

DREAMGIRLS



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**Screenplay by
Bill Condon**

**Music by
Henry Krieger**

**Lyrics by
Tom Eyen**

Based on the musical play

**FIRST DRAFT
January 3, 2005**

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"DREAMGIRLS"

IN DARKNESS

The seductive wail of a blues harp. Then a raspy VOICE, right out of a Mississippi juke joint:

FACTORY WORKER (V.O.)
I'M GOIN' TO DETROIT, GET MYSELF A GOOD
JOB

MAIN TITLES begin. We FADE UP on:

INT. CHRYSLER ASSEMBLY PLANT - DETROIT - DAY (1962)

The voice cuts through the rattle and hum of factory machinery.

FACTORY WORKER (O.S.)
TRIED TO STAY AROUND HERE WITH THE
STARVATION MOB

The singer -- a grizzled FACTORY WORKER -- plays to an audience of fellow WORKERS on their lunch break.

FACTORY WORKER
I'M GOIN' TO GET ME A JOB UP THERE IN MR.
FORD'S PLACE

The workers murmur and nod. Another harmonica lick follows, joined by the tickle of a piano...

INT. AFTER-HOURS CLUB - NIGHT

...from a bebop improv session, played by some of the greatest MUSICIANS in the city. Dim lights and a hypnotized crowd. A romping rhythm section takes us to...

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

A burning BIG BAND plays the hottest, smoothest swing you've ever heard. Trumpets that pump, horn licks that kick.

SINGER (V.O.)
Are you with me?

CROWD (V.O.)
Yeah.

INT. ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A Friday night neighborhood blowout. A local SINGER dials the temperature way up with some call-and-response vocalese.

SINGER
I said yeah.

CROWD
Yeah.

SINGER
What you say?

CHURCHGOERS (V.O.)
Let it shine.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A DEACON leads his congregation through some serious praise shouting.

DEACON
His light is shining on us.

CHURCHGOERS
Let it shine.

A CHILDREN'S GOSPEL CHOIR launches into a powerful spiritual. And now the mosaic gets even richer, new musical colors added in quick succession:

EXT. BELLE ISLE PARK - DAY

Amateur DOO-WOP GROUPS rehearse on an island in the middle of the Detroit River.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Four YOUNG MEN shimmy under a street lamp, snapping their fingers in unison, as a TENOR SAX oozes a warm velvet counterline.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

A small BOY plays bongo drums for tips.

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - DAY

Three twelve-year-old GIRLS harmonize a capella in a concrete stairwell, their voices echoing off the smooth hard walls.

The musical styles start to merge -- gospel with a rhumba beat...pop with a boogie flavor...jazz and salsa and African rhythmic speech...hand-clapping and arm-waving and foot-stomping...until every influence seems to blend into a single sustained note. We're in Detroit, in 1962, where music isn't just a diversion from life -- it is life.

THE SCREEN GOES DARK

And MAIN TITLES end. A pulsating R&B drumbeat emerges, as we FADE UP slowly on:

THREE YOUNG BLACK WOMEN

silhouetted, in tight home-made dresses. They stand frozen in place.

M.C. (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, Detroit's Fox Theatre continues our legendary talent contest with the indefatigable Stepp Sisters!

A blinding spotlight and:

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (1962)

The women explode into wild time steps.

STEPP SISTERS

I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING BABY
SOMETHING THAT'LL GIVE ME A RISE
I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING BABY
LIKE A REAL NICE SURPRISE

We circle the Stepp Sisters to reveal a run-down vaudeville palace, packed to the rafters. An all-black audience, a lot of them TEENAGERS.

STEPP SISTERS

I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING BABY
SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE GOT
I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING BABY
AND IT'S GONNA BE REAL HOT

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The SONG continues. The pomaded M.C. moves through the dimly lit backstage area, where OTHER ACTS hover, primp, rehearse.

MARTY MADISON, 50, an old-time manager, trails two sassy ladies, JOANN and CHARLENE, who are carrying their bags.

MARTY

Ladies, you can't leave. What about the show? What about Jimmy?

JOANN

Marty, you know I can talk. Well Marty -- watch me walk.

She throws open the stage door.

EXT. FOX THEATRE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

CONTESTANTS who have already performed take cigarette breaks in the alley. Joann and Charlene emerge.

CHARLENE

Come on, Joann. Our limousine is waiting.

They head for a broken-down cab, passing a handsome man in a silk suit, his hair processed a slick, straight black.
CURTIS TAYLOR, JR.

JOANN

Oh and Marty...give Jimmy a message for me. Tell him I've got his number. His phone number.

MARTY

Now, baby...

JOANN

At home. Where he lives. With his wife.

She sashays off.

MARTY

Shit.

He checks out other acts, looking for possible replacements. Curtis steps into the light.

CURTIS

Hey, Mister. Can I interest you in the
(sings)
"SOUND OF TOMORROW?"

He holds the mellow last note, offering it up with an outstretched hand. Marty spits out his cigarette and goes back inside. Curtis turns, sees DEENA JONES appear at the end of the alley. Doe-eyed, rail thin. And barely 16.

The stage door opens again. Curtis slips inside the theatre. Deena stops under a street sign: WOODWARD & COLUMBIA.

DEENA

Oh no! Effie, Lorrell, hurry up!

LORRELL ROBINSON, 17, rounds the corner. She's sexy, a born flirt. C.C. (CLARENCE CONRAD) WHITE, 18, follows, carrying sheet music and a make-up kit.

LORRELL

C.C., go back and help your sister.

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Deena marches in, collides with Curtis.

DEENA

Oh, I'm sorry, Mister...

CURTIS

Taylor. Curtis Taylor, Jr.

DEENA

Look, I know we're late, but my Mama, she don't like me goin' out on weeknights, so I had to wait for her to go to bed, only it turned out she had a PTA meeting tonight, see she's a grade school teacher...

An officious TALENT BOOKER rushes past with a clipboard.

BOOKER

Are you Brenda Talbert?

DEENA

No, Deena Jones. One of the Dreamettes.

BOOKER

You're too late. You were supposed to go on second.

CURTIS

Hey, man, give her a break.

BOOKER

Sure. A little heart-break.

He chuckles and turns but Curtis puts a hand on his shoulder. A strong-arm gesture which turns into a friendly squeeze.

CURTIS

She made it here, didn't she?

They share a look. The booker backs down.

BOOKER

Okay, I'll put her on last. After Tiny Joe Dixon.

DEENA

Oh, thank you. Which one is he?

He motions to a huge man wearing thick pancake foundation, eyeliner, rouge, and lipstick. Deena shrinks as TINY JOE DIXON struts past imperiously.

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The Stepp Sisters have hit their groove.

STEPP SISTERS
I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING, BABY
LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING NOW

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Lorrell and C.C. rush in.

DEENA
C.C., where is Effie?

C.C.
She was right behind me.

EFFIE (O.S.)
It's this goddamn door. It's too heavy.

The stage door swings open and EFFIE WHITE appears. She's a bit older than the others (19) and a lot larger. Effie unwraps her kerchief, revealing a huge head of synthetic hair.

EFFIE
I need to rest.

C.C.
What? This is the greatest moment of our lives and you want to rest?

LORRELL
She's just nervous, that's all.

EFFIE
I'm not nervous. I'm tired.

She aims this last remark at a thin DIVA, who stubs out a cigarette and stands. As Effie settles into the folding chair:

EFFIE
Where's our dressing room?

DEENA
Effie, we don't have time. We have to rehearse.

Deena and Lorrell take off their coats and kerchiefs, revealing matching dresses and wigs.

DEENA

Come on, let's warm up.

(sings)

MOVE MOVE

MOVE MOVE

Lorrell joins in. Curtis stands against a wall, taking it all in. The M.C. moves past and we follow him to the wings.

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

From over the Stepp Sisters' shoulders, we see kids dancing in the aisles.

STEPP SISTERS

DEENA, LOREELL (O.S.)

I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING,

MOVE

BABY

MOVE

I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING NOW

MOVE

I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING,

MOVE

BABY

I'M LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHING NOW

The Stepp Sisters freeze and the house rocks. In the front row, three professional JUDGES fill out score cards.

M.C.

...the unstoppable Stepp Sisters! And remember, at the conclusion of our talent contest, the wildest man in show business, Detroit's own James "Thunder" Early, kicks off his national tour right here on this stage tonight!

The crowd erupts. Marty looks panicked.

M.C.

And now turn it on for Little Albert and The Tru-Tones!

Four extremely thin MEN, led by LITTLE ALBERT, hit the stage in red tuxedos:

LITTLE ALBERT & THE TRU-TONES

ME AND MY BABY GOING DOWNTOWN (DOWNTOWN)

ME AND MY BABY GETTIN' DOWN TONIGHT

ME AND MY BABY GOING DOWNTOWN (DOWNTOWN)

ME AND MY BABY GONNA CHECK CHECK

CHECK OUT THE SIGHTS

WE'RE LOOKIN' AROUND

WE'RE LOOKIN' AROUND

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Marty sidles up to the Dreamettes. Pouring on the charm:

MARTY

Excuse me, ladies. You're singers,
aren't you?

DEENA

The best. We're the Dreamettes.

MARTY

Well I have got the break of your lives.
The great Jimmy Early is in need of some
back-up help tonight.

EFFIE

We don't do back-up.

DEENA

Come on, Effie. All we have to do is a
few oohs and aahs.

EFFIE

I don't do oohs and aahs.

LORRELL

Now you look, Effie. This could be our
big break.

EFFIE

Singing back-up is a trap. I'm sorry,
but we can't accept your offer.

MARTY

Well I'm a little confused. I see three
girls in front of me but all I hear is
one mouth. You two got anything to say
about it?

Curtis watches as Deena and Lorrell turn away, frustrated but
unwilling to cross Effie.

EFFIE

Thank you very much, mister.

She dismisses Marty with a haughty smile.

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Little Albert & the Tru-Tones finish up:

LITTLE ALBERT & THE TRU-TONES
 WE'RE GOING DOWNTOWN
 CHECK, CHECK, CHECK OUT THE SIGHTS

The crowd roars. In the pit, C.C. hands out charts to the
 BAND PLAYERS.

M.C.

Let's hear it for Little Albert and the
 Tru-Tones. Weren't they fabulous? Now
 put your hands together for Tiny Joe
 Dixon.

The stage lights turn blue. Tiny Joe slithers onstage.

TINY JOE DIXON
 OH BABY I'M TAKING THE LONG WAY HOME
 'CAUSE MY BABY DON'T LIVE THERE NO MORE

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Deena freshens her lipstick in a full-length mirror.

