

MEDIA INFORMATION KIT

LOVE IN BRIGHT LANDSCAPES

The Story of David McComb of the Triffids

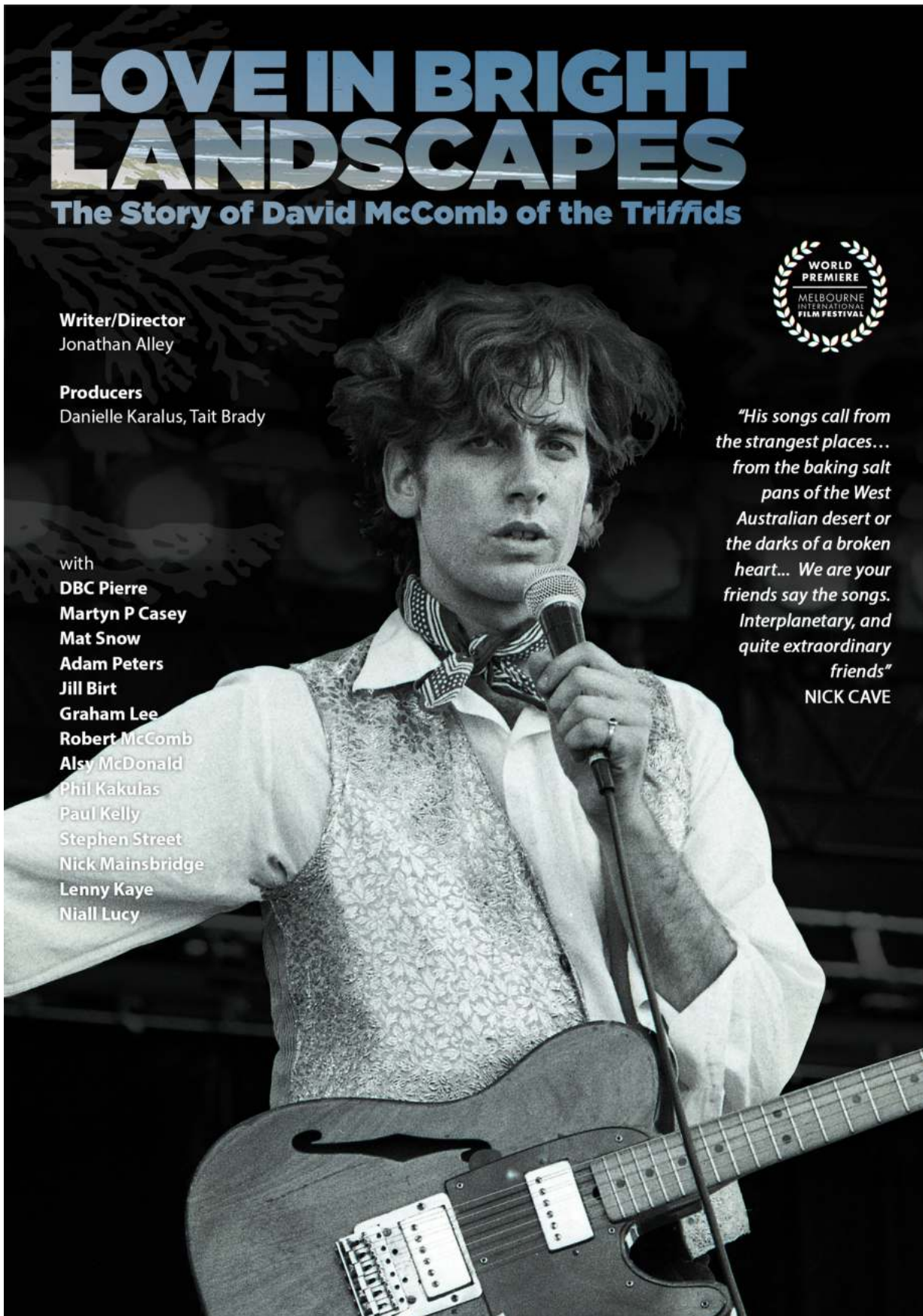


Writer/Director
Jonathan Alley

Producers
Danielle Karalus, Tait Brady

with
DBC Pierre
Martyn P Casey
Mat Snow
Adam Peters
Jill Birt
Graham Lee
Robert McComb
Alsy McDonald
Phil Kakulas
Paul Kelly
Stephen Street
Nick Mainsbridge
Lenny Kaye
Niall Lucy

