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Australian Story: What a Wonderful World

**Airs Monday August 22 at 8pm on ABC & iview –
introduced by Brian Henderson**

Brian Henderson, presenter of the iconic 1960s music show *Bandstand* has come out of retirement, for what he says is his “final television appearance”, to present this special program about Patricia Amphlett - known to generations of Australians as “Little Pattie”.

As “Little Pattie”, Patricia Amphlett was the teenage pop star who stomped her way to stardom with two hit singles at the age of 14.

At 17 she became the youngest Australian entertainer to perform for troops at Nui Dat during the Vietnam War. It proved to be a dangerous mission when the battle of Long Tan broke out in the rubber plantation next to the Australian base.

Fifty years on Patricia Amphlett has never forgotten that day and is returning to Long Tan with Vietnam veterans to perform for them again.

Back on 18 August 1966 Little Pattie was on stage with Col Joye and the Joy Boys when the fighting escalated.

Major Harry Smith, Officer Commanding Delta Company 6RAR, led the historic battle and remembers it vividly:

“As as we left the base at about eleven o’clock and went out to Long Tan rubber we could hear the music floating through the air from the concert. And I recall that music all the way until we actually started firing.” – Major Harry Smith, Delta Company 6RAR commander

For Little Pattie it was a case of the “show must go on”. They were scheduled to perform several concerts during the day, to entertain hundreds of soldiers.

“During the second concert, there was gunfire and some explosions and heavy battle noise. I could tell something bad was going on in the jungle and I just kept singing.” - Patricia Amphlett (“Little Pattie”)

By four o’clock and in torrential rain Little Pattie’s third concert was cut short, with an order to immediately evacuate. She was pulled into a jeep and lifted into a chopper, while rogue soldiers ‘kidnapped’ Col Joye for the night.

“We were over the jungle where the Battle of Long Tan was underway and I was sitting next to a soldier with a big 50 calibre machine gun, he didn’t talk and I didn’t talk, and we stared at the jungle, there were thousands and thousands of orange lights, which were tracer bullets. We were witnessing what was going on from the sky.” – Patricia Amphlett (“Little Pattie”)

In the relative safety of Vung Tau, Little Pattie received news throughout the night of the heavy human toll – “I stopped counting,” she told *Australian Story*.

Eighteen Australians died, another 24 were injured.

"I saw things that perhaps I shouldn't have seen, green bags, terribly wounded soldiers. I talked to troubled young soldiers, and they all looked like my brother, they were so young." – Patricia Amphlett ("Little Pattie")

Now 67, Patricia Amphlett remains one of Australia's most loved and respected entertainers. She has also been a prominent union leader and social justice advocate.

For this program, *Australian Story* is travelling to Vietnam to exclusively cover the special concert marking the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan.

Patricia Amphlett will also lay a wreath at the Long Tan commemorative ceremony.

Major Harry Smith of Delta Company 6RAR is returning to Vietnam for the first time since the war.

He was in combat during Little Pattie's concerts in 1966 and says he is looking forward to this one:

"She's held in very high regard, about fifteen of us [who fought in Long Tan] are going back and we're looking forward to hearing, seeing and cuddling Little Pattie."

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Join the conversation: **#AustralianStory**

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