DEENA

Oh, we're next!

The Stepp Sisters pass. The girl groups exchange horrified
 looks as they realize they're wearing identical wigs.

DEENA

Oh, no!

LORRELL

We're ruined unless we can find new wigs.

EFFIE

Why do we need wigs in the first place?

DEENA

Because we need a look.

(into the mirror)

I got it! Turn the wigs around!

LORRELL

What?

DEENA

Turn the wigs around!

They crowd around the mirror.

LORRELL

Oh, Deena, it's so...different.

DEENA
It's sophisticated looking.

She starts toward the stage. Effie lingers to check herself out.

EFFIE
Front ways or back ways, wigs ain't natural. And what about these dresses? I mean, this dress does nothin' for my body.

LORRELL
You got the same wig I got?

EFFIE
Yeah.

LORRELL
You got the same dress I got?

EFFIE
Yeah.

LORRELL
Then shut up.

She hurries after Deena. Curtis steps up behind Effie.

CURTIS
Say, miss, I think you look just great.

Effie turns to Curtis with a coquettish grin, then swans off.

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

In the wings, the M.C. leers at Deena.

M.C.
What's the name of your group again?

DEENA
The Dreamettes.

M.C.
Nice, baby.

He squeezes Deena's ass and she lets out a gasp.

TINY JOE JACKSON
 (the big finish)
 I GOT NOWHERE TO GO
 'CAUSE MY BABY DON'T LIVE THERE NO MORE
 NO MORE

A finger taps the M.C.'s shoulder. It's Effie, who fixes him with a fierce look. He removes his hand and rushes onstage, as the audience gives it up for Tiny Joe.

M.C.
 And now: the courageous, the curvaceous,
 the climactical...Creamettes!

As the girls run onto the stage:

DEENA
 It's the Dreamettes! The Dreamettes!

Lorrell and Deena take positions behind Effie, who sings lead.

THE DREAMETTES
 MOVE MOVE MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE
 MOVE MOVE MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE

Their movements are awkward but the energy is raw, and Effie's voice is electrifying.

EFFIE	DEENA & LORRELL
YOU BETTER MOVE	MOVE
YOU'RE STEPPIN' ON MY HEART	
I SAID MOVE	MOVE
YOU'RE TEARIN' IT APART	
PLEASE MOVE	PLEASE MOVE
OH WHAT AM I GONNA DO? MY	
HEART	MY HEART
BREAKIN' BREAKIN' UP OVER YOU	BREAKIN' BREAKIN' UP OVER YOU

Curtis watches from the wings, blown away by Effie's power. He sees Marty by the stage door, trying to talk the Stepp Sisters into singing back-up. The girls walk off in a huff.

EFFIE
 YOU'VE GOT A SUCH MAGNETIC POWER
 THAT JUST KEEPS HOLDING ME DOWN
 I FEEL JUST LIKE A FLOWER
 THAT YOU'RE KEEPING STUCK
 IN THE GROUND GROUND GROUND GROUND

DEENA, LORRELL, EFFIE
 MOVE MOVE MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE
 MOVE IT MOVE IT OUT MY LIFE
 (MORE)

DEENA, LORRELL, EFFIE (cont'd)
 MOVE MOVE MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE
 MOVE IT MOVE IT OUT OF MY LIFE
 MOVE MOVE MOVE RIGHT OUT MY LIFE

As Effie twirls, she catches Curtis' eye.

EFFIE
 YOU ARE SO HORRIBLY SATANIC
 THE WAY YOU LEAD ME AROUND
 I FEEL JUST LIKE THE TITANIC
 I'M ALWAYS GOING DOWN DOWN DOWN

EFFIE
 MOVE OUT OF MY LIFE
 MOVE OUT OF MY LIFE
 GET OUT OF MY LIFE
 MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE
 THERE'S TOO MUCH PAIN AND
 STRIFE

DEENA & LORRELL
 MOVE MOVE
 YOU'RE STEPPIN' ON MY STYLE
 MOVE MOVE
 I WANT TO BREATHE FOR A WHILE
 MOVE MOVE MOVE RIGHT OUT OF
 MY LIFE
 MOVE IT MOVE IT OUT OF MY
 LIFE

Effie glances back to the wings. Curtis is gone.

EFFIE
 SO WHY DON'T YOU PACK IT UP AND MOVE IT?
 TAKE THE CAT, KIT, AND KABOODLE

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Curtis stands in a corner with Marty. They are negotiating.

EFFIE (O.C.)
 TAKE YOUR BROKEN DOWN CAR
 YOUR SMELLY CIGAR
 AND JUST MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Effie hurls out the words.

EFFIE
 MOVE RIGHT OUT OF MY LIFE!

DEENA, LORRELL, EFFIE
 PLEASE MOVE MOVE MOVE MOVE
 PLEASE MOVE MOVE MOVE MOVE
 PLEASE MOVE MOVE MOVE MOVE

The song ends and the crowd goes wild.

M.C.

Come on! You can do better for the
delectable, the delicious, the defiant
Dreamettes!

The judges fill out their score cards, hand them to the
talent booker.

M.C.

In exactly one minute, we'll have the
winner of our talent contest.

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

The booker heads up a narrow stairway with the judges' tally.

CURTIS

Say, my man.

The booker flinches. Curtis holds up a folded bill.

CURTIS

Fifty bucks says the Dreamettes don't
win.

The booker takes a moment to decide.

BOOKER

You got it. They weren't going to win
anyway.

He pockets the fifty and turns with a smile.

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

The CONTESTANTS have formed a line behind the M.C. The
Dreamettes stand dead center, supremely confident.

M.C.

Now remember, the winner of this year's
contest gets a week's paid engagement
right here at the Fox Theatre.

The booker hands the results to the M.C.

M.C.

And that very lucky, very talented Star
of Tomorrow is...

(a drum roll)

Tiny Joe Dixon!

Tiny Joe joins the M.C. on the lip of the stage, as the
curtain lowers on the losers.

The shadow moving down Effie's face reflects familiar feelings of rejection and disappointment.

LORRELL

Does this mean we're not gonna be famous
now?

EFFIE

Well not tonight. Come on, let's go
home.

C.C. hands them their coats. Deena remains center-stage.

DEENA

Why?

EFFIE

Because I'm tired and we have to rehearse
in the morning.

DEENA

No, Effie, I mean -- what's the point?
Lorrell, how old were we when we first
started singing together?

LORRELL

Twelve.

DEENA

C.C., how many songs you got written down
there in your notebook?

C.C.

Over a hundred, I guess.

DEENA

And Effie. Effie, you ever met
anyone who can sing as good as you?

EFFIE

No.

DEENA

And still we're gettin' nowhere. So I'm
asking you -- what is the point?

CURTIS

The point is, you don't need an amateur
contest. There's nothing amateur about
you.

They all turn to Curtis, who emerges from the wings.

CURTIS

What you need is a break.

Behind them, STAGEHANDS roll in a baby grand piano, setting up for Jimmy Early's act.

CURTIS

Like singing back-up for someone already established. Someone like Jimmy Early.

EFFIE

Do you work for Jimmy Early too?

CURTIS

I work for no one. I'm my own boss and I'm offering you thirty dollars each to sing behind Jimmy tonight!

EFFIE

We just turned that down.

CURTIS

But not just that. I got you a guaranteed ten-week engagement on the road, starting tomorrow morning, at four hundred dollars a week.

LORRELL

Four hundred dollars!

CURTIS

And Mr. Early's manager has agreed to hire my Aunt Ethel to watch out for you girls while you're away from home.

DEENA

Oh, Mama's gonna like that.

EFFIE

No! I'm not singing behind anybody!

The celebrating comes to an end. Curtis moves closer to Effie. More a seduction than a sales pitch.

CURTIS

Look, kid, I know you're good and so do you. You're talented and you're beautiful. But that's not enough. A girl like you could get hurt without someone to protect you.

Effie's resolve is starting to wilt.

CURTIS

You could be a star and I could do it for you. But you've got to trust me.

(he touches her cheek)

Believe me, I won't disappoint you.

DEENA

Come on, what do you say?

EFFIE

Well, Mister...

CURTIS

...Curtis Taylor, Jr.

EFFIE

Curtis Taylor, Jr. -- our manager -- says we're singing behind Jimmy Early tonight!

DEENA

Oh, I love you, Effie!

LORRELL

This business sure has got a lot of ups and downs!

M.C. (O.S.)

(bleeding through)

Are you ready for Jimmy Early?

A roar, followed by stomping that shakes the floorboards. There's a look of panic on the girls' faces as they realize they're about to perform a song they've never even heard.

INT. FOX THEATRE - BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

JAMES "THUNDER" EARLY emerges from his dressing room. Big and brawny, with shiny hair and ebony skin, he wears a sequined tuxedo, every inch the R&B star. He and Marty are followed by a KEYBOARD PLAYER and four TRUMPET PLAYERS in blue sharkskin suits.

MARTY

...I warned you to lay off the women you work with, Jimmy. There are plenty of other girls out there.

JIMMY

There sure are, baby, but who's got time to go out looking? I'm always working!

MARTY

Yeah, 'cause Marty always keeps you working.

They turn a corner, come upon Curtis.

MARTY

Everything set with the two girls? I know the Countess doesn't sing back-up.

CURTIS

Wait a minute, Marty. This is a group. It's three or nothing.

JIMMY

What's happening, Marty?

CURTIS

My clients always work together.

JIMMY

Wait, I know you.
(stops, sizes him up)
Didn't you sell me my car?

CURTIS

Yes. In addition to my management company, I also own a Cadillac dealership down on Woodward Avenue.

Jimmy smiles. He knows bullshit when he hears it.

JIMMY

Well it needs a tune-up, baby.
(moves off)
And Jimmy only works with two.

MARTY

Sorry, man. It's two or nothing.

CURTIS

Then it's nothing.

They reach the stage, where the Dreamettes are waiting. Jimmy stops.

JIMMY

Marty, are these the girls?

Jimmy zeroes in on Lorrell, who gapes at him, starstruck.

JIMMY

Well it's fine, Marty. Three's gonna be just fine.

Jimmy open his arms and approaches the Dreamettes.

JIMMY

Ladies, you are saving Jimmy's life! I needed your help and I'm at your feet, thanking you.

He kneels in front of Lorrell, who giggles uncontrollably.

JIMMY

Do you understand what I'm saying? I am thanking you. I will do anything for you. Anything. Now what can I do for you, baby?

LORRELL

Well, Mr. Early...you could teach us the song.

Jimmy jumps up, plays a few chords on the baby grand.