*"His songs call from
the strangest places...
from the baking salt
pans of the West
Australian desert or
the darks of a broken
heart... We are your
friends say the songs.
Interplanetary, and
quite extraordinary
friends"*
NICK CAVE



World Premiere – MIFF 2021, Aug 5 – 22

www.labeldistribution.com

www.loveinbrightlandscapes.com

SYNOPSIS

Love in Bright Landscapes is the inspiring, tragic and intimate life story of **David McComb**, cult Australian singer/songwriter, of **The Triffids**.

In a short life, McComb gave up secrets in the shape of his songs. Using his familiar Western Australian landscape as the canvas for his towering psychodramas and heart-broken epics, the tragedy and triumph of McComb's short, driven, passionate life is brought to the screen using a vast array of David's music, poetry, letters, and unseen family-archives.

McComb believed in the song: from his earliest art/punk pranks to the darkly atmospheric brilliance of his last works, he ran at their whims, from his insomniac writing jags to lost loves across the continents, they forever ran at his heels. In The Triffids' 1986 masterpiece *Born Sandy Devotional* he found a new Australian voice: a poetically inspired vernacular cast against desolation, broken hearts in the bright expanse.

But McComb's health faltered and after a heart transplant in 1996, he died in 1999, days short of his 37th birthday - leaving a slew of unanswered questions and unrecorded songs.

McComb's poetry and newly discovered letters are read by Australian-born Man Booker Prize winning novelist DBC Pierre, interwoven with excerpts from 75 of McComb's songs. *Love in Bright Landscapes* reveals the man behind the songs – via beautifully restored 35mm slides, delightfully evocative home movies and heart-rending interviewees with colleagues, family, and friends.

A labour of love made over a 13-year period, *Love In Bright Landscapes* is the first film by writer/director Jonathan Alley.

ABOUT DAVID McCOMB - AUSTRALIAN SONGWRITER, POET (1962-1999)

WHAT'S OUR FILM ABOUT?

Love in Bright Landscapes is a feature documentary that tells the story of the breakneck creative adventure of late Australian songwriter and poet David McComb – best known for his work with his band, The Triffids.

A charismatic art-punk with a pen, McComb dived headlong into a creative win-at-all-costs journey that met a tragic end. In 37 short years he became a major modern new Australian voice. The film is driven by the cinematic imagery of his songs, an aching inner voice, posthumously published poems, the flinty private letters and the tragic story of a driven man – who despite hell-bent drive – got utterly lost.

WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

"The Triffids were born to two teenagers in late '70s Perth. The Perth of Norman Gunston, clear blue skies, watersports, all-night TV horrorhons, Hungry Jacks, the WAFL, the P76, the Nookanbah episode.... Politics was a distant rumble. Slim pickings for precocious Stooges/Velvets/Eno fans. But anything was fair game to escape the heat and boredom of the world's most isolated capital city." - David McComb, self penned bio.

WHAT DID HE DO?

Although no slouches in Australia – they toured the Eastern capitals and regional towns long and hard in the 80s, and took part in the national *Australian Made* tour in 1987 (see right) – McComb's main commercial success in his lifetime came in Europe, in the '80s. The Triffids hit the cover of music bible N.M.E in 1985 and played major European music festivals Glastonbury, Pinkpop, Waterpop, Seinojoke, Roskilde (40,000), T&W Belgium (35,000) and den Haag's Parkpop (100,000+). They found popularity in The Netherlands, Greece, Scandinavia, Ireland and Belgium, and released five studio albums, all over the world. Over this period they were a cult success in Australia at best. The Triffids split in 1989. McComb died a decade later, two weeks short of his 37th birthday.

WHY IS HE STILL RELEVANT?

David McComb's images and stories, all painted in song, have grown into the fabric of Australia, burning at us to swim deeper inside them, something at their core transcendent of era, fashion, or prevailing national mood; they loom large and ever mysterious, ready to delve into again and again. Because in these songs, lie the stories in which everyday people mark their lives. As the dust has settled on *Wide Open Road*, *Lonely Stretch*, *Bury Me Deep in Love* and *Stolen Property* they've been recognised by his contemporaries, critics, and the general public as some of the best songs ever written. As time passes, they reveal more of their secrets.

