benefit the film and its authenticity, but to in some way benefit the veterans themselves.

“A lot of young veterans, who served recently in Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor and Somalia, struggle with issues such as PTSD,” explains Martin Walsh. “Like many young Australian veterans – not just men but women also – if you ask them ‘are you okay, do you need a hand?’ they’ll often say ‘no, I’m okay mate’ and they’ll continue to isolate themselves. However, if you ask them to help in making a film about a battle that’s part of their heritage, they’ll leap at the idea and ask: ‘how can we help?’, which is what they did.”

“I wanted everyone working on the film to understand that it’s about real people, real veterans, real families,” continues Walsh. “The best way to do that is to have veterans working on the film and helping us build a culture of care, love, attention and respect. Having them around everyday completely changed the dynamic on the film, in an unbelievably positive way.”

Ex Delta Company, 6RAR, Australia Army veteran SHAUN BARRY and his company Extra Specialists, comprising veterans who had recently been deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands, were engaged to collaborate on the film. They helped source props, aided the art department in building the Nui Dat base and artillery batteries, and some did stunt work and some were cast as extras and actors.

“We were blessed to have them involved from a very early stage in pre-production,” says Stenders. “We were also able to engage them in the actual shoot. A lot of the guys came on as extras, which was wonderful, because training a layperson to act like a soldier is very difficult. There are a lot of basic skills that they have to learn, that these guys know already. All of that added to the authenticity and credibility of what’s on screen.”

Actor Luke Bracey adds: “It was amazing having servicemen and ex-servicemen as extras; it added to the realism for the actors and for the audience. They brought a sense of discipline and a sense of service and selflessness to the film set. They understood that everyone was there to serve the film.”

Many cast members were eager to meet their living contemporaries. Kriv Stenders and Travis Fimmel met Harry Smith and other Long Tan veterans on ANZAC Day at a special service in Wooroolin, Queensland organised by Producer Martin Walsh. Actor STEPHEN PEACOCKE met Colonel Adrian Roberts, who as a 24 year old Lieutenant commanding the armoured personnel carriers in the Battle. Lasarus Ratuere met Corporal Buddy Lea’s son.

Producer Michael Schwarz adds: “We were lucky enough to have many of the men who served in 6RAR Delta Company in the Battle visit set, which was a really humbling experience. When you spend so much time reading the script and planning the film, casting and piecing it all together, you sometimes forget that this happened to real people. It was sobering– if a character dies in the film, talking to the people who were there when that person died, hearing what that was like...the weight of that was not lost on any of us.”

The producers also organised for the current serving soldiers of Delta Company 6RAR, who were about to deploy to Afghanistan, to meet the cast on the Gold Coast, without the producers or director present.

“The actors immediately gravitated towards men in the roles that they were playing - the same rank, I was told afterwards,” says Martin Walsh.

“On weekends during the shoot, the cast, crew and producers caught up with some of the veterans at RSL clubs and listened intently to their stories. They opened the eyes of our cast into what they would be feeling if they saw one of their mates killed in front of them. It’s their legacy. It’s their history.”

The filmmakers ensured that the veterans understood they were trying to achieve two things; to be as accurate as possible to history, whilst ensuring the audience profoundly feel what was at stake, on a dramatic level.

“There was a balance we needed to strike,” says Kriv Stenders, “we've been very careful to be true to history, but at the same time, we’re telling a story. We’re not making a documentary. We had to take license and amalgamate characters and events and create subplots to create a narrative. We are telling the ballad of the battle. It’s a dramatic interpretation of real events. I think most of the veterans understand that. Hopefully when they all see the film, they’ll appreciate what we've had to do, but also appreciate that we honour their legacy and their sacrifice.”

Producer Martin Walsh says, “These young men and women brought something special to the production. It was their story, their legacy and everyday they humbled us as to the importance of this story. They became our friends and work colleagues and even after hours they helped inspire the entire cast and crew to a level of passion that few of us have ever seen before on a film or television production. Danger Close is so much more special because of what they contributed to this special film and we’re glad they we’ve helped setup new careers for many of these veterans as they’ve quickly gone on to work on other major Australian and Hollywood productions.”

CAST

TRAVIS FIMMEL (Major Harry Smith)

TRAVIS FIMMEL is best known for playing the lead role of Ragnar on four seasons of History Channel's hit original series "Vikings".

The show premiered in March 2013 to both critical acclaim and record audience numbers. His performance in Season 2 landed him on Variety's Emmy Contenders short list and his final season, which aired in 2016, is garnering equal acclaim.

On the big screen, Fimmel was most recently seen as the lead role in Warcraft for Legendary Pictures/Universal, which amassed more than \$450 million worldwide. The film also stars Ben Foster, Dominic Cooper, Ruth Negga and Paula Patton and was directed by Duncan Jones.

He was also seen in the romantic comedy Maggie's Plan, starring alongside Julianne Moore, Ethan Hawke and Greta Gerwig. The Rebecca Miller-directed film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and was acquired by Sony Pictures Classics.

