

YOU'RE ON THE AIR

A one-act play in five scenes
by
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Cast of Characters

<u>Mick "The Mouth" Malone:</u>	Man, 40s. The breakfast show host – loud, ego-driven, all hair and teeth. Think mullet, mirrored sunglasses, and a voice that never stops performing, even when off-air.
<u>Sandra Steele:</u>	Woman, 30-40s. Straight-laced, perfectionist newsreader. Constantly correcting grammar and quietly judging the chaos. Secretly has a wicked sense of humour.
<u>Kev "Killer" Kavanagh:</u>	Man, 40s. Sports guy. Lives and breathes footy. Brings commentary energy to everything, even coffee breaks. Constantly drops clichés: "It's a game of two halves!"
<u>Cheryl:</u>	Woman, 20s. The young, bubbly receptionist and PA. Wears shoulder pads, has a perm that could have its own postcode. Unintentionally brilliant at cutting through everyone's nonsense.
<u>Barry Baxter:</u>	Man, 40s. Programme Director – a former DJ who still dresses the part. Torn between wanting to innovate and keeping sponsors happy. Constantly battling Mick over "format changes".
<u>Graham Greaves:</u>	Man, 50s. Station Manager – the corporate guy who knows nothing about radio. Obsessed with budgets, community image, and "branding". Thinks he's everyone's boss, but no one listens.
<u>"Rockin' Rod" Rivers:</u>	Man, late 30s-40s. The Drive DJ – full of sleaze and swagger, the kind of guy who calls himself "Rockin'" without irony. Walks in at the end like he owns the joint.
<u>Tina:</u>	Woman, 20s. Cheerleader girlfriend of the Drive DJ. Naïve, enthusiastic, and fascinated by "how radio works." Becomes an accidental on-air guest in the finale.
<u>Courier:</u>	Man, 20s. Delivers The Cactus in scene 1
<u>Caller (Darryl):</u>	Man, 30s. Voice only. Roofer. Typical rock music fan.

Synopsis

In the smoke-hazed chaos of Rock 107, 1980s radio is louder, looser, and far less apologetic than it should be. Mick "The Mouth" Malone runs the desk with ego and caffeine, Sandra Steele fights for dignity and diction in the news booth, and Kev "Killer" Kavanagh mistakes every conversation for commentary. Holding it all together – barely – is Barry Baxter, a washed-up DJ turned program director still nursing a suspension for dropping an on-air "fuckwit."

When a cactus arrives for "Rockin' Rod" Rivers – the station's resident rock god and walking scandal – the day spirals into a battle of egos, hormones, and format changes. As management pushes for a softer sound and Rod swaggered back into the studio, Rock 107 becomes a live broadcast of everything that made the 80s unforgettable: big hair, bad behaviour, and the kind of comedy that doesn't say sorry.

Scene

A bustling 1980s radio station – Rock 107 – where the on-air studio and adjoining office blur into one chaotic hive of noise, ego, and cigarette smoke. The studio glows with turntables, tape reels, and a defiant red ON AIR light, while the office hums with ringing phones, coffee cups, and constant interruptions. It's part newsroom, part battleground – a place where rock is religion, the staff are disciples, and every broadcast feels one power chord away from collapse.

Time

1988. Summer.

Disclaimer

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Author's Note

You're On The Air is a love letter to the chaos, the charm, and the sheer absurdity of 1980s Australian radio – a time when FM ruled, egos were louder than the guitars, and political correctness hadn't yet made it past the front gate. It's a world of cigarette smoke curling through the on-air light, of bad coffee, reel-to-reel tape, and louder-than-life personalities fighting for the last word and the hottest track.

The play is written and intended to be performed in the spirit of "Working Dog Realism" – a distinct Australian style defined by naturalistic rhythm, understated comedy, and the humour that comes from truth, not punchlines. The dialogue overlaps, interrupts, and stumbles. It should feel real, not rehearsed. The comedy lives in the chaos – in the silences, the glances, the accidental timing that happens when everyone's just trying to get through the day. Think 'Frontline' meets 'The Castle' in a radio station that never quite got the memo about professionalism.

This play is unapologetically of its time – irreverent, crude, and unfiltered. It doesn't seek to excuse the attitudes of the 80s, but rather to hold them up to the light, laugh at them, and remind us how far (or not) we've come. It's about people trapped in the machine of broadcast ego, clinging to their fading power while the world quietly moves on around them.

So play it straight. Play it fast. Don't perform the comedy – let it fall out of the cracks. The biggest laughs come when the characters take themselves the most seriously. And remember: in Rock 107, everyone thinks they're the star... right up until the mic goes live.

Relationship Notes**MICK**

- Chronic sparring with Barry
- Professional disdain for Rod
- Brother-sister friction with Sandra
- Comedic dominance over Kev
- Affectionate teasing with Cheryl

SANDRA

- Respects but exhausts Mick
- Tolerates Kev
- Deadpan foil to Cheryl
- Loathes Rod
- Mutual frustration with Barry and Graham

CHERYL

- Unfiltered honesty → everyone
- Sees herself as the station mum
- Cactus becomes her anchor prop

KEV

- Lovable idiot
- Clown mascot of the station
- Gets roasted by literally everyone

BARRY

- Once-great DJ haunted by his past
- Tension with Mick
- Threatened by Rod
- Blind spot for Cheryl's sarcasm

GRAHAM

- Only character not "of the tribe"
- Corporate outsider
- Constantly ignored or ridiculed

ROD

- Walking embodiment of chaos
- Loved/hated/admired/loathed in equal measure

TINA

- Sweet, naïve, and exploited by Rod
- Unintentionally heightens tension everywhere she goes

THE CACTUS

- A symbolic grenade
- A unifying comedic thread
- Every character interprets it differently
- Directors should treat it as a silent antagonist

Scene 1 - Breakfast with the Mouth

SETTING: INT. RADIO STATION - ON-AIR STUDIO - 8:03 AM

AT RISE: Dim early-morning light seeps through venetian blinds. The ON AIR light glows red. The hum of a fluorescent tube. We hear the tail-end of a song - INXS, Need You Tonight (1987) - fading out under MICK'S voice.