JIMMY

THIRTEEN YEARS OF SOLID GOLD PLATTERS
 RISING COSTS AND COCKTAIL CHATTER
 FAT DEEJAYS, STEREOPHONIC SOUNDS
 THE GAME OF HITS GOES ROUND AND AROUND

The KEYBOARD player slides in and takes over.

JIMMY

OH YOU CAN FAKE YOUR WAY TO THE TOP
 ROUND AND AROUND
 (to Lorrell)
 Try that part, baby.

LORRELL

ROUND AND AROUND

JIMMY

FAKE YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

He points at Deena.

DEENA

ROUND AND AROUND

JIMMY

You fell in right there, sweetheart.
 YOU CAN FAKE YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

EFFIE
ROUND AND AROUND!

He jumps back, stunned by the force of her voice.

JIMMY
I knew you'd have it!
BUT IT'S ALWAYS SO REAL
SO REAL

DREAMETTES
ALWAYS SO REAL

JIMMY
That's it!
WHEN YOU'RE COMING DOWN

Jimmy executes a dazzling turn and we are suddenly..

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (LATER)

Onstage, in the middle of the number. Jimmy is a whirling dervish of energy, the trumpet players gyrating behind him.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
HELP ME JESUS	HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME HELP ME JESUS	HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME HELP ME JESUS	HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME JESUS	HELP HELP
I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I DONE	OOOH
YOU OUGHT TO HELP ME	HELP ME JESUS
HELP HELP HELP ME JESUS	HELP ME JESUS
HELP HELP HELP ME JESUS	HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME JESUS	HELP HELP

The Dreamettes struggle to keep up.

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - WHITE APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's just before dawn. C.C. packs for his sister Effie. Their truck-driver father, RONALD, serves her an enormous plate of griddle cakes.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
HELP ME JESUS

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - JONES APARTMENT - NIGHT

Deena moves from her bedroom -- dominated by a poster of Lena Horne -- to the living room, where her mother MAY is still asleep on the pull-out sofa. Deena places a letter on her pillow.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
HELP HELP
HELP ME JESUS

EXT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - DAWN

A vast housing project built in the 1930s. Lorrell joins Deena and Effie by the swings. They hug C.C. goodbye.

JIMMY (V.O.)
UP BACK UP BACK UP

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
ALL THE WAY UP!

INT. CLEVELAND THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

The number continues in Cleveland, the next stop on the Chitlin circuit. Jimmy mash-potatoes across the stage.

JIMMY
BACK TO NUMBER ONE
UP BACK TO NUMBER ONE!

DREAMETTES
OOOOH!

JIMMY
Listen!

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENIN'	DO DO DO DO
I'VE BEEN AROUND	DO DO DO DO

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

The girls stare out the window as they cross the state line into Pennsylvania.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
FAKING MY WAY	DO DO DO DO
THROUGH EVERY TOWN	DO DO DO DO

INT. PHILADELPHIA THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Another theatre, another show. In the wings, a one-legged DANCER holding a trained DOG waits to go on.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I MAKE MY LIVING	DO DO DO DO
OFF OF MY SOUND	DO DO DO DO
AND THE GAME OF HITS	
GOES ROUND AND AROUND	

The Dreamettes are up to speed now, matching Jimmy step for step.

DREAMETTES
ROUND AND AROUND
ROUND AND AROUND

EXT. STREET - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

The decrepit bus with Michigan plates drives through the city, the White House visible in the distance.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
ROUND AND AROUND

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Jimmy holds court in back. A MUSICIAN hands him a joint and he takes an impossibly long toke. He blows the smoke out the window.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
ROUND AND AROUND

Jimmy makes his way up the aisle. The three Dreamettes are asleep in the front rows.

JIMMY
(whispers)
Hey, Lorrell.

An orthopedic shoe stops him. Curtis' AUNT ETHEL, a heavy-set elderly woman, opens her eyes.

AUNT ETHEL
That back there is Harlem. This is
Hollywood. And you ain't welcome in
Hollywood.

Lorrell smiles, pretending to sleep.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
AND AROUND AND AROUND
AND AROUND AND AROUND

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Jimmy's athletic moves and gospel screaming stir up an almost sexual fever in the audience.

JIMMY
 YOU CAN FAKE YOUR WAY TO
 THE TOP
 FAKE YOUR WAY TO THE TOP
 YOU CAN FAKE YOUR WAY TO
 THE TOP

DREAMETTES
 ROUND AND AROUND
 ROUND AND AROUND
 ROUND AND AROUND
 ALWAYS SO REAL
 ROUND AND AROUND
 ROUND AND AROUND

INT. CURTIS' CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - DETROIT - DAY

A small dealership in a black neighborhood. Curtis sits opposite a well-dressed BLACK COUPLE. He sees a pick-up truck pull onto the lot.

CURTIS
 Would you excuse me?
 (calls out)
 Wayne, could you help me out here?

An older salesman, WAYNE, takes over. Through the window, we watch Curtis and C.C. unload an upright piano.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
BUT IT'S ALWAYS REAL SO REAL	ROUND AND AROUND
WHEN YOU'RE COMING DOWN	ALWAYS SO REAL

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

A dance break. Jimmy skips across the stage.

INT. BAR - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Jimmy puts the moves on a WOMAN whose BOYFRIEND suddenly appears. A fight breaks out. Marty tries to stop it but the boyfriend smashes a beer bottle on the bar. Jimmy has to bob and weave to avoid being cut.

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

Jimmy's onstage steps mirror the action until:

INT. BAR - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Jimmy literally starts dancing opposite his attacker. The tension breaks, until even the boyfriend is smiling.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 ROUND AND AROUND
 AND AROUND AND AROUND

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - DETROIT - NIGHT

C.C. bangs out some chords in Curtis' office.

CURTIS
No, that's not it.

C.C. stops, frustrated.

C.C.
I'm sorry, Mr. Taylor, but I just don't know what you're looking for.

CURTIS
I don't either, but it's out there. Remember what Dizzy says. All the music in the whole world has always been out there. You just gotta get your own little piece of it.

INT. BUS - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

MUSIC continues under. Deena has somehow managed to turn her small row into a fluffy bed, where she sleeps. Lorrell tiptoes past the chaperone, who snores heavily, and takes a seat next to Jimmy. He passes her a flask of whiskey.

LORRELL
Mr. Early, I don't believe all this all can be happening to me.

JIMMY
Miracles happen all the time in the world of R&B.

LORRELL
What's R&B mean?

JIMMY
Rough and Black.

LORRELL
Oh, Mr. Early, you're so crazy.

Jimmy puts his arm around her. In the next aisle, Effie plays poker with Marty and a trumpet player. She reaches into a bag for another burger.

JIMMY
Jimmy, baby, call me Jimmy.

LORRELL
Oh...Jimmy, you're so crazy.

He laughs, kisses Lorrell's neck. We hear a car honking outside.

LORRELL

That does feel nice. I mean, it feels funny. You're married, aren't you?

JIMMY

Yeah, baby. Everybody knows Jimmy's married.

LORRELL

Then you get your married hands off.

The honking gets louder.

EFFIE

Oh my God! Lorrell, look! It's Curtis!

Everyone wakes up. From their POV, we see Curtis and C.C., waving from a gold Cadillac convertible.

JIMMY (V.O.)

BUT IT'S ALWAYS REAL SO REAL
WHEN YOU'RE COMING DOWN

DREAMETTES (V.O.)

ROUND AND AROUND
ALWAYS SO REAL

INT. CHICAGO THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

The number reaches its climax. Curtis and C.C. stand in back, watching with Marty.

JIMMY

YOU CAN FAKE YOUR WAY TO
THE TOP
HELP ME HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME JESUS
UP BACK UP BACK UP
BACK TO NUMBER ONE
BACK TO NUMBER ONE

DREAMETTES

ROUND AND AROUND
ROUND AND AROUND
OOOH
HELP HELP
HELP HELP
HELP HELP
ALL THE WAY UP
OOOH

JIMMY

I FAKED MY WAY
I FAKED MY WAY
I FAKED MY WAY

Jimmy works himself into such a frenzy that he seizes up and drops in a dead faint. Marty lets out a mock gasp.

Jimmy jumps up, suddenly revived, and the audience applauds. But it's old schtick and the timing is off tonight.

JIMMY

HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME HELP ME JESUS
HELP ME HELP ME JESUS

JIMMY
 HELP ME JESUS
 FAKE MY WAY TO THE TOP
 YEAH!

Jimmy recovers for the big finish. The final trumpet blare carries over into:

INT. BLUES CLUB - CHICAGO - NIGHT

Jimmy's back-up trumpet players jam in a South Side club. At a table, Effie looks bored while C.C. helps Deena open a box of gifts.

DEENA
 And look, Effie...Mama sent me a sleeping mask!

EFFIE
 Oh and where's your little princess robe?

Curtis brings drinks, a highball for Effie, a Coke for Deena.

EFFIE
 Curtis, we were just wondering...do you cheat on your wife like Mr. Jimmy Early?

DEENA
 Effie, stop it! That's none of our business. We don't even know if Mr. Taylor is married.

CURTIS
 Actually, I was married. It didn't work out.

EFFIE
 Was she one of those teeny little tweety-birds like Deena here? Or do you prefer a real woman?

DEENA
 Effie!

CURTIS
 Actually, I was raised by two older sisters, and they're both just as real as you are.

Effie pats the chair next to her.

EFFIE

Well why don't you sit down and tell me about them?

CURTIS

In a minute, ladies.

He nods to C.C., who stands. In a nearby booth, Marty huddles with Jimmy.

JIMMY

It ain't workin', Marty! Man, I remember when that faint, it used to kill 'em! Too many other people doin' it now.

MARTY

Yeah, Jimmy, everybody's doin' it now.

JIMMY

But I was the first! You know that, don't you?

MARTY

And you're still the first, Jimmy. You killed 'em tonight. It was beautiful. Beau-ti-ful!

JIMMY

You're full of shit, Marty. I need something, man. Something --

He sees Lorrell at the bar, flirting with some of the guys from the band.

JIMMY

-- like that! Lord have mercy! Mama!

CURTIS

What you need is a new sound.

They look up at Curtis and C.C.

JIMMY

No, baby, I need a new car. The one you sold me is leaking oil.

Marty cracks up. They turn away from Curtis.

CURTIS

Jimmy, you remember Effie's brother C.C. He's a very talented young composer.

Curtis pushes C.C. down into the booth next to Jimmy, then sits opposite them.

JIMMY

Oh, yeah. You wrote that song the girls do. How's it go?

(sings)

YOU BETTER MOVE, MOVE...you wrote that one, huh?

C.C.