Past credits include a lead role in the Mark Steven Johnson indie Finding Steve McQueen with Forrest Whitaker and William Fichtner, a supporting role opposite Matthew McConaughey in the Anchor Bay Entertainment film Surfer Dude, directed by S.R. Blinder.

Additional film credits include Ivory Trade, Needle, co-starring Ben Mendelsohn, Restraint, opposite Teresa Palmer and Stephen Moyer, The Experiment with Adrien Brody, The Baytown Outlaws with Billy Bob Thornton and Haroldim, opposite Peter Fonda. In 2008, he starred opposite the late Patrick Swayze on A&E's drama series "The Beast". Fimmel is a native of Echuca Victoria, Australia.

LUKE BRACEY (Sergeant Bob Buick)

Luke Bracey is a star on the rise with a variety of coveted roles, most notably including in the Academy-Award nominated film HACKSAW RIDGE, the big-budget Warner Brothers remake of POINT BREAK and Nicholas Sparks' THE BEST OF ME.

Luke attended Harbord Public School and later enrolled at Scots College. As a child, Bracey had never dreamed of becoming an actor and was very fond of sports, initially wanting to be a professional rugby player. He soon grew a passion and love for movies and acting and his big break came when he landed a starring role as Trey Palmer in the hit television drama series Home and Away which produced other successful Australian actors such as Chris Hemsworth and Margot Robbie. Luke also played a lead role in the ABC drama pilot Westside produced by McG.

Luke's other film credits include; Roger Donaldson's The November Man starring alongside Pierce Brosnan and Olga Kurylenko, Monte Carlo starring opposite Selena Gomez, , and G.I Joe: Retaliation starring opposite Dwayne Johnson and Channing Tatum.

Luke recently booked the lead in Netflix's feature film HOLIDATE opposite Emma Roberts which is set to start production summer of 2019 and he can next be seen opposite Nina Dobrev in Roger Avary's LUCKY DAY.

DANIEL WEBBER (Private Paul Large)

Daniel Webber was born and raised in the city of Gosford, New South Wales.

Daniel's extensive body of work includes the recent hit Netflix feature, 'The Dirt', the Motley Crue story, as lead singer Vince Neil, the Netflix Marvel series - 'The Punisher', and J.J.Abrahm's television mini-series '11.22.63' playing the role of 'Lee Harvey Oswald' opposite James Franco, Chris Cooper & Lucy Fry (special screening at The Sundance Film Festival).

Daniel's feature film credits include the crime thriller feature 'Thumper', 'Sleeping Beauty' (alongside Emily Browning and Julia Leigh (the film received 5 wins and 28 nominations internationally, including a nomination at the Cannes Film Festival), 'Galore' (the critically acclaimed, coming of age drama set in the days leading up to the 2003 Canberra bush fires), the lead role of Xavier in Dale Sadler's mystery thriller 'Deceit', David Field's controversial film 'The Combination' inspired by Sydney's 2005 race riots, 'Teenage Kicks', 'Australia Day' and he is currently filming the Thriller, 'Escape From Pretoria' with Daniel Radcliffe.

ALEXANDER ENGLAND (Warrant Officer Class 2, CSM [Company Sergeant Major] Jack Kirby)

Since graduating from the Victoria College of the Arts in 2009 Alexander has appeared in numerous film and television productions.

Alexander recently completed shooting on QUEEN AMERICA, the upcoming Facebook Watch series starring Catherine Zeta Jones. He will next be seen playing the lead role of 'Dave' in Abe Forsythe's feature film LITTLE MONSTERS, alongside Lupita Nyong'o and Josh Gad which just sold in a bidding war for distribution at Sundance to Neon & Hulu.

Recently, Alexander was seen in the latest installment of Ridley Scott's ALIEN franchise, ALIEN: COVENANT alongside Michael Fassbender and Noomi Rapace. In 2015 Alexander worked with Abe Forsythe on his darkly-comic feature film DOWN UNDER, and in 2014 Alexander completed shooting director Alex Proyas' feature film GODS OF EGYPT.

Alexander has appeared in numerous critically acclaimed television productions. In 2012 he played James Packer in the ABC's PAPER GIANTS 2: MAGAZINE WARS, and followed this playing Clyde Packer alongside Lachy Hulme in Network Nine's POWER GAMES : THE PACKER MURDOCH STORY. It was this role that earned him an AACTA nomination in 2014 for Best Supporting Actor in a Television Drama. In 2016 Alexander joined the cast of Series 6 of OFFSPRING opposite Asher Keddie. He returned to the show again in 2017 for Season 7.

Alexander is also known for having played legendary cricketer Tony Greig in the award winning Network Nine mini-series HOWZAT!, the story of World Series Cricket. Other television credits include an appearance in the popular ABC series RAKE starring Richard Roxburgh, and the ABC tele-movie PARER'S WAR alongside Matthew Le Nevez. Alexander appeared in the ABC series THE BEAUTIFUL LIE, a modern day reimagining of Tolstoy's ANNA KARENINA, and his earlier credits include Network Seven's WILD BOYS, the Nine Network's TRICKY BUSINESS, and Network Ten's MR & MRS MURDER.