MICK

(ON-AIR)

And that was INXS... absolute legends, still goin' strong, and ah, yeah - you're on Rock 107 Breakfast with Mick "The Mouth" Malone, it's just gone eight-oh-three in the big smoke, and I'm- hang on-

(He squints at a clock on the wall)

Eight-oh-four. Close enough. No one's checking.

(He presses a button, leans too close to the mic, voice distorts slightly)

Big show this morning - we've got the Cash Cow Caravan coming up, we'll check your weather, take a few calls, maybe spin some Def Leppard later if Barry hasn't banned it for being "too sexual".

(He chuckles to himself, lights a cigarette. The mic stays open)

MICK

(Muttering)

Bloody thing won't stay lit... Not too sexual, Barry, just too good.

(He exhales, taps ash into an over-full tray)

Right, let's see who's awake. Line one, you're on the air- ah, hang on. (Presses a few buttons) Line one, now you're- hello?

(Dead air. A faint voice in the distance)

CALLER

(Faint, distorted)

—yeah, am I on?

MICK

You're on! You're live! What's your name, mate?

CALLER

It's Darryl. From Wyong (Change place name as appropriate)

MICK

Darryl from Wyong! How bloody exciting. What's happenin'?

CALLER

Just drivin' to work.

MICK

Ah, good man. Keep the wheels turnin'. What do you do, Darryl?

CALLER

Roofin'.

MICK

Roofin'? (Beat) Jesus! You're not a ranga, are ya?

CALLER

—what?

MICK

A redhead mate. You got the ginger goin' on? 'Cause that's a bloody death sentence in your line of work. Up on a tin roof in summer? You'd cook faster than a snag on the barbie.

CALLER

Nah, nah, I'm not a ranga.

MICK

Good. Good. I can relax then. I just got this image in my head of a poor bloke up there, melting into his Colorbond. Tragic stuff. Should be a law against it.

CALLER

(Laughing)

Yeah, righto.

MICK

You got a song request, mate? Or just callin' in for roofing safety advice?

CALLER

Uh... Cold Chisel.

MICK

Course you bloody do. Every roofer wants Chisel. It's like a union rule. Alright, Darryl, I'll spin one up for ya - stay off the edges, and if you start smokin', it's probably not the smoko break.

(He hangs up, chuckling. Takes a drag of his cigarette, ashes it straight into his coffee mug.)

MICK

(To himself)

Fucking Chisel! Ah well - after 9. Roofer... ranga roofer... that'd be somethin' to see.

(He starts a new track - Men at Work - Who Can It Be Now? (1981) - but forgets to turn off his mic. He exits the studio to make a coffee, hums along tunelessly, muttering under his breath as he rummages for sugar packets)

MICK

(Off-mic, still live)

Where's that bloody coffee... ah, here we go.

(We hear the sound of a chair scraping, a door opening, footsteps fading. The song continues. Silence except for the music. It reaches the fade-out - then stops dead. The ON AIR light stays red. Beat. Long, uncomfortable nothing. A muffled cough from the corridor. Then the door opens, a clatter, chair scrape - he's back)

MICK

(ON-AIR, breathless)

And that was... ah... Men at Work! Classic from 1981. Great Aussie band! Big shout-out to the boys if they're listening - they're probably not. (Laughs)

(He takes a long drag of his cigarette, exhaling toward the mic. Static crackle)

Right, quick squiz at the weather - and yeah, she's gonna be a stinker. Top of thirty-four today, bit of a nor'easter later on, so hang onto your hats - or your wigs if you're one of our more fashion-forward listeners. Perfect day to melt your thong to the driveway. And if you're a roofer called Darryl... mate, slip, slop, slap, and maybe say your prayers.

(Beat. He takes a drag of his cigarette, ashes it straight into the mug.)

Traffic? Yeah, they say it's movin' fine – but I don't buy it. I hate traffic. People in cars drive me nuts. Yesterday I was stuck behind some old duck who thought the accelerator was optional. Nearly lost the will to live. Honestly, I reckon half of you out there shouldn't be on the road at all. Anyway – good luck with that.

(He laughs, lights another cigarette, and leans back, clearly proud of himself. He hits play on the next song)

You're doin' fine, Mick. Still got it. Still the Mouth. They can't kill what they can't replace.

(The song builds. He spins his chair toward the window, cigarette glowing. The studio hums – lived-in, a little lonely. The ON AIR light burns red as lights fade)

Scene 2 - The Prickly Gift

SETTING: INT. RADIO STATION - RECEPTION AREA / STUDIO GLASS WINDOW - 8:25 AM

AT RISE: Through the glass, Divinyls - Boys in Town (1981) is playing. The ON AIR light glows red. Mick is still inside, smoking, mouthing along to the words. The smell of burnt coffee lingers.

At reception, CHERYL is flipping through the mail, chewing gum, humming along to the song. A courier enters - sunburnt, holding a potted cactus in shiny cellophane. There's a little note attached.

COURIER

Delivery for, uh... "Rockin' Rod Rivers"?