With absolutely no help from anyone.

JIMMY

What do you think of that song, Marty?

MARTY

Well, I think it's kind of...

JIMMY

Boring?

MARTY

Yeah. It's real boring, kid.

C.C.

I'm no kid, mister.

JIMMY

I'm sorry but that song just don't have enough soul in it. You know what I mean, baby? Look, I'm Jimmy and I gotta have soul.

The trumpet players drive the point home with some staccato riffs. Jimmy lifts his glass.

JIMMY

Gotta have soul, brothers!

CURTIS

Sure, soul and gospel too. And R&B and jazz and blues and everything else the white man has stolen from us. I mean, look at what Pat Boone did to Fats. Or Peggy Lee, grabbing Little Willie's "Fever" right out from under him.

JIMMY

Don't forget Presley!

(a mocking imitation)

YOU AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A HOUND DOG
It's so jive, man.

CURTIS

That's right, it's jive. But Big Mama Thornton's living on food stamps while Elvis is out in Beverly Hills making bad movies and fucking Stella Stevens.

MARTY

Hey man, tell us something we don't know.

CURTIS

There's got to be a way to bring our music to a broader audience. Only this time with our artists. Our money.

MARTY

Wake up, brother. This is America.

CURTIS

Yes, and what's the American concept of success? A three-letter word, known to every child:

(stands)

'Big.'

The trumpets punctuate each word.

CURTIS

As in 'large.' As in 'huge.' As in:
(sings)

MINE IS BETTER THAN YOURS

Jimmy looks up, surprised by Curtis' audacity.

EXT. WOODWARD AVENUE - DETROIT - NIGHT (A WEEK LATER)

Moving along the frame of Curtis' gold Cadillac.

CURTIS (O.S.)

NOW ONCE UPON A TIME THE CADILLAC CAR
REPRESENTED THE HIGHEST CLASSES IN
AMERICA

THE PURE, UNSTAINED WASP

We reveal Curtis and Marty sitting in front, with Jimmy sprawled across the back seat. Curtis turns to Jimmy, as music continues under.

CURTIS

The pure unstained WASP. They never worried about the cost.

The gleaming car stands out among the wrecks cruising the boulevard.

CURTIS

Then the Cadillac car was bought by the rising Jews to show they were just as good and part of the scheme.

EXT. CURTIS' CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - DETROIT - NIGHT

C.C. rolls open the cyclone fence and Curtis' car pulls in. They drive past aisles of new and used Cadillacs.

CURTIS (V.O.)

NOW WE'VE GOT THE CADILLAC
TAKEN OVER BY OUR NEGRO BROTHER TO PROVE
HE, TOO, BELONGS
IN THE AMERICAN DREAM

Curtis parks and jumps out. He opens the door for Jimmy.

EXT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - OFFICE - NIGHT

Curtis leads Jimmy and Marty through his dimly lit office.

JIMMY

Marty, this man is handing me crap.

MARTY

Yeah. I know, baby.

CURTIS

One hour of your time. That's all I asked for.

JIMMY

Well you better hurry up, brother.

Curtis opens the door to the garage.

CURTIS

LOOK I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU
I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU THUS...

He flicks a switch, revealing:

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - GARAGE - NIGHT

The space has been transformed into a recording studio, with a used two-track recorder, mixing board, and a small booth covered in old carpeting. And pictures everywhere, a collage of images which covers the walls. Everyone from Sarah Vaughn to Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday to Charlie Parker, Count Basie to Miles Davis.

Jimmy looks around, impressed in spite of himself.

CURTIS
 IF THE BIG WHITE MAN CAN MAKE US THINK WE
 NEED
 HIS CADILLAC TO MAKE US FEEL AS GOOD AS
 HIM
 WE CAN MAKE HIM THINK HE NEEDS OUR
 MUSIC
 TO MAKE HIM FEEL AS GOOD AS US

C.C. joins them.

C.C.
 WE'LL MAKE HIM FEEL AS GOOD AS US

JIMMY
 I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING
 I LIKE IT A LOT
 AND BABY I LIKE THE AMBITION YOU'VE GOT

MARTY
 You can't listen to this guy, he's a car
 salesman.

CURTIS
 BUT IT'S NOT AS EASY AS IT MAY SOUND
 YOU GOT TO GET A SMOOTHER SOUND

C.C.
 GOTTA GET A SMOOTHER...

JIMMY
 GOTTA GET A...

CURTIS, C.C., JIMMY
 SMOOTHER SOUND

Curtis puts his arm around C.C.

CURTIS
 THIS MAN HERE HAS OBVIOUS STYLE
 YOU CAN TELL BY HIS MUSIC AND HIS
 DAZZLING SMILE

C.C.
 I LIKE SINATRA, JAZZ AND THE BLUES

JIMMY
 (caught up)
 I LIKE GOSPEL AND BLUE SUEDE SHOES

CURTIS
 AND I LIKE MODERN SOUNDS THAT CATCH YOUR
 EAR
 THERE ARE SO MANY SOUNDS WE LOVE TO HEAR

CURTIS, JIMMY, C.C.
 THERE ARE SO MANY SOUNDS WE LOVE TO HEAR

Quick cutaways to the legends that surround them.

CURTIS, JIMMY, C.C.
 THERE ARE SO MANY SOUNDS WE LOVE TO HEAR
 THERE ARE SO MANY SOUNDS WE LOVE TO HEAR

CURTIS
 WE'LL BLEND THEM ALL IN

JIMMY, C.C.
 WE'LL BLEND IT ALL IN

CURTIS
 THE MORE YOU PUT IN
 THE MORE YOU CAN WIN

JIMMY
 THE MORE YOU CAN WIN

c.c. settles in at the piano, plays a catchy tune.

C.C.
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC CADILLAC
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR

JIMMY
 Whatcha got there, baby?

C.C.
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC CADILLAC
 LOOK AT ME, MISTER, I'M A STAR!

Jimmy joins in. Marty looks concerned.

C.C., JIMMY
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC CADILLAC
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR

CURTIS
 (singing the girls' part)
 OOH OOH

C.C., JIMMY
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC CADILLAC
 LOOK AT ME, MISTER, I'M A STAR

MARTY

Look, I know what you're trying to do, man. But Jimmy Early ain't some street corner punk looking for his first date. He's an established artist with a recording contract on a major label.

CURTIS

A major label that can't move his records to the pop charts.

MARTY

There's nothing we can do about that.

CURTIS

One record, Marty. That's all I'm asking for. One song with a simple hook everyone can relate to. "Look at my pretty car -- it makes me feel like a movie star."

(to Jimmy)

You know where all the hits happen these days? In cars, man! Songs that make you feel good while you're driving your automobile.

MARTY

Yeah, well Jimmy's fans like to take the bus.

He puts on his hat, moves to the door.

MARTY

C'mon, Jimmy. We shouldn't even be having this conversation.

CURTIS

Listen, I don't give a shit about money. Jimmy's label can have all the rights, all the profits. I just want to prove I'm right.

MARTY

(holds the door open)

Let's go, Jimmy.

Jimmy ignores him, sits at the piano next to C.C.

JIMMY

You figure out the bridge yet, baby?

Curtis smiles. Marty closes the door.

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 MOVING OUT
 MOVING UP
 MOVING ON

CURTIS (V.O.)
 Okay let's stop. We'll go again.

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - GARAGE - NIGHT (A WEEK LATER)

Wayne turns the thunderous air-conditioner back on. It's an all-night recording session, with Jimmy and the Dreamettes in a cramped isolation booth, along with a small band and C.C. on keyboard.

CURTIS
 It's sounding a little street, boys.
 Let's stay in the pocket.

Curtis nods to his old-time salesman Wayne, who turns off the air-conditioner.

WAYNE
 Record "Cadillac Car." Take thirty-two.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I GOT ME A CADILLAC	CADILLAC CADILLAC
I GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR	OOH OOH
GOT ME A CADILLAC	CADILLAC CADILLAC
LOOK AT ME MISTER I'M A STAR	OOH OOH

At the mixing board, Curtis smooths out the sound, dialing down the trumpets and boosting the vocals. He flicks a switch which crunches the mix through two small speakers, approximating the sound of a tinny car radio.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I'M MOVIN' OUT	MOVIN' OUT
MOVIN' UP	MOVIN' UP
MOVIN' ON	MOVIN' ON

EXT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - NIGHT

C.C. and Wayne carry out the first boxes of singles, which are stamped: PROPERTY OF RAINBOW RECORDS. Curtis loads them into the trunk of his car.

JIMMY & THE DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 MOVIN' OUT
 MOVIN' UP
 MOVIN' ON

INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

Quick cuts of local black DEEJAYS giving the single air play.

JIMMY & THE DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 MOVIN' OUT
 MOVIN' UP
 MOVIN' ON

BLACK DEEJAY
 ...it's a different sound for the Thunder
 Man and I think you're gonna like it:

INT. CURTIS' CADILLAC - DETROIT - NIGHT

A winter blizzard. Curtis drives with C.C., with Effie and Lorrell in back. The girls scream when the song comes on the radio.

JIMMY & THE DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC CADILLAC
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR

EFFIE
 Curtis, we're on the radio!

She throws her arms around him. The sound breaks up.

LORRELL
 What's happening?

C.C.
 It's a black station. The signal's too
 weak.

He fiddles with the dial but the song is gone.

EFFIE
 Well turn around! Curtis, turn around!

She smacks him on the arm, causing the car to swerve. Curtis does a U-turn on the icy road, barely missing an oncoming truck. The song is back.

JIMMY & THE DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC CADILLAC
 LOOK AT ME MISTER I'M A STAR

The girls sing along.

EXT. RECORD STORE - DETROIT - DAY

Black TEENAGERS line up outside the store.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 I GOT ME A CADILLAC
 I GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 CADILLAC CADILLAC
 OOH OOH

INT. RECORD STORE - DETROIT - DAY

The song plays over the sound system as Jimmy, Effie and Lorrell sign 45s. The paper sleeve features a close shot of Jimmy, with the Dreamettes small in the background.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 GOT ME A CADILLAC
 LOOK AT ME MISTER I'M A STAR

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 CADILLAC CADILLAC
 OOH OOH

The kids dance and bop as they wait.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DETROIT - DAY

Deena finishes a history exam, hands it in to her TEACHER:

JIMMY (V.O.)
 I GOT ME A CADILLAC
 I GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 CADILLAC CADILLAC
 OOH OOH

Deena steps into the hallway, where a dozen YOUNGER STUDENTS wait for her. She autographs their singles.

EXT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - DAY

Under the neon 'TAYLOR CADILLAC' sign, a smaller painted sign reads:

HOME OF RAINBOW RECORDS. THE SOUND OF TOMORROW.