Alexander has also worked in theatre; his credits include the role of Paris in the Sydney Theatre Company's production of ROMEO & JULIET in 2013.

Alexander is currently filming a new Channel 7 television drama series, SECRET BRIDESMAIDS BUSINESS.

AARON GLENANE (Captain Morrie Stanley)

Aaron Glenane is acclaimed for his outstanding depiction of Mushroom Records founder Michael Gudinski in the special event miniseries Molly. Aaron also played Reg Lumley in the internationally acclaimed Picnic At Hanging Rock alongside Natalie Dormer and Yael Stone, a role in Nash Edgerton's upcoming Mr Inbetween and a role in the highly anticipated upcoming TV Series Snowpiercer.

His other television credits include the award winning World War I miniseries Deadline Gallipoli alongside Sam Worthington, Hugh Dance and Charles Dance, Wham Bam Thank You Ma'am, Soul Mates, Old School, Puberty Blues, Janet King, Tricky Business, Home and Away, Packed to the Rafters and Rescue Special Ops. Aaron also appeared in the UKTV telemovie Dripping in Chocolate alongside David Wenham.

Aaron's feature credits include the role of Chook in the critically acclaimed feature Killing Ground, an appearance in the political thriller Truth starring Academy Award winners Robert Redford and Cate Blanchett, a role as Patrick Payne in Rachel Griffith's directorial debut Ride Like a Girl starring Teresa Palmer, Sam Neil and Sullivan Stapleton, as Gus in Drift alongside Sam Worthington and Xavier Samuel. Aaron's other feature credits include Bucko in The Black Balloon starring Toni Collette and Larry in Concealed.

An accomplished stage actor and dancer, Aaron's numerous stage credits include Darlinghurst Theatre Company's Silent Night and Ride & Fourplay, The Old Fitz Theatre's Orphans and The Kings Collective's Gruesome Playground Injuries as well as Journey's End and The Boy From Oz alongside Hugh Jackman. Aaron was also a key motion capture artist of George Miller's Happy Feet 2 and a member of Dein Perry's Tap Dogs.

NICHOLAS HAMILTON (Private Noel Grimes)

With wisdom beyond his years, Nicholas has worked constantly throughout his teens.

He recently filmed the lead role of Chris in US feature Endless, directed by Scott Speer and written by Rohit Kumar (13 Reasons Why).

Nicholas is the only Australian cast member in IT and the upcoming IT: Chapter Two, inspired by Stephen King's 1986 horror novel.

He starred opposite Viggo Mortensen in Captain Fantastic. Directed by Matt Ross, it had outings at both the Sundance and Cannes film festivals and received a Nomination for Best Ensemble in a Feature Film at the SAG Awards.

Previous features include The Dark Tower, from director Nikolaj Arcel, and Strangerland, directed by Kim Farrant and starring Nicole Kidman, Hugo Weaving and Joseph Fiennes.

Nicholas first came to industry attention with the lead role in the short film Time for which he received a Best Male Actor Award at the 2013 Tropfest Short Film Festival.

Earlier credits include guest leads in *Wanted* and *Mako Mermaids*, and the short films *Letter to Annabelle*, *Jack Rabbit*, *The Boy Who Stole the Belltower* and *Gifted*.

ANTHONY HAYES (Lieutenant Colin Townsend)

Anthony Hayes has appeared on our film and television screens for over 25 years, with film credits including Robert Connolly's *THE BOYS*, Phillip Noyce's *RABBIT PROOF FENCE*, *BOOTMEN* alongside Sam Worthington, *NED KELLY* with Heath Ledger, the local independent feature *WEST*, and David Michod's multi award winning debut feature *ANIMAL KINGDOM*.

It was Anthony's performance as Stevie in the acclaimed Australian feature film *THE BOYS* that earned him Australian Film Institute (AFI) and Film Critics Circle of Australian (FCCA) nominations as Best Supporting Actor in 1998. He went on to win an AFI award in 2005 for Best Supporting Actor for *LOOK BOTH WAYS*, and followed with another win in 2006 for *SUBURBAN MAYHEM*. Other nominations include AFI and FCCA Best Supporting Actor nominations for his role in Nash Edgerton's *THE SQUARE*.

Anthony's extensive body of work in television includes the role of Gary in the acclaimed BAFTA nominated ABC series *THE SLAP*, alongside Anthony LaPaglia, Alex Dimitriades and Melissa George, which saw him nominated for Best Actor at the 2012 Festival de Television de Monte Carlo, the ABC mini-series *BASTARD BOYS*, the six part ABC series *CHANGI*, and guest roles in numerous and well known Australian series including *RUSH*, *SEA PATROL*, *McLEOD'S DAUGHTERS*, *WATER RATS* and *BLUE HEELERS*.

Along with acting, Anthony has developed a career in writing and directing. His debut feature film *TEN EMPTY* had its world premiere at the Sydney Film Festival in 2008 and received nominations for Best Screenplay at the Victorian and the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards in 2008 and 2007 respectively. In 2002 Anthony also wrote, produced, and directed the short feature *NEW SKIN* which won several awards including the prestigious Dendy Award at the Sydney Film Festival, and the Independent Film (IF) Award for Best Emerging Director. In 2001 he was also the recipient of a grant from the Gloria Payten and Gloria Dawn Fellowship which enabled him to travel to the UK to spend time with director Mike Leigh.

