

Five Minute Call



**ABC
COMMERCIAL**
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

BACKSTAGE, EVERYONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM

Every night, five minutes before showtime, Simon (Simon Burke) slips into the dressing room of co-star Helen (Helen Dallimore) – their sacred inner sanctum during a long-running musical.

Helen, once the undisputed queen of the stage, is battling escalating voice issues but refuses to give in, clinging to the role, the spotlight, and what remains of her dignity with lacquered nails and absolute fury. Waiting in the wings: her maddeningly fresh-faced understudy, poised to pounce the moment Helen finally cracks.

Meanwhile, Simon is chasing his own escape route: a US TV pilot that could rescue him from this creatively bankrupt, soul-shrivelling excuse for a show – and quite possibly deliver the international stardom he's been insisting is still within reach.

As the audition process unravels and his confidence starts to buckle, Helen's dressing room becomes confession booth, war room and theatrical asylum.

Dropping in along the way are Barnaby and Barbara – the up-and-coming stars of tomorrow – plus a revolving cast of gloriously unhinged stage veterans, desperate hopefuls and backstage lifers.

Together they expose the absurd, brutal and weirdly tender reality of theatre life, where petty rivalries, delusion and daily humiliation somehow coexist with deep loyalty, hard-won brilliance and an undying belief that the show must, against all logic, go on.

COMEDY · FORMAT 8 X 7' & 1 X 60'
COCKATOO CO LAB, SUGARY RUM
PRODUCTIONS & ARENAMEDIA

SET ALMOST ENTIRELY IN **HELEN'S DRESSING ROOM**

the series uses the nightly countdown to curtain as a pressure-cooker frame for comedy, conflict and confession. What unfolds is a sharp, camp, insider comedy about ego, ageing, ambition, disappointment and the pathological need to hear applause.

Fast, bitchy and full of 'only-in-theatre' gags, this is a love letter to the beautiful, broken lunatics who keep showing up, hitting their light, and pretending it's all perfectly under control.



KEY CREATIVES

HELEN DALLIMORE CREATOR, WRITER, STAR

Helen Dallimore is a Helpmann Award-winning musical theatre icon, best known for originating the role of Glinda in *Wicked* opposite Idina Menzel in London's West End. She's also a leading lady of television comedy, starring as Olivia O'Neill in Channel 9's *Here Come the Habibs*, for which she was also a writer.

SIMON BURKE AO CREATOR, WRITER, STAR, PRODUCER

Simon Burke AO won his first AFI award at 13-years-old playing Tom Allen in Fred Schepisi's *The Devil's Playground*. He reprised this role in 2014 in the AACTA and Logie award-winning mini-series *Devil's Playground* which he co-created and executive-produced. He is also a star of the musical theatre stage in Australia and the West End, leading productions such as *Les Miserables*, *A Little Night Music*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *The Sound of Music* and *Moulin Rouge the Musical*.



EPISODES

A man with grey hair and a blue shirt is sitting at a desk. In front of him is a star-shaped pen holder with several pens and a large, light-colored bag. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wall with some papers and a framed picture.

EPISODE 1 PERFORMANCE #318

Helen's vocal cords are staging a mutiny; Simon is fizzing over his US pilot screentest. They swig contraband Chardonnay like it's water. Dirk is warming up next door – unseen, but acoustically unavoidable. Tinkerbell drops the bomb: understudy Nicole is champing at the bit. Over Helen's dead body. Belinda arrives to give notes to a seething Helen and fawn over Simon. The Baa Baas have nobly volunteered as Equity deps.

EPISODE 2 PERFORMANCE #319

Helen's voice is hanging by a thread. She soldiers on while demolishing a cronut. Then – horror of horrors – Georgie Parker makes a surprise appearance and casually reveals she turned down Helen's role. Simon? Suspiciously quiet. Helen is incandescent. Meanwhile, the Baa Baas swoon: a double Gold Logie winner in the building tonight is basically a religious experience.

