

## FRED SMITH – PEACE IN THE PACIFIC CONCERTS

**Friday 12 July**

**Balmain – Cat & Fiddle** Doors 7pm, Show starts 8pm

456 Darling St Balmain (cnr Elliott St). Ph. 9810 7931.

Tickets \$20 Adults, \$15 Concession.

There is a bistro, unreserved seating

Bookings: <http://www.trybooking.com/DASV>

or try your luck on the door.

**8pm, Saturday 13 July**

**The Playhouse, Canberra Theatre Centre**

London Circuit, Canberra

Tickets: Adult \$35, Concession \$30, Group (10+) \$30, Children \$24

Bookings: Call 02 6275 2700 (M–F 9am to 5pm) OR [canberratheatrecentre.com.au](http://canberratheatrecentre.com.au)



Fred Smith presents *Peace in the Pacific* – a series of concerts to mark the tenth anniversary of the withdrawal of the Peace Monitoring Group from Bougainville (30 June 2003) and the commencement of RAMSI (24 July 2003).

Since 1997, over 15,000 Australians have worked on peace monitoring operations in **Bougainville and Solomon Islands** working with Defence, AusAID, Australian Federal Police, Foreign Affairs, and Treasury.

The **Bougainville** Peace Monitoring Group (1997-2003) was the world's first unarmed peace keeping operation. It was remarkably successful in ending years of bitter fighting and helping Bougainvillians find a way forward.

Similarly, many thousands of Australians have been involved in peace operations in **Solomon Islands** either with the International Peace Monitoring Team (2000 to 2002) or with RAMSI (2003 to present). Again many of these were Canberrans.

The *Peace in the Pacific* show combines projected photographs from the islands collected by Fred, some taken by professional photographers and others by Peace Monitors themselves, with songs from his award winning CD *Bagarap Empires*.

*Bagarap Empires* was described by David Bridie as “one of the great Australian records”, and in the Canadian press as “an amazing piece of work chronicling a period in a peoples’ history that few of us know anything about.”

*Bagarap Empires* was a transformative album for Fred Smith who up until then was cutting his teeth performing comedy in cabaret venues and bars around the country.

Smith’s songwriting began to move in less comic directions when he travelled to work with Australian Government Peace Monitoring operations in Bougainville, an island province of Papua New Guinea that recently emerged from ten years of civil war. “My writing only got serious once I had something serious to write about”.

Fred became a celebrity on Bougainville collaborating with local musicians and the Australian Army PR Team to record and release 20,000 copies of a cassette of peace songs in the Melanesian pidgin dialect. The important role of music in the Bougainville peace process was documented in the film “*Bougainville*

*Sky*” shot by Sydney filmmaker Nick Agafonoff in the lead up to the Peace Monitoring Groups withdrawal from Bougainville in July 2003.

Fred has since become known as one of Australia’s heavy weight balladeers. His recent release *Dust of Uruzgan*, written while working for 18 months in southern Afghanistan, earned him comparisons with legendary Australian songwriters Eric Bogle, Don Walker and John Schumann.

*Bagarap Empires* and *Dust of Uruzgan* have bookended a decade in which Fred has emerged as something of a chronicler of the human face of Australian interventions overseas . “The last 15 years of Australian military history has been all about peace and stabilisation operations rather than traditional war fighting. I've been in a unique and fortunate position to document some of this” said Fred.

Some of the tunes on the *Bagarap Empires* are sung in Melanesian pidgen, a language in which Smith became fluent while working in the islands. One of these tunes is a jingle that he wrote for the island’s only radio station, Radio Bougainville. Smith hosted a weekly radio show on Radio Bougainville called ‘Saredi Nait Pati’ (‘Saturday Night Party’).

“We’d do interviews, play requests, talk about the peace process, and discuss seasonally pertinent issues in horticulture. Radio was important on the island because it was the only way of getting accurate information around. Without it, rumours and fear spread” says Fred.

The villages of the Pacific are a long way from the streets of Sydney or Canberra. But those who lived and worked on the islands were deeply affected by the experience. “Thousands of Australians worked in these missions and were deeply affected by their experiences” said Fred. “It's time we got together and talked about it” said Fred.

**Peace in the Pacific explores the beauty, turmoil and complexity of the Islands, and the role played by Australians in bringing them back from the brink.**

### *...More about Bagarap Empires*

Smith returned from Bougainville to record the "*Bagarap Empires*" CD (pronounced 'Bugger-up'). The CD was rated amongst the top 5 albums of the year by ABC Radio presenter Paul Petran. *Bagarap Empires* was also awarded the SreenSound Australia award for Best New CD Release of 2002. *Bagarap Empires* is a CD of story songs from the conflicts in Bougainville and the Solomons Islands, told from personal perspectives which make them accessible and universal.