As a writer Anthony was part of the story and plotting team for the successful Australian ABC series *A MOODY CHRISTMAS*, which was commissioned by CBS studios for the Fox network to be produced as a US remake.

In 2012 Anthony appeared in Network Ten's *BIKIE WARS* which was based on the true events of the Milperra massacre in 1984, and Network Nine's tele-movie *BEACONSFIELD*, the story of the Tasmanian mining disaster in 2006. His portrayal of Bernie Banton, the James Hardie worker who became the public representative in the battle for compensation for employees who suffered asbestosis as a result of working for the company, in the ABC mini-series *DEVIL'S DUST* won him the 2013 Logie award for Most Outstanding Actor and also earned him an Australian Academy of Cinema Television Arts (AACTA) for Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama. He also received a Best Actor nomination at the 2013 Seoul International Drama Awards.

2012 saw Anthony appear in the ABC tele-movie *THE BROKEN SHORE* opposite Don Hany and Claudia Karvan, and in the Network Ten series *SECRETS AND LIES* opposite Martin Henderson.

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In the same year he also featured in two films; Craig Monahan's HEALING opposite Hugo Weaving and Xavier Samuel, and opposite Guy Pearce in David Michod's THE ROVER which premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014. In 2016 Anthony appeared in the DreamWorks film THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS, directed by Derek Cianfrance, alongside Michael Fassbender, Alicia Vikander, Rachel Weisz.

Further television credits include Network Nine's epic mini-series GALLIPOLI, produced by John Edwards, Imogen Banks and Robert Connolly, the ABC tele-movie REFERN NOW: PROMISE ME, and the Matchbox/ABC drama series 7 TYPES OF AMBIGUITY, based on the critically acclaimed novel by Elliott Perlman, starring alongside Hugo Weaving and Alex Dimitriades.

2017 saw Anthony in two feature films; playing opposite Brad Pitt in the Netflix produced war film WAR MACHINE directed by ANIMAL KINGDOM's David Michod, and also in the Australian thriller CARGO, alongside Martin Freeman.

Recent television credits include appearing alongside Judy Davis in the ABC drama series MYSTERY ROAD, and the UK/ITV international crime thriller series STRANGERS.

RICHARD ROXBURGH (Brigadier David Jackson)

Award-winning actor Richard Roxburgh has worked on stage and screen around the world.

His film credits include MOULIN ROUGE, DOING TIME FOR PATSY CLINE, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE II, OSCAR & LUCINDA, THANK GOD HE MET LIZZIE, CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION, THE TURNING (REUNION), MATCHING JACK and James Cameron's action adventure film SANCTUM.

Most recently in film Richard appeared in Mel Gibson's HACKSAW RIDGE and the adaptation of Tim Winton's novel BREATH with Simon Baker and Elizabeth Debicki, opposite Radha Mitchell and up-and-comer Odessa Young in Sue Brooks' LOOKING FOR GRACE. Richard's upcoming credits include ANGEL OF MINE with Noomi Rapace and Yvonne Strahovski, GO! opposite Frances O'Connor and Dan Wyllie and H IS FOR HAPPINESS, with Miriam Margolyes, Emma Booth and Deborah Mailman.

Richard's well-known television credits include the role of Cleaver Greene in the ABC hit series 'Rake', which he also co-created, writes and produces. His brilliant performance earned him a TV Week Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Actor and the 2012 AACTA Award for Best Actor in a Television Series. series screens in the US on DirectTV. His performance in the role of Prime Minister Bob Hawke in Channel TEN's telemovie 'Hawke' earned Richard critical acclaim along with his award-winning electrifying portrayal as the notorious Roger Rogerson in the ABC's controversial mini-series 'Blue Murder'. The 2017 sequel 'Blue Murder: Killer Cop' earned him a Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama nomination at the 2017 AACTA Awards. Richard can next be seen alongside Helen Mirren in the HBO/Sky UK Miniseries CATHERINE THE GREAT.

For the ABC he also collaborated with Somersault director Cate Shortland on the two-part drama series 'The Silence' and 'East of Everything' where he played the lead role of Art Watkins.

Richard is also an accomplished director. His debut film, ROMULUS, MY FATHER, starring Eric Bana drew critical acclaim when it was released in 2007.

Richard has shared the stage with some of Australia's finest actors including Cate Blanchett, Hugo Weaving, Jacki Weaver and John Bell. He appeared on stage in the critically hailed *The Present*, an adaptation of Chekhov's *Platonov*, at the Sydney Theatre Company and earlier this year on Broadway. *The Present* continued his association with Cate Blanchett, with whom he also appeared as the title character in STC's hugely successful production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, directed by Tamas Ascher. The play had a revival at the Kennedy Center in Washington in 2011, the *New York Times* describing his performance as "astonishing, Richard Roxburgh, who seems to melt and re-form before your eyes". The play was remounted at Lincoln Centre New York for Sydney Theatre Company in 2012. Additional stage credits include *Waiting for Godot* (including a critically acclaimed 2015 tour to the Barbican, London), *Toy Symphony*, *The Seagull*, *Hamlet* (Company B) and *Closer* (Sydney Theatre Company).