CHERYL

Oh, he's not in yet. You can leave it there, thanks.

COURIER

Righto. (Sets it down) Bit of a statement, that one.

CHERYL

Yeah, looks... (Reads the tag) "To Rod. You're a real prick."

(Beat. They both stare at it. The COURIER lets out a snort)

COURIER

Classic. Alright, have a good one.

(He leaves. CHERYL watches him go, then looks back at the cactus)

CHERYL

(To herself)

Bit emotional for a plant.

(She drags it to the centre of the reception counter and turns the tag outward. She sits back, admiring her display. The door opens – SANDRA STEELE walks in, perfectly composed, carrying a cassette reel and a clipboard)

SANDRA

Morning Cheryl.

CHERYL

Hi Sandy.

(Beat. SANDRA looks at the cactus)

SANDRA

What's that?

CHERYL

Delivery for Rod. From his ex, apparently.

SANDRA

Of course it is.

(She moves closer, reads the tag, gives the smallest nod)

SANDRA

Poetic.

CHERYL

Yeah, it's kinda nice though. Brings some life into the place.

SANDRA

It's a cactus, Cheryl. That's not life, that's stubbornness.

(They both look through the studio glass. MICK is talking into the mic, cigarette still in hand)

MICK

(ON-AIR)

And remember folks, smoking's bad for ya - so if you see me doing it, look away.

(He flicks ash into his coffee mug)

SANDRA

He's still on air?

CHERYL

Yeah, sorta.

(They watch him fumble with a switch. He knocks a reel-to-reel deck slightly. The ON AIR light flickers but stays lit)

SANDRA

It's a miracle this station hasn't burned down.

(Enter BARRY BAXTER - dressed like a DJ: leather jacket, rings, and sunglasses on inside. He's carrying a paper cup and an aura of half-baked authority)

BARRY

Mornin', ladies. Big day today - board meeting, morale's high, and the music... the music gives you wood.

(CHERYL nearly chokes on her gum. SANDRA doesn't even blink)

SANDRA

Still saying that, are we Barry? For a Programme Director you've got a beautiful way with words.

BARRY

What? It's a feeling. It's primal. It hits you right-

SANDRA

In the demographics?

(He misses the sarcasm entirely, nodding seriously)

BARRY

Exactly. That's why you're the smart one. You write the News, I'll...

(He spots the cactus and loses his train of thought)

BARRY

What's this then? Promo thing?

CHERYL

Nope. For Rod. From an ex. Says he's a prick.

(Beat. BARRY leans in, reads the tag, nods approvingly)

BARRY

Good branding. Memorable.

(SANDRA just looks at him)

SANDRA

You realise that's not a compliment, right?

BARRY

Eh, the audience doesn't know that. Perception is everything.

(They all look through the window — MICK'S chair is empty, cigarette smoke wafting. Music still playing. The ON AIR light is on)

SANDRA

He's gone again. I'm working with idiots.

(Beat. Dead air. Everyone freezes. Then, MICK bursts back in on mic, wheezing slightly)

MICK

(ON-AIR)

And that was... uh... Divinyls! Great stuff. Sorry about the gap — just testing our new "silence alarm" system. Works a treat.

(He laughs at himself. Long pause. SANDRA closes her eyes)

SANDRA

Every morning's a stress test.

CHERYL

He's still better than Rod.

SANDRA

That's not comfort, Cheryl, that's a cry for help.

(BARRY grins, gesturing vaguely to the cactus)

BARRY

This is good though. Let's leave it out. Bit of colour. Bit of mystery.

SANDRA

Bit of HR paperwork waiting to happen.

BARRY

HR paperwork? Please. I've got every dickhead in the building filing their complaints directly to me — including Rod's gardening club for exes with pot plants and emotional issues.

(SANDRA gives up. BARRY exits to his office. CHERYL rearranges the cactus so the tag faces the studio glass. MICK glances over mid-broadcast, squints at it, shrugs)

MICK

(Trying to get in on the office talk from the studio)

Someone's gettin' gifts?

(He cues up another record and returns to the air. The ON AIR light stays red. In the background, SANDRA sips coffee, CHERYL stares dreamily at the cactus. The radio hum fills the space — alive, imperfect, familiar)

Scene 3 – The Format

SETTING: INT. ROCK 107 – MID-MORNING. Lights split subtly between the ON-AIR STUDIO and the OFFICE area. There's a visible window between the two spaces

AT RISE: We hear faint music – "Highway to Hell" (1979) fading under MICK'S voice. CHERYL is in the office area typing, phone to her ear. SANDRA floats between the two.

MICK

(ON-AIR)

That was AC/DC – the real deal, none of this "classic hits" fluff they're trying to flog us now. You're on Rock 107, the home of loud guitars and bad decisions.

(He hits the button for an ad, leans back, and removes his cans)

MICK

(To SANDRA, through glass)

You hear that, Sandy? "Classic hits." Give me a break.

SANDRA

(Calling back)

Don't start. You'll only get yourself worked up.

(KEV "KILLER" KAVANAGH barges in mid-bite of a sausage roll)

KEV

Morning, team! Big day today – atmosphere's electric. Finals vibe.

SANDRA

It's a newsroom, Kev. Not the bloody MCG!

(KEV walks straight into the studio side like he own the place)

KEV

You know what's soft? Carlton's defence on the weekend. Absolute bloody joke.

MICK

Kev, you can't just...

KEV

(Ignores him)

I'm serious Mick. Two points down, five minutes to go, and they still manage to fuck it. I told Cheryl-

CHERYL

(Off, from office)

You didn't tell me anything, Kev. You yelled it through the photocopier room again.