Wayne hands a young COUPLE the keys to their new Cadillac. He also gives them a free 45.

JIMMY & THE DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 MOVE ME MOVE MOVE MOVE ME
 RIGHT TO THE TOP

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - GARAGE - NIGHT

Everyone pitches in. Lorrell answers the phone and Effie opens mail, while Wayne processes orders and C.C. boxes up singles for distribution. Only Deena sits apart, sipping a soda and doing homework.

JIMMY (V.O.)
 MOVIN' ON

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
 MOVE ME MOVE MOVE MOVE ME
 RIGHT TO THE TOP

Curtis enters, waving a copy of "Cash Box."

CURTIS
 "Cadillac Car" is number 10 on the R&B
 charts.

Everyone cheers. Curtis turns the page.

CURTIS
 And...we're number 98 on the pop charts!

LORRELL
 I don't believe it! We're on the pop
 charts!

Curtis rips out the chart and pins it on the bulletin board.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
MOVIN' ON	MOVE ME MOVE MOVE MOVE ME
	RIGHT TO THE TOP

Curtis slaps on the next week's chart. "Cadillac Car" moves
 to number 82.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
MOVIN' ON	MOVE ME MOVE MOVE MOVE ME
	RIGHT TO THE TOP

More charts follow as the song breaks into the top 50.

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - DETROIT - NIGHT

Jimmy and the Dreamettes play to an SRO crowd.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
LOOK AT ME, MISTER	MOVE ME MOVE MOVE MOVE ME
I'M A STAR	RIGHT TO THE TOP
LOOK AT ME, MISTER	MOVE ME MOVE MOVE MOVE ME
I'M A STAR	RIGHT TO THE TOP

They freeze, the stage goes black, and the audience goes
 crazy. In the darkness, we hear a thin arrangement of the
 same melody:

THE SWEETHEARTS (V.O.)
 OOOH EEEE OOOH
 OOOH EEEE OOOH

We FADE UP on:

INT. "AMERICAN BANDSTAND" STUDIO - DAY

A cut-out set depicts a canary yellow Cadillac driving along
 the beach, palm trees swaying against a turquoise sky.

We move across this pastel nightmare to reveal DAVE AND THE SWEETHEARTS, an all-blonde trio in matching argyle sweaters. They make Pat Boone look edgy.

DAVE	THE SWEETHEARTS
GOT ME A CADILLAC CADILLAC	
CADILLAC	OOOH EEEE OOOH
GOT ME A CADILLAC CAR	
OH, I'VE GOT ME A CADILLAC	
CADILLAC CADILLAC	
LOOK AT ME MISTER I'M A STAR	OOOH EEEE OOOH

On the "American Bandstand" stage, TEENAGERS sway along to the song. And if we haven't realized it before now, something suddenly becomes clear. These are the first white faces we have seen.

DAVE	THE SWEETHEARTS
LOOK AT ME MISTER I'M A STAR	
LOOK AT ME MISTER I'M A STAR	I'M A STAR

We pull out to see a black & white image of Dick Clark, smiling and nodding from a Zenith console.

DICK CLARK
That's Dave and the Sweethearts with
their marvelous new recording, "Cadillac
Car."

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - GARAGE - NIGHT

Everyone stares at the screen.

DEENA
How can they do that?

Jimmy watches from an E-Z chair, sucking the last bit of life out of a joint.

JIMMY
Yeah, Marty. How can they do that?

MARTY
The label sold off the underlying rights.
To them it's just another race record.

LORRELL
But that's not right. It's Jimmy who
made it a hit.

JIMMY
Thank you, baby.

EFFIE

And those white people don't know how to sing.

MARTY

This kind of shit happens all the time. Nothing anybody can do about it.

CURTIS

You should have protected the song, Marty.

Curtis moves out of the room. An ominous CHORD plays under:

EXT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - NIGHT

Curtis is silhouetted against the barren industrial landscape. C.C. joins him.

C.C.

They stole our hit.

Curtis doesn't turn. He smokes in silence.

C.C.

I never even thought...

CURTIS

(his back still to C.C.)
YOU GOT ME TO THINK FOR YOU NOW

C.C.

They're always turning our grit into somethin' pretty they can swallow.

CURTIS

YOU GOT ME TO THINK FOR YOU NOW

C.C.

Every time we get up off the ground they push us right back down again.

CURTIS

GOTTA PUT YOUR SOUL ON A MORAL BREAK
GET TO THE POINT, YOU JUST GOT TO TAKE

He opens his hand and turns to C.C., rage in his eyes.

CURTIS

STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE

C.C.

OOH, OOH, OOH

Jimmy Early stands in the doorway.

JIMMY
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE

CURTIS, C.C., JIMMY
GONNA TAKE A MEAN MEAN MEAN RIDE

C.C.
THAT SMILE I HAD IS GONE AWAY

Wayne emerges from the shadows.

WAYNE
THOSE THAT STEAL ARE GONNA PAY

CURTIS, C.C., JIMMY, WAYNE
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE
TODAY

EXT. DETROIT STREET - NIGHT

Curtis, Jimmy, C.C. and Wayne head down a deserted street.
Moving as one, with purpose.

CURTIS, C.C., JIMMY, WAYNE (V.O.)
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE, OOH, OOH, OOH
GONNA TAKE A MEAN RIDE, OOH, OOH, OOH
THAT SMILE I HAD IS GONE AWAY
THOSE THAT STEAL ARE GONNA PAY
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE TODAY

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A stout MAN leads the men down a dimly lit brick hallway.
Curtis turns to Jimmy.

CURTIS
I TELL YOU NOW IT'S GOT TO END
NO MORE TRUSTING THEM, MY FRIEND
WE'RE GONNA CHANGE OUR STYLE,
CHANGE OUR TONE
MAKE THE SONGS WE SING OUR OWN

A door opens revealing some low-rent MOBSTERS sitting around
a table playing poker. Curtis introduces himself to NICKY
SYLVANO, an aging hipster.

CURTIS
So you're the gentleman I've heard so
much about? The one who's going to help
me with my record?

Curtis and the Mafioso shake hands.

CURTIS
Meet Mr. Early.

Jimmy fakes out Sylvano with a soul handshake, then smothers him in a bearhug.

CURTIS, C.C., JIMMY, WAYNE (V.O.)
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE, OOH, OOH, OOH

EXT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - DUSK

More handshakes, as Curtis, Wayne, and even C.C. close deals on new and used Cadillacs. A banner reads: 'CLOSE-OUT SALE. EVERYTHING MUST GO.'

CURTIS, C.C., JIMMY, WAYNE (V.O.)
GONNA TAKE A MEAN RIDE, OOH, OOH, OOH

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - OFFICE - NIGHT

Wayne and C.C. count piles of cash, tens of thousands of dollars.

CURTIS
I'LL GET YOU ALL THE BREAKS YOU NEED
IN JUST TWO YEARS WE'LL BE IN THE LEAD
YOU CAN'T SIT BACK IT'S PLAIN TO SEE
JUST OPEN YOUR EYES AND TRUST IN ME

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - GARAGE - DAY

A recording session. In the booth, C.C. shakes tire chains to accentuate the foreboding backbeat.

JIMMY & THE DREAMETTES
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE, OOH, OOH, OOH
GONNA TAKE A MEAN RIDE, OOH, OOH, OOH

INT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - OFFICE - DAY

Curtis and C.C. review mock-ups for album covers. Curtis crosses the "THUNDER" out of JAMES "THUNDER" EARLY.

C.C.
I WAS A MAN WHO TRIED TO BE GOOD

Curtis next crosses out JAMES, replaces it with JIMMY.

EXT. CADILLAC DEALERSHIP - NIGHT

Wayne sells the last car, which cruises off the lot.

WAYNE
I WAS ALWAYS MISUNDERSTOOD

Curtis flips a switch, lighting a huge new neon sign: RAINBOW RECORDS.

CURTIS
YOU CAN'T PLAY FAIR OR BE TOO MEEK

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - OFFICE - DAY

More album covers, featuring 'JIMMY EARLY & THE DREAMETTES' in friendly poses. Curtis flips through and lands on a comp which has no picture at all. Just a line drawing of a fun guy and three sexy chicks, all of indeterminate race.

ALL (V.O.)
YOU GOTTA GET WAY DOWN AND SHOW YOUR
DANGER STREAK
STREAK STREAK STREAK STREAK

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

CHESTER 'JOLLY' JENKINS, a veteran black hooper, demonstrates some athletic steps to Jimmy and the Dreamettes, who are backed up by a dozen MALE DANCERS.

ALL (V.O.)
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE OOH OOH OOH
GONNA TAKE A MEAN RIDE OOH OOH OOH

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD GYM - NIGHT

Two spry MIDDLEWEIGHTS move in time to the music, until one lands a knockout punch. Curtis high-fives Wayne -- they've just won a big bet.

ALL (V.O.)
STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'
STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. CLUB - DETROIT - NIGHT

A mostly white supper club. At the end of the bar, Wayne slips some cash to a couple of well-dressed HOOKERS.

ALL (V.O.)
STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'
STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

At a center table, Curtis is hosting a group of white RECORD DISTRIBUTORS. The hookers step up and Wayne introduces them around.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

The dancers move in tight rhythm.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. CLUB - BATHROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

A paunchy distributor sits in a stall, getting serviced by one of the hookers. The door swings open and the club's PHOTOGRAPHER takes a souvenir picture.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. CLUB - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

At the concession stand, the photographer slides the roll of film to Wayne, who slips him a bag filled with hash.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. RADIO STATION - ATLANTA - DAY

Nicky Sylvano's cash transaction with a DEEJAY is interrupted by a good-ole-boy STATION OWNER, who shows him to the door.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. GAMBLING HALL - NIGHT

Curtis in a high stakes poker game. He turns over his hand -- all hearts, ace high -- and grins.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. RADIO STATION - ATLANTA - NIGHT (LATER)

The red-neck station owner gets roughed up by some THUGS.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

Nicky Sylvano looms over the station owner. He tosses Jimmy's 45 onto the man's chest.

ALL (V.O.)
 STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN' STEPPIN'

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO/INT. RADIO STATIONS - DAY (INTERCUT)

We INTERCUT between VARIOUS WHITE DEEJAYS and the dancers,
 whose steps build in intensity.

ATLANTA DEEJAY

Good morning, Atlanta, you're tuned to
 WKLS. Here's this week's hit, Steppin'
 to the Bad Side!

MALE DANCERS

STEP STEP

DEEJAY #2

KTHK gives you the sounds to want ---
 Steppin' to the Bad Side.

