



*THE*  
**NEWSREADER**

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT THERE'S NOWHERE TO HIDE

eOne

This is the story of success and identity set

within the high octane world of a 1986 newsroom



Created by **Michael Lucas** (*Offspring*) with  
award-winning director **Emma Freeman** (*Stateless*)

*The Newsreader* digs behind some of the most iconic stories of our time for an intimate, vital look at an era of great change.

In the maelstrom of a commercial television newsroom in 1986, Dale Jennings (Sam Reid, *Anonymous*, *Belle*) is a diligent young reporter, desperate to become a newsreader. Helen Norville (Anna Torv, *Fringe*, *Mindhunter*) is a notoriously 'difficult' star newsreader determined to build credibility. Paired together over three months, Dale and Helen will cover an extraordinary chain of news events— from the shock of the Challenger explosion, to the hype of Halley's Comet, to the complexities of the AIDS crisis. From messy beginnings, a deep bond is formed that will upend their lives and transform the very fabric of the nightly news bulletin. This is a story of a grand, unconventional relationship in a world on the cusp of change.

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ORIGINAL BROADCASTER: **ABC (AUSTRALIA)**

ORIGINAL PRODUCER: **WERNER FILM PRODUCTIONS**

S1: **6 × 60 MIN** 

*The Newsreader* is set in the frantic, busy heart of the of a commercial TV newsroom. Thanks to the dazzling immediacy of satellite images, by 1986, TV had usurped newspapers to become the world's preferred news source. Leading newsreaders had become national icons. Lions of composure and masculinity, these newsreaders— always stately older men with God-like voices— drew audiences of millions every night. *The Newsreader* centres on the relationship between two very different characters, both outside the standard, masculine model of a newsreader, both determined to rise to the very top of the commercial news world.

Like *Mad Men*, the series examines the politics and power structure of one workplace as a way of interrogating an entire era. Like James Brooks' classic film *Broadcast News*, the pace will be fast, and the series will embrace both the humorous and the tragic aspects of our characters. Avoiding painting characters as heroes or villains, *The Newsreader* will build an ensemble that sings with both tension and rapport.



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Dale Jennings is a diligent young reporter, desperate for a shot on the news desk.

Dale reads every paper cover to cover, and has an encyclopedic knowledge of news archives. But despite all that diligence, Dale doesn't quite fit the brand. His voice lacks gravitas, he's slightly stilted on camera... and he seems to be perpetually single. The carefully guarded truth is, Dale is also attracted to men. He's only acted on this attraction once— with a boy at his school; an affair that was brutally exposed... an affair that Dale has dedicated his life to denying.

He knows that no achievement would reverse that teenage scandal more emphatically than ascending to the position of nightly newsreader.

But for all his hard work, all his dedication, he can't get an opportunity to step up. He remains in a personal and professional rut. But then, fate throws him together... with newsreader Helen Norville.



On screen, Helen Norville is

magnetic, captivating and assured.

She is as glamorous and outgoing as Dale is timid. In a bid to lift ratings, she was recruited in '84 to sit beside long-time 'king of news' Geoff Walters (Robert Taylor, *Longmire*, *Focus*), reading some of the 'lighter' stories.

Off screen, Helen she has fast developed a 'reputation'. If Dale is too gentle and passive to cut through, Helen has the opposite problem - she's just 'too much': too emotional, too demanding, too opinionated.

Thrown together in the heat of the newsroom, this unlikely pair will navigate some of the most iconic stories of the time; from the sudden devastation of the Challenger explosion; to the misbegotten hype of Halley's Comet; to the pageantry of the Fergie and Andrew Royal Wedding. And when their relationship becomes romantic... both of them can feel an unexpected, but palpable career boost. Their romance allays the simmering concern over Dale's masculinity; and it lends Helen an air of stability, and respectability.



Their personal story will play out alongside

some of the most iconic news stories of the era

Over time, they become an undeniable duo, a 'golden couple' of news. But at what cost...? Over the course of six episodes Dale and Helen will go on a dizzyingly broad and unpredictable arc. Their relationship sits in the cross-hairs of so many of the key changes of the era— the emergence of the gay rights movement, the increased presence of women in the workforce, the rise of materialism, the spread of mass-media. Their personal story will play out alongside some of the most iconic news stories of the era, and *The Newsreader* will draw on real news archives to evoke the world as it was three decades ago.

Secrets emerge from Dale's past that he

has long tried to conceal...

## EPISODE 1

In 1986, ambitious reporter Dale dreams of landing the most prized role on commercial TV: newsreader. But Helen, the network's first female newsreader, struggles against her reputation as 'difficult'. When their personal and professional lives collide, Dale and Helen embark on a fragile new alliance. Their first job together seems simple enough: cover the launch of the Space Shuttle Challenger...

## EPISODE 2

Halley's Comet is approaching, and change is in the air. As veteran newsreader, Geoff is pressured to step away from the desk, the top job's suddenly within reach. Dale scores a break that could supercharge his career, but Helen is plagued by severe mood swings that leave her a wreck. Dale finds himself torn between his desire for privacy and his desire to support his new ally. The closer he draws to Helen, the more he finds himself thrust into the spotlight...

## EPISODE 3

Before Dale and Helen can resolve who they are to each other, news hits of Lindy Chamberlain's imminent release from prison. Helen races to Darwin with Dale and Tim in tow, ferociously pursuing the "interview of the century". As she denies her oscillating mental health and ignores sobering news of her estranged father, what toll will this story have on her?





In the face of it all, they must confront who they

really are – to each other, and to themselves.

#### EPISODE 4

A bomb has gone off on Russell Street in the heart of Melbourne... right where Dale's been shooting. The explosion ripples through the newsroom: typist Noelene finally gets her shot at producing; Helen's feelings for Dale come into focus; the fragile Geoff pushes his body to dangerous extremes; and Dale, standing in the wreckage of a world turned upside down, makes a choice that will transform his life for good...

#### EPISODE 5

Dale's career and his relationship with Helen are garnering ever more attention and excitement. But when his prized interview with an HIV-positive mother goes horribly awry, the newsroom is suddenly at the centre of an intense media storm. Secrets emerge from Dale's past that he has long tried to conceal... secrets that threaten to tear his entire life apart.

#### EPISODE 6

Whilst Helen and Dale are still reeling at his revelation, alarming reports surface of a nuclear accident in Chernobyl. As the newsroom scrambles to determine the nature of the meltdown, Helen and Dale are once more thrown together: under-slept and under-resourced, and under more pressure than ever. In the face of it all, they must confront who they really are – to each other, and to themselves.