KEV

Same thing. Gotta project, keep the pipes warm!

CHERYL

It's not the grand final Kev.

SANDRA

(Crossing through, dry as ever)

You're supposed to be talking about sport, not performing it.

KEV

Multitasking, Sandy. Brand synergy.

SANDRA

(Deadpan)

Yeah, I can smell the synergy from here.

CHERYL

It's called deodorant, Kev. Try it sometime.

(SANDRA smirks; KEV grins like he thinks he's winning)

SANDRA

You've been here all of 1 minute and I'm already tired.

KEV

That's the price of greatness.

(SANDRA rolls her eyes and works on her News. CHERYL picks up another phone call, already scribbling a message, shaking her head with a grin)

CHERYL

Rock 107, Cheryl speaking... yes, he's here, hang on.

(Covers phone, yells toward studio)

Mick! It's the council again. Something about your ad read for the fireworks night.

MICK

Tell 'em it's art.

CHERYL

They said you called the Mayor a "tight-arse."

MICK

Yeah – it rhymes with "bright sparks."

(KEV laughs too loud, then glances at SANDRA, hoping she heard it)

KEV

That's gold. You should use that.

MICK

I did use it. That's the problem.

(SANDRA steps back in, rolling her eyes)

SANDRA

Barry's gonna love that.

(Music fades. Mick cues the next track manually – "Sweet Child O' Mine." (1987))

MICK

(ON-AIR)

This one's for the council – because nothing says civic responsibility like Slash. You're on Rock 107.

(He fades the mic down, spins his chair toward the office)

MICK

You know what, if Barry wants to play safe, he can host the bloody show himself.

KEV

I had brekkie with Barry once – reckons he used to pull bigger ratings than Doug Mulray.

MICK

(Laughs)

Oh, he reckons that, does he? Mate, Barry's been living off that story since '82.

CHERYL

(Calling out from reception)

Yeah, until he called that bloke a "fuckwit" on air.

SANDRA

Cheryl–!

MICK

(Grinning, not stopping her)

Nah, she's right. The Great Fuckwit Fiasco of 1985

KEV

(Laughing)

Bloody legend. Whole industry still talks about it.

SANDRA

Legend? It was a national complaint! The BSA went feral.

MICK

Poor bastard thought the mic was off, drops a "fuckwit," and boom – career in the bin.

CHERYL

Well he's good at reading ads. Advertisers love him.

MICK

Yeah. Voice of Rock 107. Just... never live.

SANDRA

(Deadpan)

The most heavily delayed man in radio.

KEV

(Laughs)

They should've framed the fader! "Here lies Barry's career."

CHERYL

He's fine. Acts like he invented the word.

MICK

He did – at least around here. Every time the mic light comes on, half the building still tenses up.

SANDRA

That's trauma, not nostalgia.

(Beat – they all share a knowing smirk as the sound of BARRY'S laugh echoes faintly down the corridor)

MICK

Speaking of the fuckwit.

(They're mid-laughter when the outer door opens. Everyone goes quiet. BARRY re-enters. MICK remains in the studio keeping an ear on the office conversation as he runs his show)

BARRY

Alright, alright, settle down. What's funny?

(No one answers. KEV mutters)

KEV

Just reminiscing, mate. Classic moments.

BARRY

Good. We could use a few more of those — minus the swearing.

(He moves toward the glass between office and studio, looking at the "Rock 107" logo stuck crookedly on the wall)

BARRY

You know, this place used to rock.

MICK

Still does, mate. You're just listening from the wrong end of the dial.

BARRY

Not funny Mick. I'm the one who signs your pay cheque.

CHERYL

(Quietly, to SANDRA)

When it clears.

(SANDRA bites back a laugh. KEV leans on BARRY'S shoulder like a mate.)

KEV

You talking about the format thing again, Baz? 'Cause I've been saying—

BARRY

You've been saying a lot, Kev. Mostly about footy.

KEV

Yeah, well, people like that stuff. Builds community.

BARRY

So does music. But not if we scare off the advertisers.

MICK

Advertisers don't buy the music, they buy the vibe. You kill the rock, you kill the brand.

(The tension crackles. SANDRA senses it and steps in to diffuse)

SANDRA

Why don't we run a survey? Ask listeners what they want.

CHERYL

They'll say "less Kev."

KEV

Oi-

BARRY

(Cutting in)

Look, I'm not saying we drop the rock – I'm saying we evolve. A little Fleetwood, a bit of Billy Joel–

CHERYL

(Grinning)

Fleet-wood, huh? You really love your wood, Barry.

(A few snorts of laughter – BARRY shoots her a look)

MICK

(Interrupting from the studio)

We're Rock 107, not bloody Piano Bar FM.

(Crossfire now – everyone talking at once. SANDRA and CHERYL try to keep up. KEV'S rambling about "the power of community engagement.")

SANDRA

You can't run Bon Jovi into Bread, Barry.

KEV

Hey, Bread had some good harmonies.

MICK

Kev, you wouldn't know harmony if it bought you a beer.

CHERYL

Yeah – probably think it's just some fat fan shoutin' you a schooner, ya boof-head.

(Laughter. KEV throws up his hands, grinning, pretending to take offence)

BARRY

This is exactly what I have to deal with – too many opinions, not enough direction. I'm trying to keep this station alive here.

MICK

Yeah, alive – but limp.

CHERYL

You drop the rock, Baz, and it's not just the format goin' soft – it's your cock!

KEV

Soft cock!

(More laughter. BARRY glares, trying not to grin)

BARRY

Alright, enough. This isn't a comedy workshop.

