

Hollywood Aussie A-list keen to portray Vietnam heroes



ACTION APPEALS: Russell Crowe (left), Hugh Jackman, Bryan Brown and Eric Bana are in line for parts in the Australian war drama

Movie to honour Long Tan vets

STARS including Russell Crowe, Eric Bana and Hugh Jackman are being sought for roles in an Australian blockbuster movie based on the Battle of Long Tan.

Long Tan, to be produced by Australian Martin Walsh, will depict the bravery of 108 Australian troops who kept about 2000 Viet Cong guerrillas at bay in August 1966 during the Vietnam War.

Eighteen Australians died and 24 were wounded.

Vietnam veterans are hoping the film will lead to greater recognition of their courage under fire.

The novice producer aims to make the film an all-Australian affair by using a local director, scriptwriter and cast.

I, Robot director Alex Proyas has been approached by Mr Walsh, who has already received encouraging responses from A-list actors Crowe, Bana, Jackman, Bryan Brown and Sam Neill.

"From the contact we've had from their agents, they're all very keen," Mr Walsh said.

"A lot of these actors want to do action films and because it is an Australian and New Zealand story, it's something that really, really appeals to them.

"And that's great from an audience perspective, too, because their enthusiasm levels will probably be two or three times greater than what they might be in other

By DAVE DONAGHY

Louis Nowra, who wrote the screenplay for the Harrison Ford film *K-11: The Widowmaker* among others, is adding the finishing touches to the script that is scheduled to be completed next month.

Mr Walsh took on the project after coming across the story during his time as a serviceman in the Army Reserve Special Forces.

He believes the soldiers' courage in holding their ground despite heavy attack has never received the status it deserved.

"It's something that really upsets me," he said.

"The medals that were awarded were the lowest echelon of medals that you could have possibly received for courage or heroism.

"Even to this day (former major) Harry Smith is trying to get better recognition for his men."

Mr Walsh has enlisted the help of Mr Smith and six other former commanders to help with the production, which is likely to be filmed in north Queensland.

Mr Walsh said he was confident the film would breathe new life into the flagging Australian film industry.

"There's very few films that come out of Australia at the moment other than straight drama," he said.

"This is an action-drama film that lends itself to a larger budget, so it's a fairly