MALE DANCERS

STEP STEP

DEEJAY #3

WMBN the Great Lakes Number One station
 brings you the Number One song, Jimmy
 Early and the Dreamettes' Steppin' to the
 Bad Side.

MALE DANCERS

STEP STEP

DEEJAY #4

WKGU presents...

MALE DANCERS

STEP STEP

DEEJAY # 5

MXRV presents...

MALE DANCERS

STEP STEP

The dancers execute a hairpin turn which takes us to:

INT. APOLLO THEATRE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

The well-dressed audience is already cheering as the curtain
 rises slowly behind the M.C.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I HAD TO STEP INTO THE BAD SIDE	OOH OOH OOH
I HAD TO TAKE MYSELF A MEAN RIDE	OOH OOH OOH

There is movement everywhere, intricate and precise. The number resembles a giant piece of kinetic sculpture.

JIMMY
YOU KNOW THAT SMILE I HAD IS GONE AWAY
THOSE THAT STEAL ARE GONNA PAY

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I'M STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE TODAY	TODAY!

In the back of the house, it takes two TECHNICIANS to work the manual lighting board. Every line of Jimmy's solo brings a new cue:

JIMMY
A MAN JUST STOLE MY WOMAN FROM ME
HE TOOK HER DOWN TO TENNESSEE
SHE WAS THE BEST GIRL I EVER KNEW
IF IT WASN'T FOR HIM SHE'D STILL BE TRUE
NOW ALWAYS BEEN A GOOD MAN, IT'S BEEN
SAID
BUT WHEN I CATCH THAT MAN, HE'LL WISH HE
WERE DEAD
MEN LIKE HIM MAKE GOOD MEN MAD 'CAUSE
STARTING TODAY I'M GONNA BE BAD

In the audience, C.C. mouths the words along with Jimmy. Marty watches impassively.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I'M STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE	OOH OOH OOH
I'LL HAVE TO TAKE MYSELF A MEAN RIDE	OOH OOH OOH
THAT SMILE I HAD IS GONE AWAY THOSE THAT STEAL ARE GONNA PAY	
I'M STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE TODAY	STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE TODAY

Jimmy and the Dreamettes hold the note and raise their arms in unison, a gesture of freedom and joy.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

We intercut between the stage and:-

INT. CHRYSLER FACTORY - DAY

PHOTOGRAPHERS snap away at a half-finished Cadillac convertible moving down the assembly line. The Dreamettes are perched in back, while Jimmy pretends to drive.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

EXT. CHRYSLER FACTORY - DAY

Another PR event. Curtis watches proudly as each of the Dreamettes is taken to her own brand-new Cadillac. One turquoise, one cherry red, and one lime green.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

INT. APOLLO THEATRE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Jimmy and the Dreamettes lead the dancers in a triumphant strut.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DETROIT - DAY

Deena steps onto the stage to receive her diploma. Her mother May looks on.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE
I HAD TO STEP	STEP STEP TO THE BED SIDE

In back, Curtis, Effie, C.C., Lorrell and Jimmy whistle and stomp. Other students notice and start to scream.

INT. APOLLO THEATRE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Effie sees Curtis standing in the wings. She fixes him with a wicked smile.

JIMMY
I HAD TO STEP

DREAMETTES
STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DETROIT - DAY

Back to Deena's graduation. A "Hard Day's Night" moment as a near-riot breaks out, hormonal teenagers lunging forward to devour Jimmy Early and the Dreamettes.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I HAD TO STEP

DREAMETTES (V.O.)
STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

INT. APOLLO THEATRE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Effie breaks out of formation and marches into the wings, where she plants a kiss on Curtis' lips.

JIMMY
I HAD TO STEP
I HAD TO STEP

DREAMETTES
STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE
STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE

Effie flounces back onstage and joins Deena and Lorrell for their final pose:

JIMMY
STEPPIN' TO THE BAD SIDE!

DREAMETTES
STEP STEP TO THE BAD SIDE!

The number ends and we FADE TO BLACK. Out of the silence:

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. (V.O.)
...and today, which marks the anniversary
of the Emancipation Proclamation...

INT. COBO HALL - DETROIT - DAY (EXISTING FOOTAGE)

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. speaks at a civil rights demonstration held on June 23, 1963.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
...we are reminded that a hundred years
later, the Negro in the United States of
America is still not free.

EXT. WOODWARD AVENUE - DETROIT - DAY (EXISTING FOOTAGE)

King and various CIVIC LEADERS lead a dramatic procession, thousands of marchers heading toward the riverfront. One man holds a placard: 1863-1963 -- TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. (V.O.)
The goal of universal equality, freedom,
and prosperity is far from won. But
there is progress. There is hope.

(MORE)

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. (V.O.)
 Here in Detroit, we see an urban
 community moving forward toward a future
 of racial justice and civic peace.

The image freezes and becomes a Rainbow Records album cover.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

Curtis plays the album for his sisters, RHONDA and JANICE,
 who are middle-aged and heavy-set.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - DAY

Effie heads down a corridor, a beehive of activity. Curtis'
 Aunt Ethel calls out from the kitchen:

AUNT ETHEL
 I'm making the peach cobbler today,
 Effie...

Effie marches past.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

Effie storms in.

EFFIE
 Curtis!

CURTIS
 Effie. You know my sis...

EFFIE
 (cuts him off)
 Tell me something. Do you think it's
 right to promote an amateur performer
 over a professional?

CURTIS
 I'm not sure what this is about...

EFFIE
 It's about fairness, Curtis.

Rhonda and Janice share a look as Effie bears down on their
 brother.

EFFIE
 It's about people paying their dues.
 Isn't that what you keep telling me? Get
 in line, Effie. Wait your turn.

CURTIS
 Yeah, well I guess...

EFFIE

So why am I sitting here without so much as a 'B' side on a 45 when an amateur like Martin Luther King, Jr. gets his own friggin' album?

Effie's argument is so outrageous that Curtis doesn't know how to respond. She turns to his sisters.

EFFIE

I mean, can he even sing?

A beat, then all three women burst out laughing. Curtis smiles, realizing he's been had. Effie leans down and puts her arms around Curtis.

EFFIE

You're a great man, Curtis. Isn't your brother a great man?

Curtis gives her a real kiss. Rhonda and Janice beam with pride. MUSIC starts under.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - MUSIC ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

C.C. plays a smooth gospel-tinged ballad on the piano. Effie sings from his hand-written lyric sheet. (New song to be written; these are dummy lyrics adapted from a Jill Scott song.)

EFFIE

YOU'RE THE KIND THAT TURNS MY HEAD AND
MAKES ME LOOK
YOU'RE THE KIND THAT STEPPED RIGHT OUT OF
A STORYBOOK

She makes a face, not sure about this last lyric.

EXT. RAINBOW RECORDS - DAY

Various MUSICAL ACTS hang out in the parking lot, waiting to audition. Curtis opens the door and is immediately surrounded.

CURTIS

...I promise we'll get to all of you but right now I need someone who can answer the phone. Anyone here have any secretarial experience?

MICHELLE MORRIS, 22 and pretty, pushes her way through the crowd.

MICHELLE

I can do it.

Curtis glances at her fingers, which sport inch-long synthetic nails. Michelle starts ripping them off.

CURTIS

Okay, okay. You got the job.

Michelle squeals like she's just won the lottery. Curtis laughs.

EFFIE (V.O.)

YOUR VIVACITY MAKES ME WANT
TO COOK MY FAVORITE RECIPE
AND PLACE IT ON YOUR TABLE BABY

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Effie closes her eyes.

EFFIE

YOU'RE INTOXICATING AND SO DIVINE
YOU'RE THE KIND THAT STAYS ON A YOUNG
GIRL'S MIND
AND I KNOW YOU'LL THINK THIS IS CRAZY
BUT BABY I KNOW YOU LOVE ME

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Jolly Jenkins does a combination which Jimmy tries to follow. Curtis watches.

JOLLY

That's better, but it's still a little jerky.

JIMMY

Jerky? Did you say jerky?! Curtis, I swear there's something wrong with my eyes, 'cause this white man looks like he's a brother.

CURTIS

He's just trying to smooth out the edges, Jimmy.

LORRELL

That's right, Jimmy. See it's supposed to look like this...

She does a perfect combination -- dips, hand gestures, turn.

LORRELL
...and you're doing this.

She does a wildly exaggerated jungle dance that even gets Jimmy laughing.

JIMMY
Well on you it all looks black. Black
and mighty fine.

He grabs Lorrell, who hardly resists.

JIMMY
When's your birthday, baby? Tell Jimmy,
when do you finally come of age?

LORRELL
Next month.

JIMMY
Well Jimmy's gonna have a real nice
present waiting for you.

He wraps her in his arms. Curtis slips away.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Effie is lost in the song.

EFFIE
YOU'RE THE KIND THAT LOVES MY MIND AND
CURLS MY TOES
YOU'RE THE KIND THAT LOVES MY MIND AND
FEEDS MY SOUL

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - WARDROBE ROOM - DAY

Deena steps out of a dressing room in a long tight gown that flares at the knees, her beanpole figure filled out with hip pads and padded bra. Curtis stares, surprised at how beautiful she has become.

EFFIE (V.O.)
AND I LOVE IT BABY
YOUR INTELLECT AND UTTER RESPECT
MAKES ME WANNA GROW AND BE MY BEST
AND I KNOW YOU LOVE ME BABY

Deena sees him watching in the mirror. She holds his gaze, then turns, letting him see more.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Curtis passes the open door. He stops when he hears Effie's amazing voice, then steps inside to listen.

EFFIE
YOUR SENSE OF SELF AND SILLINESS
MAKES THE HARDEST THINGS THE SIMPLEST
AND I LOOK BUT I DON'T TOUCH

Effie looks up, sees Curtis. She moves across the room, singing directly to him.

EFFIE
BABY I KNOW YOU LOVE ME AND YOUR LOVE IS
WONDERFUL
YOU HELP ME FEEL FREE
YOU CAN REST YOUR SHOULDERS AND SLEEP AT
NIGHT
OKAY ALL RIGHT?
CAUSE I KNOW
ALL RIGHT
I KNOW

She ends by taking Curtis' hand.

EFFIE
C.C. wrote it for me.

C.C.
What do you think, Curtis?

CURTIS
It's got a good hook but it's still too
gospel. We need songs for Saturday
night, not Sunday morning.

EFFIE
If we fix it, can we put it in the show?

CURTIS
First things first. I have to get Jimmy
booked into Miami. Even if we have to
buy our own hotel.