Recently it has been announced that he will star opposite Helen Mirren in 'Catherine the Great', an HBO/Sky UK four-part miniseries.

THE FILMMAKERS

KRIV STENDERS - DIRECTOR

Kriv Stenders is one of Australia's most renowned and respected film and television directors with numerous critically acclaimed and award-winning shorts, documentaries, music videos, television series and feature films to his credit.

His feature films include *THE ILLUSTRATED FAMILY DOCTOR* (Official Selection Tribeca Film Festival), *BLACKTOWN* (Audience Award Winner Sydney Film Festival), *BOXING DAY* (Adelaide Film Festival Premiere and Jury Special Mention/ Best Actor Award at the Busan and Montreal Nouveau Cinema International Film festivals).

Kriv's fourth feature, *LUCKY COUNTRY* received two AFI nominations as well as being in Official Selection for the Adelaide, Cork, Montreal, Palm Springs and St Tropez Film Festivals.

His fifth feature, *RED DOG*, released by Roadshow in August 2011 has now earned over \$22 million at the box office, making it the eighth highest grossing Australian film of all time. As of 2012, it became the highest selling Australian DVD of all time. *RED DOG* won both Best Director and Best Film at the 2011 IF Awards and the Best Film Award at the inaugural 2012 ACCTA Awards. In 2013 Kriv directed *KILL ME THREE TIMES* starring Simon Pegg, Alice Braga, Teresa Palmer, Sullivan Stapleton and Bryan Brown. It was released theatrically by Magnolia Pictures in the U.S. in April and eOne in Australia.

Kriv followed up the success of *RED DOG* with *RED DOG: TRUE BLUE*, which was released by Roadshow in 2016.

For TV, Kriv's credits include *AUSTRALIA DAY* for Foxtel, which also received a theatrical release and screened at the Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane Film Festivals; the first and second series of *DOCTOR DOCTOR* for Channel 9; *A PLACE TO CALL HOME* for Channel 7; *THE PRINCIPAL*, a four-part Television drama for SBS TV, starring Alex Dimitriades and Aden Young; the feature-length documentary, *WHY ANZAC* with Sam Neill for ABC TV; and *HUNTERS* for NBC Universal/Syfy Channel/Matchbox Pictures.

Kriv's recent credits include the reimagining of the seminal film WAKE IN FRIGHT as a TV series for Channel 10; UNCHARTED, a feature documentary with Sam Neill for ABC TV that follows the journey of Captain Cook and RIGHT HERE: THE GO BETWEENS, the feature documentary about the extraordinary band and their journey; and JACK IRISH, for Easy Tiger Productions and ABC TV.

Kriv is currently shooting the Australian thriller BETWEEN TWO WORLDS starring Cold Feet and Luther star Hermione Norris for Seven Studios.

Kriv also continues to work as a director on numerous award-winning television and online advertising campaigns both in Australia and overseas.

MARTIN WALSH - PRODUCER

Martin Walsh is an award-winning film producer and senior marketing executive.

Martin left home at the age of 15 years and originally began his early working life as an actor appearing on stage and in TV commercials, then in film & television including the television mini-series ANZACs starring Paul Hogan, feature films THE COWRA BREAKOUT, THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, and television such as NEIGHBOURS and STAR SEARCH.

In 2004, Martin established his own film production company Red Dune Films after optioning the film and story rights for the Battle of Long Tan from the Long Tan commanders. In 2006, Martin developed, co-wrote, produced and marketed the ASTRA Award winning, TV Week Logie Award nominated, and critically acclaimed feature length documentary called The Battle of Long Tan narrated by Sam Worthington. The documentary was first broadcast on The History Channel / FOXTEL on 16th August 2006 for the 40th Anniversary of the battle.

Martin has more than 25 years of senior marketing and digital experience across News Corporation (Fox Sports, AFL, NRL and NBL - equivalent of managing MLB, NFL and NBA) and the global News Corporation's Sydney 2000 Olympics efforts, BMG Bertelsmann (music and games), Village Roadshow Pictures (movies, theme parks and stage shows), Telstra – Australia's largest Telecommunications company and Australia's largest FM Radio network Austereo.

Since 2012 Martin has been providing advice on digital and marketing transformation and optimization to large and medium sized organisations in Australia, New Zealand and the USA such as Commonwealth Bank, XERO, ansarada, MYER and others. Prior to 2012, Martin led digital marketing at Microsoft, and then IBM. During the 5 years immediately prior to joining Microsoft in 2005, Martin established and grew the ecommerce division of one of Australia's largest gaming and entertainment companies Tabcorp, from less than \$20m per year in annual sales to more than \$400m in annual sales.

In 2009, Martin was invited to be a keynote speaker at the SPAA (Screen Producers Association Australia) Conference discussing modern film marketing, and he has also given lectures and other presentations at AFTRS (Australian Film Television and Radio School) and Fringe SPAA.