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The Story of David McComb of The Triffids

LISTENING

TREELESS PLAIN (1983)

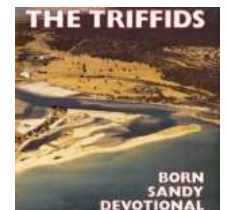
The 1st Triffids album proper, after numerous singles, EPs and cassette albums. *“Treeless Plain and Dylan’s Infidels have a lot in common... intense, passionate, there’s any number of songs on Treeless Plain that affect me in the same way as Dylan’s best”.*

Stuart Coupe, Sun Herald



BORN SANDY DEVOTIONAL (1986)

A song-cycle casting a disintegrating relationship against the night terrors of the Australian landscape packed with stunning literary allusion, metaphor, imagery with explosive and thrilling playing on any Australian album. Gave Australia the anthem *Wide Open Road*. *“One of the greatest albums ever made”.* **The Guardian**



IN THE PINES (1986)

A rustic collection of earthy, pastoral songs recorded at the McComb family farm on the edge of the Nullabor plain. Johnny Cash meets Cormac McCarthy.

“Beautifully captures the essence of The Triffids’ underscores frontman David McComb’s musical and lyrical talent for translating the isolated mental and physical landscapes of Australia.” **All Music.com**



CALENTURE (1987)

Signed to Chris Blackwell’s Island label, The Triffids’ elegant widescreen epic contains some of McComb’s best writing, including classics *Bury Me Deep in Love*, and *Save What You Can*. Fittingly named after the delusions suffered by sailors too long at sea.



THE BLACK SWAN (1989)

Smiths/Blur producer Stephen Street helmed this carnival ride through a musical vaudeville that encompasses McComb’s eclectic tastes; electronica, rock, soul, tango, hip hop; The Triffids’ take on The Beatles *White Album*, stretching out in all musical directions.



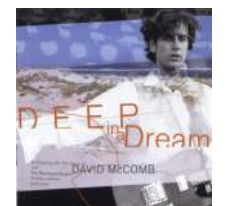
LOVE OF WILL (1994)

McComb’s only solo album seamlessly marries his instinct for the traditional and keen sense of the new, and ably demonstrates his mastery of the art of vocal delivery. A multi-layered, metaphorically complex and highly polished set of songs.



DEEP IN A DREAM: AN EVENING WITH THE SONGS OF DAVID McCOMB

An original fundraising project by the film’s creative team, this Melbourne recorded and produced live ‘tribute’ album features renditions of his songs by his post-Triffids group The Blackeyed Susans, Charles Jenkins, The Diving Bell, Mick Thomas (Weddings Parties Anything) and others. Inner sleeve art contains photographic depictions of David’s quintessentially Australian childhood.



TRUCKLOAD OF SKY: THE LOST SONGS OF DAVID McCOMB (2020)

In early 2020, David’s friends, family, former bandmates and young admirers brought an acclaimed set of previously unrecorded songs to life, further demonstrating the depth of McComb’s talents and the devotion of his peers.

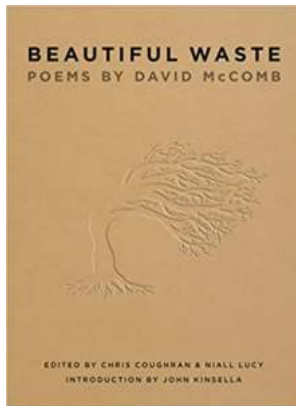


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READING

Beautiful Waste, David McComb (Fremantle Arts Press, 2009)



This slim paperwork volume of McComb's poetry was published posthumously over ten years after his death, bringing his oeuvre to a new audience, demonstrating his multi-disciplinary versatility and ongoing relevance as an Australian artist.