EFFIE
But you promised I wouldn't spend my life
singing back-up!

He glances out the window. In the parking lot, Marty jumps
out of his car and slams the door.

CURTIS

And you won't, baby. You think I'm going to let a voice like yours go to waste? You just have to trust me.

EFFIE

Can we talk about it more tonight?

CURTIS

Sure. Tonight.

EFFIE

All night?

Curtis kisses Effie, then leaves. Effie turns to C.C.

EFFIE

ALL RIGHT.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - DAY

Marty moves down the hall toward Curtis.

MARTY

Boy, you a real snake! A cheap, second-rate hustler, nothing but a street-corner con artist!

CURTIS

Look, Marty, whatever this is about, let's take it into my office...

MARTY

I'm away for a week and you're cancelling dates behind my back?! I spent six months setting up that tour for Jimmy!

CURTIS

Jimmy's too big for that Chitlin circuit shit. Marty, listen to me. I think I can get him booked into the Eden Roc in Miami Beach.

MARTY

Miami? You really are drifting out there, chump! You couldn't even get Sammy Davis Jr. in there. That place is so white, they don't even let our boys park the cars.

CURTIS

I already got him an audition.

Marty is taken aback by this news.

MARTY

Luck, man. Hustler's luck.

CURTIS

And Miami's just the beginning. There's no reason Jimmy can't be playing the Copa, the Americana, even television.

MARTY

I been in this business too many years to listen to some hot shot talking bullshit!

CURTIS

Not bullshit, change. I'm talking change. Look around you, man. I believe in time, and it's now! But Jimmy needs a new act. Something classier, with a catchier sound.

MARTY

That'll go down better with a white audience.

The shouting brings Effie, C.C. and some of the others into the hall.

CURTIS

That will put him where he should be, making the kind of money he should be making. Jimmy's on the pop charts now. He's hot. We can do this for him.

MARTY

We? We got to do nothing! Jimmy's mine. So back off, Curtis. Jimmy's mine.

Jimmy stands in a doorway behind Marty.

JIMMY

Jimmy don't belong to no one but Jimmy.

MARTY

Are you defending this car salesman, Jimmy? Can't you see he's using you?

JIMMY

Ain't nobody usin' Jimmy! Nobody!

MARTY

Who you think you talking to, baby?

Curtis hangs back as the argument heats up.

MARTY

This is Marty. The man who found you singing for pennies when you were ten years old.

JIMMY

Yeah, well, Marty...it's a different time now. And a different Jimmy.

MARTY

You want him, brother? You got him. I'm through.

He pushes past Jimmy, who takes his arm.

JIMMY

Now look...

MARTY

You can't have it all, baby.

JIMMY

Please, Marty. I didn't mean...I don't want you to go.

MARTY

I love you, Jimmy. But you can't have it all.

He pulls away and walks out.

CURTIS

Let's get back to work.

Through a window, we see Marty put on his hat and climb into his old Plymouth. Jimmy looks stricken. Lorrell tries to comfort him.

SANDY PRICE (V.O.)

Excuse me sir, what is your nationality?
I know, it's a big word.

A sprinkling of laughter carries us to:

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - LOBBY - MIAMI BEACH - NIGHT

The last word in mid-century kitsch and glamour. Muzak plays in the lobby as an older COUPLE rushes past a tasteful picture of Jimmy Early & the Dreamettes.

SANDY PRICE (V.O.)
Cuban? You're kidding, right?

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - COBRA ROOM - NIGHT

SANDY PRICE, a short insult comic, moves among the crowd.

SANDY PRICE
I'm a Jew and you're a Cuban. I say this
from the heart: A Negro can move into my
neighborhood, you can't.

The laughs are quick to ripple, largely liquor-induced.
Price points to a chubby overdressed WOMAN.

SANDY PRICE
You gotta be a Jew, lady -- it's 105
degrees in here and you're the only one
with a mink stole. Are you on vacation?
And you're sitting next to the Cuban?
You've taken your shots?

Curtis and C.C. sit at a table in back. They anxiously check
out the sea of white faces. Price moves to an unattractive
OLDER MAN.

SANDY PRICE
Oh my God, look at you. Anyone else hurt
in the accident?

OLDER MAN
(a good sport)
No, sir.

SANDY PRICE
Don't call me sir, you're not a Negro.

C.C. turns to Curtis, who wears a pasted-on smile.

SANDY PRICE
But really, folks, God put us on this
earth to laugh. We're all human beings.
Jew, Gentile, Cuban, Negro, even Irish.
And tonight we're about to make history.
The first Negro headliners ever to play
Miami Beach. Actually it's a very
convenient arrangement. These people can
sing and dance and dust. You just can't
get help like that anymore. So please
join me in welcoming the very talented
Jimmy Early and the Dreamettes!

The band plays a mellow intro, a drastically different sound from anything we've heard before. Jimmy and the Dreamettes stand in silhouette.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
I WANTCHA BABY	I WANT YOU
I NEED YA BABY	I NEED YOU

The lights come up, revealing Jimmy in a white tux, his hair straightened into a Perry Como helmet. With their poofy gowns and bouffant wigs, the Dreamettes look like bridesmaids at a Great Neck wedding.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
OH BABY	BABY
YOU GOT ME ON MY KNEES	GOT ME ON MY KNEES
YOU GOT ME BEGGIN'	
OH BABY BABY BABY BABY	BABY BABY BABY
BABY	
BABY PLEASE	PLEASE

Curtis motions for C.C. to look around. At the next table, a young WHITE COUPLE is kissing. Other couples are holding hands to the romantic music.

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - SUITE - MIAMI BEACH - NIGHT

Lorrell's 18th birthday party. Jimmy kneels and hands her a small box. There is a collective gasp as Lorrell holds up an emerald ring. She and Jimmy fall into a deep kiss.

JIMMY (V.O.)	DREAMETTES (V.O.)
I KNOW YOU DON'T TRUST THE	
WAY I'M FEELING	THE WAY I FEEL
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE STANDING	
OVER THERE	OVER THERE

Everyone turns as Deena makes an entrance in a stunning gown. Both C.C. and Curtis stare.

EFFIE
Curtis!

She steps up, blocking his view.

EFFIE
Is it true you cried the first time you
heard a Billie Holiday record?

CURTIS
Now I wonder who told you that.

Curtis glances over at his sisters Rhonda and Janice, who are sharing a laugh. Effie takes Curtis' hand, turns to C.C.

EFFIE

You know, I just love making this man blush.

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - JIMMY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lorrell and Jimmy in bed, having just made love for the first time. Lorrell is crying. Jimmy comforts her.

JIMMY (V.O.)

BUT DON'T HOLD BACK FROM ME BABY
BELIEVE ME, BELIEVE ME

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - CURTIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Effie is asleep. Curtis stands by the window, staring out at the Atlantic.

JIMMY (V.O.)

I REALLY CARE

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - COBRA ROOM - NIGHT

Another performance. Jimmy smoothly executes Jolly Jenkins' combination while the Dreamettes sway behind him.

JIMMY

I WANTCHA BABY
I NEED YA BABY

DREAMETTES

I WANT YOU
I NEED YOU

Curtis and C.C. sit at a front table now, with a PRODUCER from "American Bandstand," who makes notes on a small pad.

JIMMY

OH BABY BABY
YOU GOT ME ON MY KNEES

DREAMETTES

BABY
GOT ME ON MY KNEES

CURTIS

...of course we can put together a much younger look for "American Bandstand"...

The producer offers a non-committal smile. On stage, Jimmy is starting to heat up.

JIMMY

YOU GOT ME BEGGIN'
OH BABY BABY
BABY BABY PLEASE
OOH OOH!
BABY BABY

DREAMETTES

BABY
BABY
BABY PLEASE
I WANT YOU
I NEED YOU

Jimmy drops the mellow act and does a soul riff, which he drives home with some pelvic thrusts. A white woman turns away, rattled. She and her husband stand noisily.

JIMMY
(oblivious)
OOH OOH!
OOH OOH!

There are a few more walkouts. Curtis signals to Lorrell, who tries to get Jimmy's attention. But the damage is done. The "American Bandstand" producer flips his pad closed.

JIMMY	DREAMETTES
OOH OOH!	BABY BABY BABY
OOH OOH!	BABY BABY BABY
OOH OOH!	BABY BABY BABY
OOH OOH!	BABY BABY BABY

Curtis downs his drink. His gaze moves from Jimmy to Deena, who keeps her cool through all the distractions. He notices that other men in the audience are also staring at her.

INT. EDEN ROC - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Lorrell, Deena and Effie pull off their wigs in the mirror.

LORRELL
I love me some Jimmy, but he's gonna have to stop calling me baby. I'm a woman now.

DEENA
Did you see that man Curtis was sitting with?

LORRELL
Did you hear what I said, Deena? I am a woman now.

DEENA
Lorrell, I know.

LORRELL
What do you mean, you know? Has Jimmy talked?

DEENA
He didn't have to. How could you, Lorrell? You're just a baby.

LORRELL

I am not, Deena! I'm a woman now. I'm eighteen so I'm a woman.

EFFIE

Yeah, she's a mature woman like me. And she loves Jimmy just as much as I love Curtis. It's not wrong if you love someone.

DEENA

Is that all you two can think about?

LORRELL & EFFIE

Yeah.

DEENA

There's no doubt that my mother brought me up better.

LORRELL

Oh, Deena, you're just jealous.

EFFIE

Yeah, let yourself go...just once. It is so wonderful to have somebody to love.

The door opens and C.C. pokes his head in.

C.C.

You ladies decent?

DEENA

Well I am. I can't speak for these two.

C.C. enters with Curtis. Effie gives him a hug.

DEENA

So, Curtis, how'd it go with "American Bandstand?"

CURTIS

Timing's not right.

EFFIE

Well maybe they'll be more interested after we play the Copa.

CURTIS

You're not playing the Copa.

EFFIE

What?

CURTIS

I'm breaking you and Jimmy up.

Lorrell swivels around.

LORRELL

I know what you're doing, Curtis! You're breaking us up because you don't like me with Jimmy! None of you do because you're all jealous! Well, nothing's breaking me and Jimmy up! Nothing!

CURTIS

I'm breaking you up because you're going to Cleveland with your own act.

They fall silent. Stunned.

DEENA

Did you say our own act?

EFFIE

Finally, this is what I've been waiting for. Curtis, I love you!

LORRELL

Honey, my bags are packed. I love me some Jimmy but I don't want to be singing behind him the rest of my life!

CURTIS

Ladies and gentlemen...presenting the Dreams! 'Dreamettes' are little girls. You're women now.

LORRELL

See, Deena? I told you.