Martin also served in Australian Special Forces - 2 Commando Company, 1st Commando Regiment, Australian Army Reserve and holds post graduate qualifications in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from Swinburne University in Melbourne.

JOHN SCHWARZ & MICHAEL SCHWARZ - PRODUCERS

John and Michael Schwarz first established themselves as Full Clip Productions in 2010, alongside Sam Worthington. The company was started to produce stories across a diverse cross section of mediums, including feature films, television, graphic novels and digital platforms.

Their first graphic novel, *DAMAGED*, debuted in 2011 to critical acclaim and is now being developed as a television series.

In 2011, Full Clip launched their TV division with a first look deal at NBCU International, which led to the 2015 critically lauded tv event miniseries, *DEADLINE GALLIPOLI*, based on the WWI campaign. Directed by Michael Rymer and starring Sam Worthington, Hugh Dancy (*HANNIBAL*) and Charles Dance (*GAME OF THRONES*), the mini series was nominated for best writing in original television mini series at the 2015 Australian Writers Guild Awards (taking place in September).

Two seasons of the digital series *CLEANERS*, has been produced for Crackle. Written and directed by Paul Leyden, *CLEANERS* had a cast that included Emanuel Chriqui (*ENTOURAGE*), Emily Osment (*HANNAH MONTANA*), David Arquette (*SCREAM*) and Gina Gershon (*SHOWGIRLS*).

2017 saw the release of the feature film *HUNTERS PRAYER* (based on the novel *FOR THE DOGS* by Kevin Wignall), directed by Jonathan Mostow (*TERMINATOR 3*, *BREAK DOWN*, *U571*) with a script by John Brancato & Michael Ferris (*THE GAME*) and starring Sam Worthington and Odeya Rush (*GOOSEBUMPS*).

John and Michael have since gone on to form a new company in *DEEPER WATER*. The first film under the new banner is *KILLERMAN*, written and directed by Malick Bader and featuring Liam Hemsworth (*THE HUNGER GAMES*), Emory Cohen (*BROOKLYN*), and Diana Guerrero (*ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK*) and *DANGER CLOSE: The Battle of Long Tan* both set for an August 2019 release.

2019 has seen the beginning of production of *LES NORTON*, a 10 episode television series based on the best selling book series of the same name by Robert G. Barret. The series which debuts on Australia's ABC network later this year, stars Rebel Wilson (*PITCH PERFECT*) and David Wenham (*300*).

STUART BEATTIE – WRITER/PRODUCER

BAFTA award winning Stuart Beattie is an Australian born screenwriter and director. He attended Knox Grammar School, in Sydney, Australia and later Charles Sturt University in Bathurst.

It wasn't until Stuart moved to Los Angeles where he was enrolled to study a-year-long screenwriting course, did he actively begin his pursuits in the film industry. It was during this time he penned the thriller 'The Last Domino', which ultimately evolved into this hit movie 'Collateral', directed by Michael Mann and starring Tom Cruise and Jamie Foxx.

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Stuart has also been involved with some of the biggest films to come out of Hollywood in recent times and he has recently completed writing the script for a future 'Star Wars' film and he's been writing Ridley Scott's TV Mini-series adaptation '3001: The Final Odyssey'.

His other notable feature credits include 'Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl', 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest', 'Pirates of the Caribbean: At The End of the World', 'Pirates of the Caribbean Dead Men Tell No Tales', 'Australia' and 'G.I. Joe: The Rise of the Cobra'.

In 2010, Stuart made his directorial debut with adaptation of the John Marsden classic, 'Tomorrow When the War Began' and he also wrote and directed 'I, Frankenstein'.

BEN NOTT ACS – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Multi award winning Ben Nott is one of Australia's leading cinematographers. In a career spanning two decades, it was at the age of 23 that Ben discovered the right side of his brain, picking up a camera for the very first time. From that moment, his life changed forever.

Ben's outstanding list of film credits includes The Spierig Brothers' Winchester starring Helen Mirren, The Spierig Brothers' Predestination starring Ethan Hawke, Stuart Beattie's Tomorrow When the War Began, The Spierig Brothers' Daybreakers, Accidents Happen and Singh Is King.

Ben's Television credits include the celebrated telemovie Sisters of War, Nightmares & Dreamscapes, The Stories of Stephen King and Ridley Scott's miniseries The Company for which he received a Prime Time Emmy Award nomination.

Bestowed the honour of Australian Cinematographer of the Year Mille Award in 2006, 2008 and most recently in 2012, Ben has twice been nominated for Excellence at the prestigious American Society of Cinematographers Awards, voted winner in 2008.

SAM HOBBS – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Sydney based Sam Hobbs is one of the most respected and hardest working Production Designers in Australia. Sam has an more than 20 years experience as a Production Designer and Art Director across film, television, theatre and marketing/advertising.

In addition to Danger Close, Sam's most recent work can be seen on the upcoming Abe Forsythe feature film Little Monsters, alongside Lupita Nyong'o and Josh Gad which just sold in a bidding war for distribution at Sundance to Neon & Hulu, Kriv Stender's Red Dog: True Blue and the acclaimed feature length documentary The Waler: Australia's Great War Horse.