"McComb's lyrics operated on one level; the poems sink mineshafts... Beautiful Waste is the perfect McComb title: wry, self-deprecating, a touch of futility – but always beautiful "

- Robert Forster, *The Monthly*

Vagabond Holes (Writings on David McComb, Fremantle Arts Press, 2009)

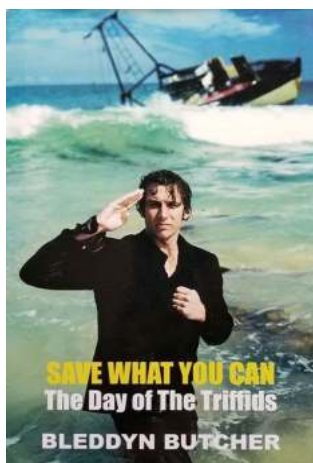


A compendium of essays, photographs, artworks, poems and remembrances of David McComb edited by the late Niall Lucy (interviewed in *Love in Bright Landscapes*) and Chris Coughran, with contributions from the remaining Triffids, Nick Cave, David Cavanagh, John Kinsella, Robert Forster, Steve Kilbey, Wilson Neate, DBC Pierre and *Love in Bright Landscapes* director Jonathan Alley.

"An enthralling story of an indomitable figure . . . a compelling Read that throws light on many unknown aspects of David McComb . . . his influence is still felt strongly."

- *The West Australian*

Save What You Can (Bleddyn Butcher, Treadwater Press, 2012)



This biography by McComb's lifelong close friend, UK photographer /writer Bleddyn Butcher tells the story of McComb's life. An exhaustive, super-detailed and immersive look into McComb's motivations, influences, dreams and demons.

"McComb is ... worthy of biography. A superb songwriter, musician and poet, interesting in terms of why his work differs from other songwriters and poets.... allows insight into often tormented creativity."

- *The Monthly*

WHAT DID THE CRITICS SAY?

“These are songs that don’t so much have lyrics as stories; compelling, elegant narratives of disappointment and despair, which give voice to the lonely, the marginalised and the silenced. This is not just the sound of an isolated part of the Antipodes – it’s the sound of humanity, all over the globe.” -
BBC Music

“The Triffids presented images of Australian climate and space ... Born Sandy Devotional is full of them: swimming out to the edge of the reef; washing the salt off under the shower. For Australians in Britain... it helped express affection for home. For Britons the same picture offered glimpses of a place utterly different and full of possibility” - **The Guardian**

“Few songwriters have managed to capture the feeling of isolation and fatalistic sense of the Australian countryside better than David McComb.” - **Ian McFarlane, Australian Encyclopedia of Rock**

WHAT DID HIS CONTEMPORARIES SAY?

“You could not find a more Australian song than Lonely Stretch. Have you ever been lost at night in the bush? The imagination starts to play its tricks. Ghosts of your former darlings appear and your headlights pierce the night to reveal ... nothing! The most vivid, crucial, exciting Aussie song of all time.”
- **Steve Kilbey, The Church**

“The wistful soul of The Triffids was a painful knowing that innocent times were gone for ever. That the band survived its brief time on critical acclaim and not commercial success confirms to me that culture flowed away past them, as they sang to a culture flowing away past. Stop and listen. They're still there, waving – and knowing where we are.”

- **DBC PIERRE, Australian Author /Love in Bright Landscapes contributor**

WHAT’S THE EVIDENCE OF A LEGACY?

Since David’s untimely passing in 1999, the legacy and reputation of the work he left behind has only grown year on year. It is clear that now in the digital era, David and The Triffids music is being embraced by a whole other younger generation that weren’t born when the band was at its original peak - and younger Australian bands and artists continue to cover and discover David’s vast back catalogue of songs.

The entire Triffids back catalogue was re-mastered and re-released via Liberation Records & Domino Records (UK) for the rest of the world. With new packaging, unreleased tracks, extensive historical liner notes and superbly re-mastered audio from the original source tapes, these re-issues have contributed significantly to the growing Australian renaissance in David McComb’s songwriting and music. Vinyl reissues of the band’s albums will arrive in late 2021.

In 2001 the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA), as part of it's 75th Anniversary celebrations, named McComb’s *Wide Open Road* as one the thirty greatest Australian songs of all time. The song is a bona fide national anthem, covered by several major Australian acts in concert and on recordings, including Paul Kelly and Weddings Parties Anything.