*Bagarap Empires* is described by Melbourne Age writer Warwick McFadyen as “a stunning marriage of ethereal poetry and hard nosed realism, with relentless rhythm and shimmering melody.” It is this mix of melody and reality that has become the hallmark of Smith’s songwriting.

'Once in a blue moon, a drift of music so unlike any other enfolds your  
sensibilities and reaffirms the power of song'

**Warwick McFadyen, The Age, 23 June 2002**

'This is a rare, compelling work...a quirky, engaging and powerful album.'

**Rowan Callick, Australian Financial Review, 8 November 2002**

'One should seriously consider purchasing Bagarap Empires. Especially if  
you are, or would like to be, a songwriter, just to hear how good it sounds  
when it is done really well'

**Mike Cooper, fROOTS magazine (UK), November 2003, Edition no. 245**

“It is an amazing piece of work. Truly folk music at its best – chronicling a period in a peoples’ history that few of us know anything about.”

**Les Siemieniuk, Penguin Eggs (Canada), Autumn 2006 Edition**

### **...The Bougainville Story by Fred**

It was early 1999 when I first went to Bougainville Island to work with the Peace Monitoring Group. At the time I was working part time in the Australian Foreign Affairs Department while beginning a career as a singer songwriter. The PMG had arrived in Bougainville in December 1997 following peace talks between Bougainville rebels and the government of Papua New Guinea which brought to an end an eight year war of independence. The ceasefire agreement invited Pacific countries to send in an intervening force on the condition that we come unarmed. With soldiers and civilians from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuata, I understand it was the world’s first unarmed peacekeeping intervention.

Though sent to Bougainville to monitor, report and translate I discovered, quite by accident, that my musical chops were of most service to the peace process. One evening I was sitting picking my guitar on the porch of our outpost in South west Bougainville underneath the only light bulb in the village. Soon two hundred faces gathered out of the darkness to listen. So I made up a little song in the local pidgin language to get them singing along, and over the coming weeks wrote a few more until all of a sudden I had repertoire.

In the early phases of the peace process our main objective was to be as present and visible on the island as possible, and to project positive messages about the peace process. The Captain of my patrol team saw that a concert was a useful excuse to be in a village so developed a patrol structure around me, my guitar, some stories and a quartet of soldiers doing backing vocals! (initially they sucked but improved with time) Headquarters became persuaded that these songs might be of value in promoting positive messages about the peace process and so flew in a recording desk and a bunch of mikes. Working with local sound engineers and musicians we recorded my songs and a number of songs written by local musicians reflecting on their experiences of the conflict and the peace. These recordings were mastered onto a ‘*Songs Of Peace*’ Cassette 20,000 copies of which were distributed around the island. It became a big thing.

In 2003 a documentary film called *Bougainville Sky* was made celebrating the role of music in what became an unusually successful peace process. The music seemed to serve a number of functions: it reached disaffected youth otherwise immune to messages smacking of didacticism; it contributed to a mood of mirth and optimism around the peace process; and it bolstered the image of the Peace monitors and therefore the credibility of the peace process breaking the ice between and amongst Peace monitors, former combatants, and otherwise wary villagers. In the end, a successful peace process is about changing hearts and minds. This is what music is for.

Bougainville Sky is distributed through Ronin Films.

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In a world where internal rather than international conflict has become a major security concern, the international community is playing an expanding role in the complex tasks of conflict resolution and peace-building processes. Robust peace enforcement followed by post-conflict state building have been the favored modes of operation in these interventions, but the results have not always been positive or enduring.

Successful elections in June 2005 marked a new stage in a remarkably successful 8 year peace process that brought peace to what seemed to be an intractable conflict situation on Bougainville Island, a province of the south west Pacific state of Papua New Guinea. The international community, through a regional “coalition of the willing” and a small UN observer mission, played a significant role in this

process.

The Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group was the first ever international intervention to enter a conflict zone unarmed. It took a highly original approach, eschewing robust enforcement and state building in favor of a minimalist strategy based on supporting local actors. This approach also left a modest footprint that enabled the Group to eventually withdraw from the island without precipitating a collapse.

Australian diplomat and Songwriter Fred Smith worked as a civilian advisor to the Peace Monitoring Group between 1999 and 2003. In addition to his official duties he was heavily involved the Group's communication strategy both as a spokesman and as a musician whose songs became legendary on Bougainville Island. He hosted his own weekly radio show on the province's only radio station, Radio Bougainville.

The film *Bougainville Sky* by Nick Agafonoff documents Fred's work on Bougainville and tells the story of how this unarmed Group worked with churches, women's groups and former combatants to release the people of Bougainville from the grip of a bitter civil war.