SANDRA

Could've fooled me.

(They all break again. BARRY sighs – beaten, but not broken. The phone rings. CHERYL answers automatically)

CHERYL

Rock 107, Cheryl speaking... yes, he's here... no, he's busy right now, can I take a message?

(Covers mic and continues)

It's the board secretary again. Says Graham wants a word.

(BARRY exhales, long and heavy. The others exchange looks – they know what that means)

SANDRA

Uh oh.

MICK

Here comes the politics.

BARRY

(Sighs)

Alright, everyone – quick tidy up. If Greaves shows up, we're a well-oiled, happy, totally functional radio family.

KEV

So we lie.

CHERYL

You've been doing it for years, Kev. You'll be fine.

(A small ripple of laughter. BARRY heads for his office. MICK cues another song, muttering under his breath)

MICK

(ON-AIR)

Coming up after the break – a little something from before “evolving” meant neutering.

(He hits play. Guitars roar. BARRY looks back through the glass, unimpressed but slightly amused. CHERYL quietly writes “Greaves 11:00” on a sticky note. The lights shift subtly to mark the build – the pace of the station quickening, tension humming under the rock soundtrack. The hum of overlapping dialogue and office noise crescendos as we fade out)

Scene 4 — The Meeting That Wasn't

SCENE: INT. ROCK 107 - LATE MORNING

AT RISE: Mid-chaos. Phones ringing. CHERYL'S on the phone, juggling paperwork and a half-empty mug of instant coffee. KEV'S pacing with a footy in hand. SANDRA'S trying to edit a bulletin. Music bleeds faintly through the walls — the tail-end of "Livin' on a Prayer". MICK "THE MOUTH" MALONE strides out of the studio, cigarette in hand, waving a script)

MICK

Right, that's the breakfast shift done. Now I've got, what, three ad reads before I can escape?

(He drops into a chair beside SANDRA, who's typing up news copy)

SANDRA

You'd get through them faster if you didn't ad-lib every line.

MICK

I don't ad-lib. I personalise. That's what gives it life. You ever heard my "Bazza's Auto" spot?

SANDRA

Yeah, sounded like you were trying to sell a date, not a car.

MICK

Well, they both need a bit of spark, don't they?

(KEV laughs too loud. SANDRA doesn't look up)

KEV

He's not wrong there. Classic chemistry.

SANDRA

You wouldn't know chemistry if it tackled you.

(Laughter. MICK smirks, lighting his smoke from a dying lighter)

MICK

You're wasted on the news, Steele. You should be in comedy.

SANDRA

I am in comedy. I read your bulletins. Complete with all the long words you can't read.

CHERYL

(Into phone)

Rock 107, Cheryl speaking -

(Pause)

No, he's not in yet.

(Pause)

No, not that either.

(Pause)

I'll pass that on, yep.

(Hangs up. Raises voice to get BARRY'S attention who is in his office)

-Barry, that was the Board again. They said Graham's definitely on his way.

BARRY

(From his office doorway)

He was on his way an hour ago.

MICK

Maybe he's listening to us on the drive. Get some pointers.

SANDRA

He listens to AM, Mick. He thinks FM's "too urban."

MICK

Figures.

(KEV bounces the footy lightly on the carpet, just enough to annoy everyone)

KEV

You know what's too urban? Fremantle's backline.

CHERYL

Kev, if that ball hits the photocopier again, you're buying a new one.

KEV

Relax. I've got hands like-

MICK

A bricklayer with Parkinson's.

KEV

Harsh. But fair.

MICK

(Leans in conspiratorially)

Anyway, that copier's been on borrowed time since Gwyn from Sales tried to photocopy her vag for her Christmas Sales mail-out.

CHERYL

(Snorts)

Yeah — shattered the glass and somehow upped her commission. Classic Gwyn.

MICK

Took three techs and a prayer to get her unstuck.

KEV

And two weeks for the machine to stop smelling like spray tan.

CHERYL

Honestly, the phones haven't stopped since. Clients still chasing whatever "festive promo" she promised mid-moon-landing.

MICK

(Chuckles)

That's Gwyn. Breaks the copier, breaks her coccyx — still smashes her targets.

KEV

She's the gold standard — always has been. I'd boof her quicker than a loose ball in the goal square.

CHERYL

You'd boof a black snake with gonorrhoea, Kev.

(Everyone cracks up. BARRY enters from his office, pacing now, flicking through papers, muttering about playlists and "core audience demographics." SANDRA moves to the studio, adjusting the mic stand in the booth. She is preparing a news/weather bulletin)

BARRY

Core audience demographics, listener retention, bloody playlists...

(He disappears into his papers. SANDRA moves toward the studio mic. KEV suddenly notices the cactus again – it clicks)

KEV

(Points at cactus)

What's this, Chez? Your new boyfriend? Bit prickly, doesn't talk back – perfect match!

CHERYL

(Laughing)

At least this one remembers to stand up straight, Kev.

MICK

(Joining in)

Yeah, she's traded up, mate – this one's got more life in it than you after footy training.

KEV

Oi! I'm in peak condition.

MICK

Peak condition for what? Napping in the commentary box?

KEV

You just wait till the station touch footy game, I'll-

MICK

(Laughs)

You'll what? Cop another one to the head? That explains half your sports reports.

CHERYL

Half? You're being generous.

MICK

True. Last week he called the cricket "a low-scoring try."

(Everyone cracks up. KEV tries to recover some dignity)

KEV

Laugh it up. You're a bunch of bloody comedians. Just remember who brings the ratings on Saturday arvos.

CHERYL

Yeah, sure mate. (Points back to the cactus) It came in for Rod. From his ex.