In 2006 David McComb was posthumously inducted into the West Australian Music Industry Association Hall Of Fame, as a composer.

In 2008 the Australian Independent Record Label Association (AIR) voted The Triffids album, *Born Sandy Devotional*, the best Australian album ever made.

In July 2008, The Triffids were inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame by Nick Cave, and *The Black Swan* was finally released as a double-album, this time as the “sprawling, messy masterpiece” that David had always intended.

In 2008 *The Age's* Entertainment Guide (Melbourne) placed The Triffids *Born Sandy Devotional* album (1986) of which each track was composed by McComb, at number nine in its top 50.

The Secret in the Shape of a Song, a tribute show only rarely staged by the remaining Triffids with selected guest singers, has been staged in Sydney, Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne, London, Brussels, and Athens intermittently since 2006. These selected festival-based gigs have drawn capacity audiences, standing ovations, repeat encores and rave reviews.

Based on 2020's *Truckload of Sky, Vol. 1* release of previously unheard David McComb songs, “The Friends of David McComb” band mounted the live concert version of the album using a range of guest vocalists including Rob Snarski, Romy Vager, Angie Hart, JP Shilo and Alex Gow. The touring of the show, interrupted by covid in 2020, continues in 2021 around Australia, keeping Dave's legacy alive and reaching new ears.

PARTICIPANTS

D B C Pierre	<i>Australian born novelist (Man Booker Prize Winner 2003)</i>
Graham Lee	<i>Triffids guitar and pedal-steel player / archivist</i>
Robert McComb	<i>Dave's brother and long-standing Triffids guitarist/violinist</i>
Jill Birt	<i>Triffids keyboard player and occasional lead vocalist</i>
Martyn P. Casey	<i>Triffids bassist & subsequently member of Nick Cave's Bad Seeds</i>
Alsy McDonald	<i>lifelong friend and co-founder of The Triffids</i>
Will Akers	<i>early Triffids member and close friend of David</i>
Joanne Alach	<i>David's longterm partner</i>
Adam Peters	<i>UK born composer, musician & David's songwriting collaborator</i>
Athel McComb	<i>David's mother (1924-2011)</i>
Harold McComb	<i>David's father (1924–2012)</i>
John McComb	<i>David's elder brother (1954-2015)</i>
Niall Lucy	<i>WA born academic/friend /published Dave's poetry (1956-2014)</i>
Thomas Hoareau	<i>noted West Australian painter and friend of David</i>
Dave Faulkner	<i>Perth born singer/songwriter Victims and Hoodoo Gurus founder</i>
Sally Collins	<i>former manager of The Triffids</i>
Paul Kelly	<i>Australian singer/songwriter</i>
Stephen Street	<i>UK music producer (Smiths, Blur etc) produced The Black Swan</i>
Lenny Kaye	<i>legendary US music producer & guitarist Patti Smith Group</i>
Richard Kingsmill	<i>longtime ABC JJJ music programmer/announcer</i>
Mat Snow	<i>UK music critic (NME & Mojo)</i>
Richard Gunning	<i>internationally renowned visual artist and art academic</i>
Lynden Barber	<i>journalist, former UK music critic & former Sydney Film Festival director</i>
Phil Kakulas	<i>early Triffids bassist/lifelong friend/member The Blackeyed Susans</i>
Rob Snarski	<i>singer/songwriter/member of The Blackeyed Susans</i>
Lena Gavelin	<i>Swedish journalist</i>
Carlos Van Hijfte	<i>Triffids European tour booker</i>
Nick Mainsbridge	<i>Australian-born music producer (Treeless Plain, Love of Will)</i>
Bill Dunbar	<i>longtime friend of David</i>
Julian Douglas-Smith	<i>early Triffids member/ lifelong friend of David</i>
Julian Wu	<i>longtime friend of David</i>

SONGS FEATURED IN THE FILM

Love In Bright Landscapes features excerpts from no less than **75** of David's songs - written either solely or jointly by McComb, as listed below.

