



The Jungle Dark

Steve Strevens

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On 21 July 1969, 3 Platoon, A Company, 6 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment forced their way through the damp Vietnamese jungle on a patrol as part of Operation Mundingburra. With the insects biting and the humidity sapping their strength, the platoon established a safe harbour and listened as the news came across the radio: Neil Armstrong had become the first man on the moon. Moments later, their skipper, Platoon Commander Lieutenant Peter Hines, stepped on a mine and exploded in a maelstrom of dirt, smoke and blood.

Memories of that fateful day stayed with the members of 3 Platoon for more than a decade before singer-songwriter John Schumann transformed the story into a ballad that would capture the spirit of a generation and become the anthem for the veterans of the Vietnam war.

This is the true story of Frank 'Frankie' Hunt and the other soldiers of 3 Platoon who were the inspiration for Redgum's 1983 hit song *I Was Only Nineteen*. Using first-hand accounts, *The Jungle Dark* is both a fascinating Australian yarn and enthralling military history. Vividly told, informative and poignant, it also traverses the deep unhealed wounds left in the minds and hearts of Vietnam soldiers long after they had left the battlefield.

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