KEV

(Inspecting the plant and the attached note)

Jesus, that's gold! Pure bloody gold. (Grinning, to the cactus) That's art, that is. Put that in a frame Cheryl.

SANDRA

Please don't. We've got enough pricks in the building already.

(Laughter. BARRY tries to focus on his papers, pretending not to hear)

KEV

Still. Credit where it's due. Takes guts to plant a message like that. I'd have gone bigger, though. Maybe a whole succulent display. "From all of us."

MICK

You'd need a forklift to get the point across, Kev.

(Beat – CHERYL, dry as ever, chimes in)

CHERYL

You want to water it, Kev?

KEV

Nah. Allergies.

(The laughter overlaps – a natural flow of banter as BARRY'S voice cuts over them, trying to restore order)

BARRY

Alright, can we focus? Graham's coming in here any second and I want us looking professional.

MICK

You mean pretend to agree with you?

BARRY

Pretend to care, at least.

(BARRY adjusts his leather jacket, muttering to himself about "perception" and "brand identity." MICK smirks)

MICK

You still dress like you're auditioning for Countdown, Baz.

BARRY

It's called personal style.

CHERYL

(Deadpan)

It's called dry-clean-only nostalgia.

(Suddenly the front door opens. Silence. GRAHAM enters, crisp suit, clipboard, too much cologne. He stops dead at the sight of the cactus)

GRAHAM

...What's this?

CHERYL

A gift.

GRAHAM

From who?

CHERYL

His ex.

GRAHAM

(Reading the tag)

"To Rod. You're a real prick."

(Long pause)

Right. Well...

(MICK coughs to hide his laughter. KEV smirks. SANDRA re-enters from the studio, trying not to look at anyone)

BARRY

Morning, Graham.

GRAHAM

Barry. Everyone.

(Beat)

I just came from the Board. They're... concerned.

(Collective groan. CHERYL sighs, sits back down. MICK mutters something under his breath)

MICK

They're always bloody concerned.

GRAHAM

About tone. Language. "Brand synergy."

KEV

Sounds like a losing team talk.

GRAHAM

Exactly. We can't afford to alienate advertisers with... all this "sex, drugs, and guitars" nonsense.

MICK

That's literally our slogan.

SANDRA

Printed on the mugs.

CHERYL

And the van.

GRAHAM

(Sighing)

Right, well. Maybe we repaint the van. Something friendlier.

MICK

Sure. "Hug 107."

SANDRA

"Sock 107."

KEV

"Limp Dick 107"

(Even BARRY laughs despite himself)

GRAHAM

(Bristling)

Look, this isn't a joke. The Board's serious about repositioning. We need to reflect the community.

MICK

The community likes AC/DC, mate.

GRAHAM

Sponsors don't.

MICK

Then get better sponsors.

(Tense silence. CHERYL'S phone rings again. She picks it up mid-beat, cool as ever)

CHERYL

(Into phone)

Rock 107, Cheryl speaking-

(Pause)

Yep, just a sec.

(Hands receiver to Barry)

It's the milkman. Says you still owe him from last week.

BARRY

(Snatching it)

Tell him to invoice me.

(He hangs up immediately. GRAHAM pinches the bridge of his nose, trying to recover authority.)

GRAHAM

See what I mean? We're barely functioning as a business.

KEV

We function fine. We just don't look like it.

CHERYL

That's because you're holding a football indoors.

(SANDRA snickers. "Pour Some Sugar On Me" Is playing)

MICK

(Pretending like he is still ON-AIR, smooth)

You're listening to Rock 107 – the station still brave enough to rock before lunch.

(He smirks toward BARRY and GRAHAM)

MICK

(Quietly)

That's synergy for you.

(BARRY shoots him a warning glance. GRAHAM forces a smile)

GRAHAM

Listen. They want us to tone down the playlist – something more "inclusive."

MICK

Inclusive? This is rock radio, not bloody Play School.

SANDRA

You might be more at home there, Mick.

(Kev laughs too loudly)

KEV

Yeah, picture that! "Today's word is testosterone!"

SANDRA

And "today's consequence is unemployment."

CHERYL

(To MICK)

What's happening through the square window today Big Ted?

(BARRY smirks. GRAHAM pushes on, pretending not to notice the hostility)

GRAHAM

We're looking at a new campaign - "107: Your Community Connection."

MICK

Oh, for-fuck-sake. You're killing us.

KEV

Nah, I like it. Sounds like a team slogan.

SANDRA

You'd like any slogan that fits on a bumper sticker.

KEV

Exactly! That's marketing!

(CHERYL looks at the cactus again, suppressing a giggle, changing the subject entirely)

CHERYL

I wonder what Rod's gonna say when he sees that.

MICK

Probably tell us it's jealous of his hair.

SANDRA

Or his cologne.

BARRY

Or his fragile masculinity.

MICK

You know what he's got, right? Classic small dick energy.

(KEV snorts, choking on laughter. GRAHAM raises a hand awkwardly trying to restore some order)

GRAHAM

Alright, alright – let's keep it professional, please.

MICK

It's workplace analysis.

BARRY

Peer review.

(GRAHAM sighs, defeated but trying to remain composed)

GRAHAM

Look — Rod's a key part of this station. Whether we like it or not, Drive brings in the numbers. Let's try to keep things... cordial when he arrives.

CHERYL

(Sarcastically)

Oh, he's "arriving" is he?

(Everyone glances at the cactus again. Beat)

SANDRA

Well, that's going to be cordial.

MICK

Yeah. "Welcome back, mate — here's a cactus from your ex."

