

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

This month ...
Docklands Studios

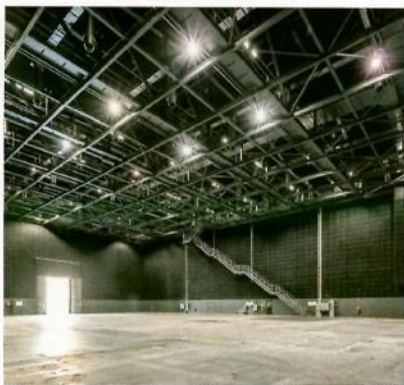
Photography/
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Words/
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The red glow of the "filming in progress" lamp flicks off, our cue that it's safe to make our debut on sound stage three at Docklands Studios Melbourne, a film and television compound wedged between Victoria Harbour and CityLink since 2004. Channel Seven's *Winners and Losers*, a television drama about four young women whose lives change after they win lotto, has been filmed here for three years. "All set?" "Shooting." "Sound's rolling." "And ... action!" The disembodied voices of director and crew emanate from behind plywood walls dressed to look like a Melbourne home but which can be reconfigured in minutes. There are 83 crew members at work at any one time and 18 core cast members as well as a handful of guest actors and babies – four baby actors play two infants.

This afternoon's scene of a family dinner, which will screen for 140 seconds, will take the better part of three hours to shoot. Seven minutes of screen time takes about a day to film, says director Ian Gilmore – "for drama, that's quite quick."

The studios have hosted stars including Nicolas Cage (in *Ghost Rider*), Robert De Niro (in *Killer Elite*), Katie Holmes (in *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*) and Ethan Hawke (in *Predestination*). Television shows including *The Footy Show* and *Millionaire Hot Seat* are shot here too. Overseas productions have been patchy in the past two years due to our high dollar but otherwise Melbourne is an attractive location for overseas filmmakers, says studio CEO Rod Allan. "Getting around is easier, Melbourne has great locations on offer and it can double as a European city and some North American cities."



Blank canvas

Inside sound stage one, the largest of the complex's five stages at 2323 square metres with a volume of 44,000 cubic metres. Its pit was flooded for a scene in the 2007 film *Ghost Rider*.



Frock and roll

This room holds just half of the costume items for *Winners and Losers*. About 60 outfits, bought as needed, are used for the speaking actors in each episode. Old stock is either sold or donated to charity.

Keep out

When filming is about to start, a crew member presses a button to light a sign that reads, "WHEN RED LIGHT ON FILMING IN PROGRESS DO NOT ENTER".





Ready, set

Carpenters and designers build sets for the science-fiction film *Predestination* starring Ethan Hawke. The former Port of Melbourne Authority building has been upgraded to house workshops and offices.

Magic factory

Outside sound stage two. All five stages at the studios are soundproofed, climate-controlled and have "grid" rigging systems that are "strong enough to hang busses off", says CEO Rod Allan.

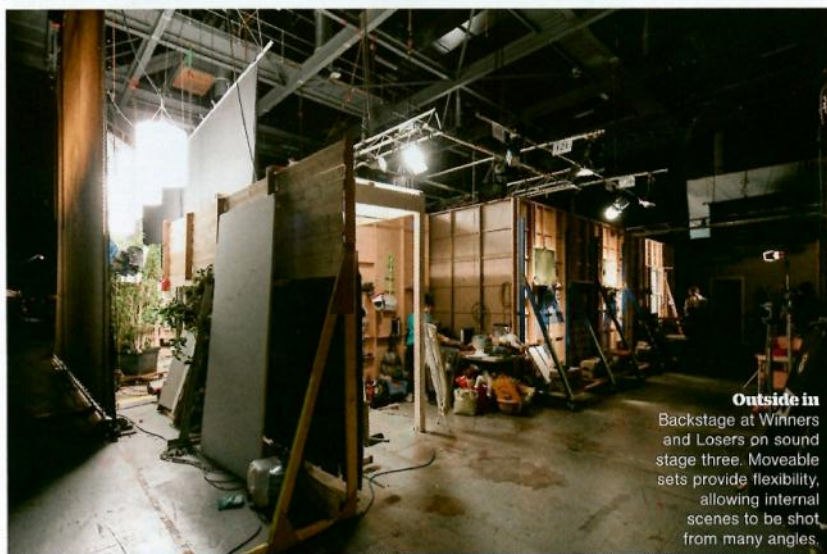


Clear as day

Large, soft light sources are rigged high above the set to achieve a natural look. Lights are split into two "colour temperatures", daylight and tungsten, to replicate locations and times of day.

Point of view

Camera operators shoot scenes many times to cover different angles. "You have to know where your light is coming from, your angles," says actor Melissa Bergland. "It's very different to theatre."



Outside in

Backstage at *Winners and Losers* on sound stage three. Moveable sets provide flexibility, allowing internal scenes to be shot from many angles.



Director's cut

The director watches the action not from a high chair with a megaphone but on monitors, flanked by a continuity specialist.

Home faux home

The living room of *Bec Gilbert*, played by Zoe Tuckwell-Smith, is one of the show's most familiar sets. It was modelled on a Victorian workers' cottage.