Sam's television credits include the award winning The Kettering Incident and many other series such as Pulse, Hyde & Seek, Old School, Janet King, Australia: The Story of Us, Rescue Special Ops and The Alice.

In 2017 Sam was nominated for the APDG (Australian Production Designers Guild) award for best production design for a feature film for his work on the 19th C period epic Hanyut, an adaptation of Joseph's Conrad's novel Almayers Folly directed by U-Wei bin Haji Saari shot in Malaysia.

Sam also has extensive production design/art direction experience for television commercials including three years of work for the ANZ Bank's award winning annual support of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras event via the Whybins agency.

VERONIKA JENET ASE - EDITOR

Veronika is an award-winning feature film editor. Her recent work includes Stephen McCallum's debut feature *1%* (2018), Rachel Perkins' *Jasper Jones* (2017) starring Hugo Weaving and Toni Collette, Simon Stone's *The Daughter* (2015), starring Geoffrey Rush, and *Strangerland* (dir. Kim Farrant, 2015), starring Nicole Kidman.

She was editor of *The Piano* (dir. Jane Campion, 1993), for which she received Academy Award, BAFTA and ACE Award Nominations. She has been nominated for six AFI Awards, winning four times for *The Piano*, documentary *Hepzibah* (dir. Curtis Levy, 1998), *The Black Balloon* (dir. Elissa Down, 2007) and *Snowtown* (dir. Justin Kurzel, 2010).

Veronika has also been nominated for four IF Awards, winning three for *Rabbit Proof Fence* (dir. Phillip Noyce, 2001), *The Waiting City* (dir. Claire McCarthy, 2009) and *Snowtown*. Other credits include *Lore* (dir. Cate Shortland, 2011), produced by Porchlight Films, which screened in Official Competition at Sydney, Toronto and London Film Festivals. She also edited *Around the Block* (wr/dir. Sarah Spillane, 2012) produced by Brian Rosen and Su Armstrong in 2012.

She has credits in high-end Australian television drama, editing the mini-series *Naked* (dir. Neil Armfield, 1995) and the four hour mini-series *Bastard Boys* (dir. Ray Quint, 2007), for which Veronika received an ASE Award for Best TV Drama. Veronika is currently in New Zealand working on the Working Titles major television adaptation of Eleanor Catton's acclaimed novel *The Luminaries* (dir. Claire McCarthy/ BBC Two).

LIZZY GARDINER – COSTUME DESIGNER

Noted for her originality, Lizzy is best known for her work and Academy Award for Best Costume Designer at the 67th Academy Awards in 1995 for *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Her costumes won the Academy Award for Best Costume Design at the 67th Academy Awards, Best Costume at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), and Best Costume Design at the Australian Film Institute Awards.

Lizzy gained worldwide attention at the Academy Awards in 1995 when she picked up her award wearing an unusual dress consisting of 254 expired American Express Gold cards.

Lizzy left Australia after finishing high school and moved to Italy, where she studied fashion and costume design for three years at the Accademia di Italiana in Florence.

After graduating she returned to Australia and began working in the Australian film and TV industry, working on the soap opera *E Street*. Whilst working on *E Street* in 1993, she began working with Tim Chappel.

Together they designed outlandish costumes for Stephan Elliott's Australian LGBT comedy film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Amongst the bizarre costumes they designed for the film was a dress consisting of many pairs of pink flip flops. She studied Australian drag

queens and their clothes and commented, "I love the fact that you can do things without much budget."

The Motion Picture Guide 1995 Annual, covering the films of 1994, said, "The Oscar-winning costumes by Lizzy Gardiner and Tim Chappel are wildly inspired and range from the bizarre to the simply indescribable."

Subsequent films which Gardiner worked on include Bound (1996), Welcome to Woop Woop (1997), Gone Fishin' (1997), Woundings (1998), Theory of the Trojans (1999), Eye of the Beholder (1999), Mission: Impossible II (2000), Effie: Just Quietly TV series (2001), Stealth (2005), The Great Raid (2005), Ghost Rider (2007), The Ruins (2008), Burning Man (2011), The Railway Man (2013), Hacksaw Ridge (2016) and Peter Rabbit (2018).

TESS NATOLI – HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGNER

TESS NATOLI is one of Australia's most respected hair and makeup designers with over 26 years' experience in the industry working both nationally & internationally. She has worked across all mediums, print, commercials, runway, theatre, music videos, television, & film.

Tess's many feature film credits & career highlights include Mad Max: Fury Road, The Great Gatsby, Three Dollars, Australia, Charlottes Web, Footy Legends, Ned Kelly, Gettin' Square and the Spierig Brothers' science-fiction thrillers Predestination and Daybreakers which included significant prosthetic makeup.

She has also designed some of Australian television's most successful programs across a range of genres such as Killing Time, Rush, Rain Shadow, Reef Doctors, The Elephant Princess, Mortified, Monarch Cove, Wentworth and Round The Twist.

Her broad experience in the industry and passion for her craft inspires her to seek out new innovative ideas & welcome challenges, most notably evident when she headed the Animal Make-up department on the international film Charlottes Web.