EPISODE 3 PERFORMANCE #320

11am schools' matinee. Simon and Helen are violently hungover. Simon's phone and memory are AWOL. Enter Winston, Helen's appallingly repulsive agent. The Baa Baas endure his offensive, predatory charm, but he does have Simon's phone – complete with incriminating video of Helen breaking the sacred "No singing after midnight" rule. Simon is positively giddy.

EPISODE 4 PERFORMANCE #321

Simon is bronzed to within an inch of 'Honey Caramel' for his US pilot callback. Disaster. Tinkerbell arrives with elusive dresser Teresa, whose chronic absence is 'apologised for' with a bottle of 'Savvy B.' Helen nearly gags. Timothy, the Associate Musical Director, pops in to fan-girl over Helen; Simon fights nausea. The Baa Baas drop their killer Equity Rap to recruit Dirk. He's unmoved – until cake is mentioned. Dirk loves cake.

EPISODES

EPISODE 5 PERFORMANCE #322

Simon swaggers into Helen's dressing room to find Nicole preparing for her first-ever show. Panic. He FaceTimes Helen at home – deathbed theatrics included – obsessing over Nicole stepping in. Accidentally, he livestreams Nicole's rehearsal. His compliments, plus the building's collective love, leave Helen screaming ragefully... on mute.

EPISODE 6 PERFORMANCE #323

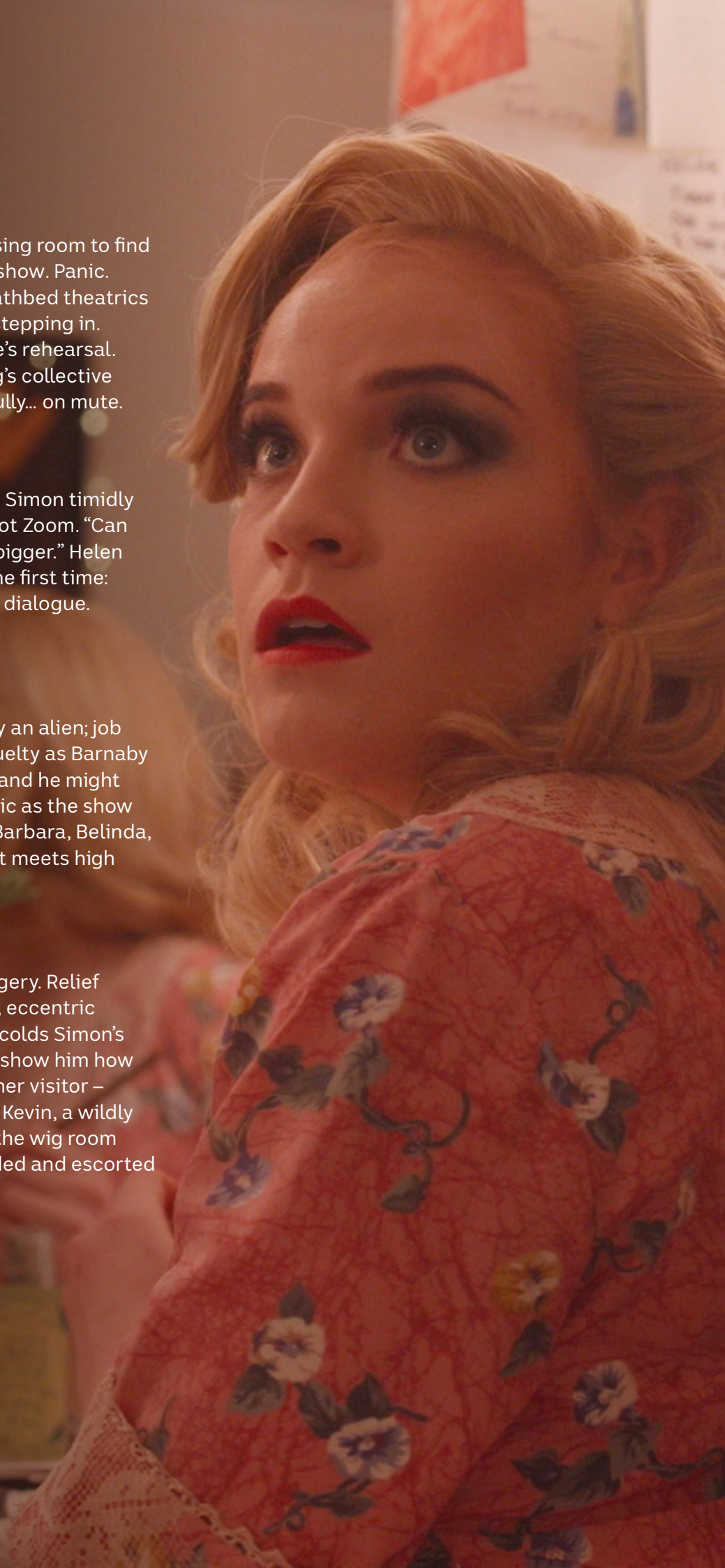
Helen is back but in high dudgeon. Simon timidly asks to run lines for his final US pilot Zoom. "Can we do it in my dressing room? It's bigger." Helen storms into Dressing Room 2 for the first time: it's a palace. They run the dreadful dialogue. Helen has notes. Many notes.