<i>Lonely Stretch</i>	<i>Wide Open Road</i>	<i>Red Pony</i>
<i>Too Hot To Move</i>	<i>Just Might Fade Away</i>	<i>Pile Up</i>
<i>Artist</i>	<i>Southern Religious Programming</i>	
<i>Spanish Blue</i>	<i>Stand Up</i>	<i>Careless City</i>
<i>Embedded</i>	<i>This Boy</i>	<i>Personal Things</i>
<i>MGM</i>	<i>Dead Wind</i>	<i>Property Is Condemned</i>
<i>Beautiful Waste</i>	<i>Bad Timing</i>	<i>Place in The Sun</i>
<i>Snake Pit</i>	<i>On The Street Where You Live</i>	
<i>Madeline</i>	<i>Life Of Crime</i>	<i>Field of Glass</i>
<i>Being Driven</i>	<i>Monkey On My Back</i>	<i>One Mechanic Town</i>
<i>In The Pines</i>	<i>Vagabond Holes</i>	<i>Estuary Bed</i>
<i>The Seabirds</i>	<i>Keep Your Eyes On The Hole</i>	
<i>Only One Life</i>	<i>Why Don't You Leave For Good This Time?</i>	
<i>Suntrapper</i>	<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i>	<i>Region Unknown</i>
<i>Calenture</i>	<i>Ocean of You</i>	<i>Enemy Mine</i>
<i>Holy Water</i>	<i>Bury Me Deep In Love</i>	<i>Fairytale Love</i>
<i>American Sailors</i>	<i>New Year's Greeting</i>	<i>Setting You Free</i>
<i>Deep in a Dream</i>	<i>Lifelike</i>	<i>Left To Rot</i>
<i>Day of My Ascension</i>	<i>The Whole World's About to Slide</i>	
<i>Lucky for Some</i>	<i>The Good Life Never Ends</i>	
<i>Everything Fixed is Killed</i>	<i>Tender Is The Night</i>	<i>Stolen Property</i>

All songs written by David McComb (Published by Mushroom Music)

Mark *Indiscrete Music* *Disco* *Punk Rock*
Written by David McComb & Alsy McDonald

The Clown Prince *New Vision*
Written by David McComb & Phil Kakulas

Everybody Has to Eat *Jerdacuttup Man* *Raining Pleasure* *Save What You Can*
Written by David McComb & James Paterson

Trick Of The Light
Written by David McComb & Graham Lee

Falling Over You *Goodbye Little Boy* *The Spinning Top Song* *Willie The Torch*
Written by David McComb & Adam Peters

The Lord Burns Every Clue *This One Eat Souls*
Written by David McComb & Will Akers Written by David McComb & Phil Kakulas

OTHER MUSIC

Eastern States
Performed by The Blackeyed Susans
Written by Phil Kakulas & Dan Luscombe

Television Addict
Performed by Television Addicts
Written by Dave Faulkner & James Baker

Closing credits music

Tender Is the Night (The Long Fidelity)
Written by David McComb
Performed by The Diving Bell

Opening titles score

Composed by Dan Luscombe
Performed by Dan Luscombe & Graham Lee

Jonathan Alley – Director, Writer, Executive Producer

Love in Bright Landscapes Writer/Director Jonathan Alley interviewed David McComb in 1994, about his solo album *Love of Will*. He'd previously been struck by McComb's undeniable charisma and power as a live performer, a seemingly effortless visage that saw him stand head and shoulders over his peers. He wondered why McComb wasn't globally recognised for the unique figure he so evidently cut.



When McComb died in 1999 aged 36, he wondered why the story of such a patently brilliant man had ended so tragically.

A radio broadcaster for 32 years (Triple R, Radio National), NZ-born Alley trained in drama and performance, mounted a travel photography exhibition on Tibet, wrote about the arts as freelancer, and worked in home entertainment publicity/marketing for 11 years before working as a full-time music journalist. *Love in Bright Landscapes* is his first film.

Danielle Karalus – Producer, Cinematographer

Danielle Karalus is a creative producer, director, DOP and editor, who has worked across TV series, documentaries, drama film, film & DVD distribution, media and entertainment, corporate video, online education, social media content, livestream video and multi-camera events. She is a graduate of VCA School of Film and Television, and worked for Madman Entertainment for eight years as Head of their Video Production department. While there, Danielle produced and directed two 10 part series of Warehouse Comedy Festival for ABC2 featuring some of the best known comedians in Australia.