(The laughter builds again. GRAHAM forces a smile, but he's clearly dreading the moment)

GRAHAM

Good. Excellent. Productive meeting. Carry on.

(He turns to leave, muttering under his breath)

GRAHAM

Bloody prick's going to love that thing.

(He exits. Everyone bursts out laughing. CHERYL tries to compose herself, straightening the cactus ribbon as the sound of Van Halen bleeds from the booth. The energy ramps up – anticipation, chaos, and egos colliding in a perfect radio storm)

Scene 5 – The Prick Arrives

SCENE: INT. ROCK 107 STUDIO / OFFICE – LATE AFTERNOON

AT RISE: A buzz of end-of-day chaos. Phones ring, faders click, someone laughs off-mic. The cactus sits by the on-air window, still proudly defiant. MICK stands half in the booth, mug in hand, halfway through bragging about an ad read.

MICK

You know why I'm good at voicing? It's about truth, mate. You sell the sizzle, not the sausage.

KEV

Yeah, but you wouldn't know a snag from a pretzel, Mick.

CHERYL

(Without looking up from her keyboard)

He just wants to voice the snag, Kev. Less grease, more ego.

(Laughter. SANDRA crosses between the office and studio, juggling papers)

SANDRA

Can someone tell me why the news printer smells like its burning?

CHERYL

Because it ran out of toner last Tuesday.

SANDRA

And why hasn't someone ordered—

(She's cut off by the sudden WHOOSH of the office door. ROCKIN' ROD strides in, like he owns not just the station but the decade itself. Aviators, leather jacket, cologne you can smell three suburbs away. A much-younger girlfriend — TINA — clings to his arm, gum snapping like applause. MICK watches in silence, unimpressed)

ROD

Rock City! Did ya miss me, ya beautiful bastards?

(He spreads his arms. Silence. Then, KEV whistles low)

KEV

Jesus. It's the ghost of FM past.

CHERYL

More like AM Radio — too many ads, not enough sense.

ROD

Cheryl, still running the asylum I see! Looking good, sweetheart. Still filing complaints in triplicate?

SANDRA

Only when the Broadcasting Standards ring. I've got your number on speed dial.

(ROD seems to welcome the comment like it is a badge of honour)

CHERYL

Hi Rod. You've got a delivery.

(She nods at the cactus. TINA gasps)

TINA

Oh my gosh! Who sent that?

ROD

(Reading tag, smirking)

"To Rod. You're a real prick."

(He laughs – loud, proud, unbothered)

ROD

Classic!. Must be from Jenny. Or... Melissa?

SANDRA

(Dry)

Or everyone.

ROD

Hey now, jealousy's not a good look, Sandy.

SANDRA

Neither's syphilis.

(Muffled laughter. ROD winks at her, unphased)

ROD

(To TINA)

See, babe, that's newsroom banter. She's just flirtin'. Happens all the time.

MICK

(Deadpan)

Yeah, in your dreams.

(ROD grins, saunters toward the booth, throwing his leather jacket onto a chair)

ROD

Mick the Mouth! Still doing mornings, huh? What's that, a charity gig now?

MICK

Keeps me sharp. Some of us can handle the early shift.

(They stare at each other – a perfect FM Mexican standoff)

ROD

Still pretending to be edgy by wearing black jeans from Big W?

MICK

Still pretending the hair's real?

(SANDRA chokes on laughter. TINA blinks, confused)

ROD

Careful, son. My voice has more hair than you do.

(He grins, striding into the studio, stroking the control panel lovingly)

ROD

Knobs. They've missed me. Haven't ya, baby?

(TINA giggles, rubbing his shoulder)

KEV

Hey Rod, what do you reckon about the new format thing?

ROD

Format? Rock is the format, mate. Always has been.

MICK

Tell that to Barry. He wants us playin' Fleetwood Mac.

ROD

Fleetwood Mac? What the fuck is this, Sunday brunch?

(TINA giggles)

TINA

You mean like – music moaning, right?

ROD

Yeah, babe. Sure.

(He slides into the studio chair, flicking switches like a pro. Cigarette dangling, sunglasses still on. MICK hovers, shaking his head in disbelief. BARRY bursts out of his office, papers flying)

BARRY

Rod! You're... early?

ROD

No, mate. Time just slows down when Rockin' Rod walks in.

(MICK snorts. KEV mutters "Jesus Christ" under his breath, but loud enough)

ROD

(Grinning. Continues to BARRY)

Rock on! Give the listeners some "wood", right mate?

(An awkward. KEV launches into an irrelevant story to break the moment)

KEV

You know, I once saw Bon Scott at the MCG—

MICK

Here we go.

KEV

—bloke could drink a keg through a straw. That's rock!

ROD

Exactly! Spirit, sweat, sex appeal! (To BARRY) What's this bullshit about dumping the rock?

BARRY

(Defensive)

I'm just saying, we might reach more listeners if we—

MICK

If we what? Play Phil Collins?

SANDRA

Or Barbra Streisand? That'll keep the truckies tuned in.

CHERYL

"The Rock Your Mum Likes."

(Laughter all round. BARRY sighs, rubbing his temples)

BARRY

It's called broadening appeal, not betraying rock.

ROD

Rock isn't an appeal, Barry, it's an erection. You can't fake it.

(TINA laughs too hard. CHERYL winces. ROD gets settled into the studio chair, TINA at his side, he punches the console and the ON AIR light glows. Everyone pauses. Even BARRY can't look away)

ROD

Alright sweetheart, you're up – give us your best weather voice. Remember: smile, slow it down, and sell it.