EPISODE 7 PERFORMANCE #324

Simon is crushed. Too short to play an alien; job lost. We glimpse the business's cruelty as Barnaby turns up in tears: Nanna just died, and he might skip the show. We glimpse its magic as the show family – Helen, Simon, Tinkerbelle, Barbara, Belinda, Dirk – rallies to cheer him up. Heart meets high heels.

EPISODE 8 PERFORMANCE #325

Helen and Simon are deep in drudgery. Relief arrives in the form of the fabulous, eccentric choreographer Mr Cha-Cha, who scolds Simon's dance and enlists the Baa Baas to show him how it's done. Tinkerbelle presents another visitor – supposedly Ray Meagher – but it's Kevin, a wildly unhinged impersonator. Chaos in the wig room ensues. Thankfully, he's apprehended and escorted out. The show goes on.



PRODUCTION COMPANIES

ARENAMEDIA

ROBERT PATTERSON · PRODUCER

Robert Patterson is an accomplished Australian producer with a rich background in content creation, sales, and marketing.

Arenamedia is an Australian production company with a strong focus on high-end scripted drama, known internationally for titles such as *The Stranger*, *The Dry*, *Force of Nature*, and *Boy Swallows Universe*.



COCKATOO CO LAB

BEC BIGNALL · PRODUCER

Bec Bignell is a filmmaker who has worked in different sectors of film and TV for over fifteen years. In 2018, Bec was named in the AFR 100 *Women of Influence* for her innovative approach to storytelling and her inclusion of regional voices.

Cockatoo Co Lab is a production company that sees storytelling and media making as ways of being, communicating and building communities.



SUGARY RUM PRODUCTIONS

GUS MURRAY · PRODUCER

Gus Murray is an actor and producer based in Sydney, who has worked extensively across film, television and theatre.

Sugary Rum Productions Sugary Rum was established in 2018 by Gus Murray and has been instrumental in the production of musicals including *The View Upstairs*, *RENT* and *The Inheritance*. It continues to push boundaries and to flourish.





CREATORS' STATEMENT

SIMON BURKE & HELEN DALLIMORE

Five Minute Call is born of thousands of nights backstage, collecting countless outrageous anecdotes that we've been dying to unleash on an audience for years.

This is a world we know intimately, fertile with material for a hilarious and authentic peek behind the curtain.

Five Minute Call means more to us than just sharing a hilarious, outrageous and heart-warming show with as many people as possible.

As performers of, ahem, 'a certain age' we also hope that in uncertain times, this world can be a joyful escape for all theatre lovers, as we invite the audience into the inner sanctum of backstage.

Musical theatre has never been more popular. The global phenomenon of *Wicked*, a show both of us have starred in, plus the recent huge success of the films, is a testament to the increasing magnitude of the musical theatre audience.

More recent shows like *Hamilton*, *Six* and *Moulin Rouge* have attracted a whole new generation of fans to join the millions already obsessed with the likes of *Phantom*, *Cats* and *Les Mis*.

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