Tess's most recent work can be seen on Aquaman, Guardians of the Tomb, Alien: Covenant, and Kong: Skull Island, demonstrating her wealth of experience with international artists.

Tess continues to develop her own skills and actively encourages others to do the same under her instruction as an industry educator and lecturer. She believes 'there is always more to learn'.

LIAM EGAN – SOUND DESIGNER

Liam has nearly 30 years' experience as a freelance sound designer, sound editor and sound recordist. In that time he has been the sound designer on over 30 feature films and he has been a sound editor and sound recordist on many more features. Liam has also been the sound designer on countless short films, documentaries, television series and multimedia projects. He has been nominated for and/or won many awards including AFI, AACTA, ASSG, IF, Golden Reel (MPSE), Flickerfest and Apollo awards.

Some of his recent awarded work includes Samson and Delilah, Beneath Hill 60, Storm Surfers 3D, The Hunter, Satellite Boy, The Broken Shore, Red Obsession, Tender, Strangerland, Beast, Ruben Guthrie and The Daughter.

Liam has collaborated with Lynette on Rekindling Venus, two installation projects with the Martu people of the Pilbara and also the documentary Tender.

CAITLIN YEO - COMPOSER

Caitlin is a highly acclaimed, multi award winning Australian Screen composer, and current president of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers. Caitlin's compositional style emerges from a fascination with music from different cultures, 20th century composition, and a deep love of telling stories with music.

Caitlin has scored multiple feature films, including The Rocket, All my Friends are Leaving Brisbane and The Butterfly Tree. She has also composed the music for many documentaries including, Foxtel series, The Pacific in the Wake of Captain Cook with Sam Neill, David Stratton: A Cinematic Life, Bomb Harvest, SBS series For The Love of Meat, After The Apology, ABC TV series The House with Annabel Crabb.

Her composition credits also extend to the stage, including Seven Stories; an audio-visual work performed by Ensemble Offspring, at the City Recital Hall for Vivid 2017, and the arena show Heartland: Australian Outback Spectacular, currently performing daily in the Gold Coast.

Caitlin has recently completed the music for the upcoming feature film Standing Up for Sunny, starring RJ Mitte due to be released in cinemas in 2019, and the documentary feature Sanctuary.

Caitlin Yeo has received a swathe of accolades including APRA screen music awards for The Butterfly Tree in 2018 (Feature Score of the Year and Best soundtrack Album) ; Feature Score of the Year for The Rocket (2013), and Best Music for a documentary for Getting Frank Gehry (2016) and Bomb Harvest (2007), 2 x AACTA nomination, a 2017 Ozflix Award for best music, and the 2014 Film Critics Circle award to name a few. In 2011, Caitlin was also awarded the APRA Professional Development Award, which garnered her a spot at the prestigious ASCAP Film and TV Scoring Workshop in Los Angeles.

SCOTT ZERO – VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR

Scott Zero is the managing director of Chroma Media and a VFX producer with 20 years experience delivering content for film and television.

With a focus on production design and a background in camera department, post production and visual effects, he oversees a team of talented digital artists at Chroma's facilities in Bank Street, South Melbourne.

Scott is a passionate supporter of the local industry, and in addition to consulting for film schools and professionals on integrating digital tools, he is also a regular speaker at the University of Melbourne, Victorian College of the Arts, a regular lecturer at the Film Summer School and a steering committee member and speaker for the Australian Production Designers Guild. In 2010, Scott received an AACTA Nomination for Best Visual Effects on Cloudstreet (2011).

Scott has worked as VFX Supervisor on hundreds of Television programs such as The Doctor Blake Mysteries, Romper Stomper, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Jack Irish and much more. Danger

Close is the first major feature film Scott has supervised Visual Effects on but his many years of experience on smaller feature films and Danger Close has set him up for greater future success having recently supervised VFX for the \$50m Chinese feature film The Whistleblower.

BRIAN COX – SPECIAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR

Brian Cox is one of the most experienced Special Effects professionals in the film and television industry.

Brian grew up in Tasmania and joined the Army in 1967. This was the year after Long Tan and the story and accounts from soldiers returning from Vietnam made this an account of action that resonated and stayed with him for many years. Although he volunteered to go to Vietnam, alas, it never came to be.

Some years later he began working in the film industry and always had the thought of Long Tan would make a great movie. It was a long time coming but when asked to contribute by Producer Martin Walsh, Brian says, “It was an incredible privilege and personal gratification that the story was finally being told.”

Brian has over 40 years’ experience as a Special Effects Technician. He has worked on many Vietnam war Stories including the Australian series ‘Vietnam’, Oliver Stones ‘Heaven and Earth’, ‘Operation Dumbo Drop’ and Frankie’s House, the story of Photographer Tim Payne. Brian has also led Special Effects on films such as; ‘The Matrix’, ‘Pitch Black’, ‘Mission: Impossible II’, ‘Moulin Rouge’, ‘Queen of the Damned’, ‘Australia’, ‘Wolverine’, ‘Unbroken’ and recently ‘Thor: Ragnarok’ and ‘Aquaman’.