(TINA perches herself on ROD'S lap, weather report in hand)

TINA

(Reading breathily)

Today's weather – hot and sticky, with a... big low coming in from the... south–

(Everyone tries not to lose it even though they've seen this "routine" before)

KEV

(Into "commentary mode")

And here we go, folks – Rockin' Rod with another big front moving in! Look at the control, the poise–

MICK

Textbook handling under pressure, Kev. Plenty of hands-on experience there.

KEV

Oh, absolutely, Mick – The Classic Rockin' Rod "Dry Root" manoeuvre right there! He's been working on that one for seasons – pure instinct, no hesitation!

(The crew bursts out laughing – CHERYL nearly spits her coffee)

CHERYL

Oh, beautiful form from the boundary there, Kev – you calling the play or auditioning for a harassment tribunal?

SANDRA

(Loud, unimpressed)

Can we not turn the newsroom into a live sex-ed class?

ROD

(Still oblivious, grinning)

Ease up, Sandy – it's just a bit of fun for the punters! Go on, Tina – tell 'em about the swell!

TINA

(Big smile, trying again)

Um... big swell expected this evening, getting rough overnight–

KEV

(Losing it)

Oh-ho-ho! And she's nailed it! Straight down the middle – what a finish! Rod's up on the scoreboard again!

MICK

Unbelievable. You couldn't script it – and if you did, Barry would bin it.

BARRY

Bin it? Mate, back in my day I'd have opened with it. Bastard's still got the moves.

(BARRY laughs with them, but there's a flicker of something else – envy, nostalgia, maybe even loss. For a split second, the performer in him stirs; he straightens slightly, eyes drawn to the studio glass as if the red "ON AIR" light still calls his name. Then he shakes it off, back to the room, forcing a grin)

CHERYL

Yeah, or frame it in the staff room under "Occupational Dickhead of the Month."

(Laughter around the room. TINA slides from ROD'S lap as he slaps her on the arse. Instantly, his voice turns into that full, chesty radio swagger)

ROD

(ON AIR, booming)

Yeahhh, good afternoon, Rock City! The rumours are true – the king is back in the big chair! Rockin' Rod here, keepin' it loud and proud on your drive home. And hey – how about a hand for the lovely Tina, folks? She's hot, she's sunny, and she's forecasting one hell of a warm front tonight!

(KEV and MICK crack up. SANDRA shoots daggers across the booth)

BARRY

He's still got it – dirty as a public dunny but still got it.

SANDRA

Yeah, along with every disease that's ever crawled out of one.

(ROD ignores them, grinning into the mic, fully in his element)

ROD

(ON-AIR and to TINA)

You know it, baby – this is the only shift that matters! The rest are just filling dead air till drive time. Let's crank it up – this one's for all the rock soldiers out there! Stay loud, stay proud, and don't let the bastards turn down your rock.

(He flicks the mic off. The light dies. Silence. The room exhales)

MICK

What a wanker.

SANDRA

Total.

CHERYL

Iconic.

KEV

Bloody goose bumps though.

BARRY

He's a bloody walking lawsuit... but you can't fake that spark. Damn if it doesn't make me miss the smell of the mic foam.

(ROD stands, chest out, soaking in the mix of admiration and contempt)

ROD

That, ladies and gents, is how you make radio. You don't talk about it — you are it.

(He kisses TINA, oblivious to the eye-rolling around him)

CHERYL

(Mutters)

That poor girl's gonna need disinfectant and therapy.

MICK

Holy shit.

(BARRY tries to re-assert order, flapping his clipboard)

BARRY

Alright, everyone, back to work. We've got sponsors—

(ROD interrupts, swaggering toward him)

ROD

Relax, Bazza. You don't manage rock, you ride it.

(He gives BARRY a manly slap on the shoulder that nearly knocks him over. BARRY forces a laugh)

SANDRA

This place is a circus.

CHERYL

Yeah, and he's the dancing bear.

(Everyone laughs. ROD grins wider, thinking it's a compliment)

ROD

Damn right I am. Now someone crank AC/DC — I feel a promo coming on!

(He grabs the mic again, firing up the next song manually. The opening riff of "Back in Black" blasts through the speakers. Everyone freezes, then instinctively bobs their heads. It's ridiculous. It's perfect. It's ROCK 107)

Tag — After the Chaos

(The music fades out of the studio — the tail end of "Back in Black" bleeding into a late-night ad jingle. ROD'S laughter echoes from the studio. The others begin drifting — each in their own small orbit. BARRY stands at the glass window, arms crossed, watching ROD and his new girl)

BARRY

Every bloody time I think we've moved on...

SANDRA

(Grabbing her notes)

That's the thing about blokes like Rod — they don't grow old. Just older.

(MICK smirks, half jealous, half impressed)

MICK

Yeah. But the bastard still gets the best shift.

(KEV chuckles, shaking his head)

KEV

It's a game of two halves, boys. He's winning the first.

(CHERYL looks up, deadpan)

CHERYL

And losing the second — one ex at a time.

(They all share a small, knowing laugh)

BARRY

Right. That's enough philosophy for one day. Someone turn that bloody cactus around - I've got sponsors coming in the morning.

(CHERYL swivels it gently so the card faces the wall)

CHERYL

Done.

(They start to pack up - the fluorescent hum taking over where the music left off. The ON AIR light glows faintly through the glass)

SANDRA

(Quietly, as she exits)

Rock never dies. It just smells like Brut 33.

(MICK snorts, KEV laughs too hard, BARRY sighs. CHERYL watches them go, alone now, typing one last line)

CHERYL

(To herself)

Rock 107... still on air. God help us.

(Curtain)