

Fred Smith - Dust of Uruzgan

Early responses to pre-release copies and performances of Dust of Uruzgan:

“Every now and then you hear a song and you think to yourself “I wish I’d written that”. Fred Smith’s album Dust of Uruzgan is chock-a-block full of songs like that. Arresting, insightful and packed full of gritty detail, Fred Smith’s songs literally bash down the doors of national understanding and conscience. If there is any justice in the world, this album will be a major hit. These songs are a clean, clear window through which we can look at our involvement in Afghanistan. And look we must.” John Schumann (ex Redgum)

“The presence of Fred Smith over the weekend was the highlight. Why this man isn't regarded as one of Australia's best-known songwriters is beyond me. His new material based on his experiences in Afghanistan is powerful, his guitar playing is understated and his lyrics incisive, deft and challenging. His song, "Dust of Uruzgan" rates as the best anti-war song written since Eric Bogle's "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda" or Redgum's "Only 19".

Chris Spencer, Trad & Now, May 2011 (on a Festival performance)

Fred Smith was the first Australian diplomat to be posted to Uruzgan in July of 2009. His main job was to build relationships with tribal leaders in order to improve cooperation and understanding between the local community and the Coalition Forces, to act as a bridge between these two vastly different cultures. This put him in a unique position to understand both. He served most of his 18 month tour of Uruzgan province living and working on the Multinational Base in Tarin Kowt and more recently at a Forward Operating Base in the Chora Valley. Whilst in Afghanistan, Fred wrote a collection of powerful songs about his experiences and the realities of life for soldiers in this difficult war. These songs are now being released on an album called *Dust of Uruzgan*.

Smith played regular concerts on the main base in Tarin Kowt where his songs are on everybody's iPod. His comic ditty "Niet Swaffelen op de Dixi", entreating Dutch soldiers not to do unspeakable things in the portaloos around the base, became a hit with the Dutch military and he toured Holland in November 2010 on the strength of it.

Fred Smith is known on the Australian and international festival circuit for his comic performances, and there is a thread of dark humour running through *Dust of Uruzgan*. It serves as a counter weight to the darker territory explored in many of the songs, and opens up the listener to a more personal and three dimensional understanding of the experience of soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan. *Dust of Uruzgan* is effectively a collection of 12 stories from the war in Afghanistan. Some are written from personal experience, while others draw on keen observation of the realities of soldiers and civilians serving in this complex war, as well as Afghan perspectives. While Smith sings most the songs on the album, some of these perspectives are delivered through guest vocal cameos from long-term professional partner Liz Frencham, Dutch singer Carola van Houwert, and American folk maverick Jonathan Byrd.

Interviews through:

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