In 2010, Danielle founded her film and video production company, Atticus Media, creating 1000s of hours of content for clients with 100s of clients. As an interactive film & multimedia artist, her works have been presented and exhibited in Australia and internationally at leading digital media arts festivals. *Love In Bright Landscapes* is her first feature project as Producer.

Tait Brady – Producer

Tait has worked in a range of roles within the Australian industry for more than 30 years - creative development, production, distribution, marketing, exhibition, production and curation.

As a producer, over the last 11 years he has produced or exec-produced 12 projects and has several others in active development - spanning features, documentary, webseries and television.



As a Producer Tait's films include the feature HEALING (2014), THE 25th REICH (2013), THE BBQ (2018), BROTHERS' NEST (2018-EP), A GUIDE TO DATING AT THE END OF THE WORLD (2020) and I MET A GIRL (2020-EP); and the feature docs DEFEND CONSERVE PROTECT (2019-EP); SUZI Q (2019) , I'M WANITA (2021) and TOM WILLS (2016-EP)

Tait was Director of the Melbourne International Film Festival for 9 years (1988-96) and subsequently General Manager of the leading independent distributor Palace Films (1996-2004); and Feature Film Evaluation Manager at the Film Finance Corporation Australia (FFC) from 2004-09.

Born in Melbourne, Tait holds a Bachelor of Arts (Cinema Studies/Australian Media History) from Griffith University, Brisbane; and is a lifelong Triffids admirer since seeing the band at one of their first Sydney gigs in 1982.

CREDITS

Written and Directed by Jonathan Alley

Produced by Danielle Karalus & Tait Brady

Executive Producers: Jonathan Alley, Shaun Miller, Robert McComb, Stephen Amis

Interviews and Research: Jonathan Alley

David McComb's poems and letters read by DBC Pierre

Music Supervisor: Gary Seeger/Trackdown Productions

Archive Supervisor: Lisa Savage/Savage Archive

Camera: Danielle Karalus

Additional Camera: Andrew Commis ACS, Andrew Watson

Sound Recordist: Danielle Karalus

Editor: Tony Stevens

Additional Editing: Greg Appel, Jonathan Alley

Colourist/Online Editor: Thanassi Panagiotaris

Motion Graphics/Titles/Design: Guy Shield

Post Production Supervisor: Stephen Amis/B-Roll Media

Sound Design: Emma Bortignon

Sound Supervisor: Paul Shanahan/Final Sound

Dialogue Editor: Ramsay De Marco

Sound Mix: Pete Smith

Mix Facility: Boom Tracks

Legals: Shaun Miller Lawyers

Insurances: Galvaniize Insurance

Completion Bond Co: FACB

Production Accountant: Nagle Accounting

Collections Agency: Screenrights

Captions & Audio Description: Create Media Access

International Sales: White Light Media International

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Supported by the State Government of Victoria, Australia



Executive Producer: Mark Woods

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The Story of David McComb of The Triffids

ATTICUS MEDIA in association with FILM VICTORIA, THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
PREMIERE FUND and THE ACME FILM COMPANY present a LOVE IN BRIGHT LANDSCAPES Production
LOVE IN BRIGHT LANDSCAPES : The Story of David McComb of The Triffids

Spotify playlists :

"DAVE - Deep Cuts" Spotify:playlist:7v1UDJqKNSI6QP0glimad0

"DAVE - Cassette Mic Tape #1" Spotify:playlist:6CnQrsbl80YJZfzZkhfyH

Deep In a Dream: An Evening with the Songs of David McComb

CD available online at www.loveinbrightlandscapes.com

Also available on Bandcamp & Apple Music

Truckload of Sky – The Lost Songs of David McComb, Vol 1

Available via thefriendsofdavidmccomb.bandcamp.com

<https://www.facebook.com/loveinbrightlandscapes>

Instagram : @loveinbrightlandscapes

Twitter : @liblfilm

www.loveinbrightlandscapes.com

www.labeldistribution.com

Australian Censorship classification : TBC

Australia / 2021 / 100 mins / colour / DCP / 16: 9 / 5.1 sound

Distributed in Australia and New Zealand by Label Distribution

label