CURTIS

We're opening in Cleveland in a month so there'll be a lot of work and a lot of changes.

He leans down behind Lorrell, addresses her in the mirror.

CURTIS

Jolly's going to stage a whole new act and I'm bringing in a vocal arranger. No more home-made harmonies.

Curtis moves on to Deena.

CURTIS

New wigs, the most expensive. And brand new costumes, ones that'll appeal to a younger crowd.

Deena giggles in excitement. Curtis stands behind Effie, puts his hands on her shoulder.

CURTIS

And Effie...Deena's going to sing lead.

EFFIE

Deena's doing what?

CURTIS

Lead.

EFFIE

What do you mean?

She pulls away, stands.

EFFIE

I always sing lead. Tell him, C.C.

C.C.

We're trying something new, Effie.

EFFIE

You knew about this?

C.C.

Curtis and I talked it over. He says it's only temporary.

EFFIE

We finally get the chance to have our own act and Deena's doing lead? She can't sing like I can.

DEENA

She's right, Curtis. I can't. I don't want to do it.

CURTIS

You'll do what I tell you. This is a new sound, with a new look...

EFFIE

New look? Nobody can see her on a record.

CURTIS

The only way we're going to change things is by appealing to kids. And kids today are watching television.

EFFIE

So Deena's going to sing lead because you like the way she looks. Am I ugly to you, Curtis?

CURTIS

Of course not, baby. You know how I feel about you. Don't make this personal.

EFFIE

Well, what am I supposed to do? Deena's beautiful. She's always been beautiful, but I've got the voice, Curtis. You can't put me in back. You just can't.

LORRELL

Effie, you'll be singing back-up with me. What's so wrong with that? Shoot, let Deena do all the work for a change.

Effie moves away from the group.

C.C.

Your voice alone is too special. We need a lighter sound to cross over to the pop charts. It's what we need.

Effie turns away from them.

EFFIE

WHAT ABOUT WHAT I NEED?

C.C.

Curtis says it's the best thing for the group.

EFFIE

WHAT ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR ME?

C.C.

He feels the Dreams can cross over.

EFFIE

WHAT ABOUT HOW I FEEL?

C.C. touches his sister's arm.

C.C.

But when we're famous, I'll write great things for you. Effie, do it for me.

Effie turns back, sings to him:

EFFIE

WHAT ABOUT ME?

(then: to everyone)

WHAT ABOUT ME?

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

The garage door is open, letting in the afternoon sun. C.C. sits at the piano, playing a new song, which he sings directly to Effie.

C.C.

IT'S MORE THAN YOU

IT IS MORE THAN ME

NO MATTER WHAT WE ARE

WE ARE A FAMILY

Curtis moves closer to Effie. She ignores him.

C.C.

THIS DREAM IS FOR ALL OF US

THIS ONE CAN BE REAL

AND YOU CAN'T STOP US NOW

BECAUSE OF HOW YOU FEEL

C.C. points at Deena, who picks up the song.

DEENA

IT'S MORE THAN YOU

IT IS MORE THAN ME

Her tiny voice cracks. C.C. plays it again.

C.C.

IT IS MORE

DEENA

IT IS MORE

She still has trouble holding the note. Effie storms out.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - BATHROOM - DAY

Effie stands over a sink, shaking.

C.C. (V.O.)
 WHATEVER DREAMS WE HAVE
 THEY'RE FOR THE FAMILY

Michelle Morris, the young receptionist, enters. She freezes when she sees Effie.

C.C. (V.O.)
 WE'RE NOT ALONE ANYMORE
 NOW THERE ARE OTHERS THERE

Michelle rushes over and takes hold of Effie, who breaks into sobs.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - KITCHEN - DAY

Aunt Ethel serves a hot family-style meal for the staff. She spoons some peach cobbler into a bowl, which Michelle serves to Effie. She ignores it.

C.C. (V.O.)
 AND THAT DREAM'S BIG ENOUGH
 FOR ALL OF US TO SHARE

Effie stands slowly.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - RECORDING STUDIO - DUSK

Effie has returned for another session, bathed now in a sunset light. C.C. pours out his heart. It's less a song than a personal plea.

C.C.
 SO DON'T THINK YOU'RE GOING
 YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE
 YOU'RE STAYING
 AND TAKING YOUR SHARE
 AND IF YOU GET AFRAID AGAIN
 I'LL BE THERE

Deena sings back-up with Lorrell while Effie remains silent.

C.C., DEENA, LORRELL
 WE ARE A FAMILY
 LIKE A GIANT TREE
 BRANCHING OUT TOWARD THE SKY
 WE ARE A FAMILY
 WE ARE SO MUCH MORE
 THAN JUST YOU AND I

Effie turns. The entire Rainbow family -- Jimmy, Aunt Ethel, Michelle, Wayne, Rhonda and Janice -- have shown up to offer support. They move to surround her.

ALL
WE ARE A FAMILY
LIKE A GIANT TREE

JIMMY
GROWING STRONGER

CURTIS
GROWING WISER

He moves behind her.

ALL
WE ARE GROWING FREE
WE NEED YOU
WE ARE A FAMILY

Effie buries her head in Curtis's shoulder, accepting the new arrangement. We FADE OUT.

MONTAGE

The new act is whipped into shape:

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Jolly Jenkins helps the Dreams perfect what will become their signature moves -- scooping hand gestures and sideways over-the-shoulder glances.

THE DREAMS
(an upbeat version)
WE ARE A FAMILY
LIKE A GIANT TREE
BRANCHING OUT TOWARD THE SKY

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

MUSIC continues under. RUBY BAXTER, a matron from the highest echelon of Detroit black society, instructs the girls in the art of taking a seat.

RUBY
Young ladies always approach the chair at an angle, first touching the seat with the inside leg...

Deena follows instructions exactly.

RUBY
...then putting one foot forward and sliding in gracefully.
(MORE)

RUBY (cont'd)

Next cross the ankles with your feet flat on the floor, making sure that your posterior is precisely three inches from the back of the chair. That's excellent, Miss Jones.

Deena stands, pleased.

RUBY

Your turn, Miss White.

Effie does surprisingly well until she sits down and knocks over the chair.

THE DREAMS (V.O.)

WE ARE A FAMILY

EXT. RAINBOW RECORDS - DAY

The Dreams are taught how to step in and out of a car.

THE DREAMS (V.O.)

WE ARE SO MUCH MORE

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - KITCHEN - DAY

The Dreams are taught proper table manners.

THE DREAMS (V.O.)

THAN JUST YOU AND I

Effie reaches for some fried chicken but Ruby hands her a plate of vegetables.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - WARDROBE ROOM - DAY

The Dreams gush over various costume sketches.

THE DREAMS (V.O.)

WE ARE A FAMILY
LIKE A GIANT TREE

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

REPORTERS snap photos of the Dreams signing multi-year contracts. Curtis stands behind them.

DEENA (V.O.)

GROWING STRONGER
GROWING WISER

On an easel, a blow-up of their debut "MEET THE DREAMS" album cover.

THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 WE ARE GROWING FREE
 WE NEED YOU
 WE ARE A FAMILY

CLEVELAND M.C. (V.O.)
 Ladies and gentlemen, the Crystal Room is
 proud to present the club debut of
 America's newest recording stars, the
 Dreams.

INT. CRYSTAL ROOM - CLEVELAND - NIGHT (1964)

The Dreams emerge in a burst of light, sexy and sophisticated
 in white chiffon gowns.

DEENA
 EVERY MAN HAS HIS OWN SPECIAL DREAM
 AND YOUR DREAM'S JUST ABOUT TO COME TRUE
 LIFE'S NOT AS BAD AS IT MAY SEEM
 IF YOU OPEN YOUR EYES
 TO WHAT'S IN FRONT OF YOU

Deena blossoms in the spotlight, her natural reticence
 transformed into stage charm.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

DEENA
 BOYS, WE'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY, YEAH!

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

DEENA
 BOYS, WE'LL ALWAYS CARE

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS
 DREAM GIRLS WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU

DEENA
 NO NO
 AND ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS DREAM, BABY

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 WE'LL BE THERE

Everyone responds to the joy and energy on the stage,
 especially the teenagers in the audience. Curtis watches
 with a satisfied smile, confident he's finally hit on the
 right formula.

DEENA & THE DREAMS

DREAM

DEENA

DREAM GIRLS WILL HELP YOU THROUGH THE
NIGHT

DEENA & THE DREAMS

DREAM

DEENA

DREAM GIRLS WILL MAKE YOU FEEL ALRIGHT

LORRELL

DREAM GIRLS KEEP YOU DREAMIN' YOUR WHOLE
LIFE THROUGH

EFFIE

YOUR DREAM GIRL COULD MAKE YOUR DREAMS
COME TRUE

The Dreams point at the crowd, then open their hands in a
come-hither gesture.

INT. "AMERICAN BANDSTAND" STUDIO - DAY

The move, which has already become famous, is repeated for
the young, racially mixed studio audience. The kids scream
in delirium.

DEENA & THE DREAMS

WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

DEENA

BOYS WE'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY, YEAH, YEAH,
YEAH

DEENA & THE DREAMS

WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

DEENA

BOYS, WE'LL ALWAYS CARE

DEENA & THE DREAMS

WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS
DREAM GIRLS WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU

DEENA

NO NO
AND ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS DREAM, BABY

DEENA & THE DREAMS

WE'LL BE THERE

A QUICK MONTAGE

covers the Dreams' rapid rise from overnight success to pop culture phenomenon:

INT. "ED SULLIVAN SHOW" STUDIO - NEW YORK - NIGHT

ED SULLIVAN steps onstage to congratulate the Dreams after a live performance.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)

DREAM

DEENA (V.O.)

DREAM GIRLS WILL HELP YOU TO SURVIVE

INT. SAKS FIFTH AVENUE - NEW YORK - DAY

TEENAGERS press their faces to the window of the store, which has been closed to the public. The DREAMS, accompanied by PERSONAL SHOPPERS, wander the aisles.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)

DREAM

DEENA (V.O.)

DREAM GIRLS KEEP YOUR FANTASIES ALIVE

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA SUITE - NEW YORK - DAY

PHOTOGRAPHERS swarm as the Dreams are introduced to the BEATLES.

EFFIE (V.O.)

DREAM GIRLS ALWAYS LOVE YOU AND THEY'LL
BE TRUE

LORRELL (V.O.)

YOUR DREAM GIRL CAN ONLY MAKE LOVE TO YOU

INT. PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO - DAY

The Dreams pose in red chinchilla capes.

DEENA (V.O.)

I'M NOT THE DREAM THAT YOU HAD BEFORE
I'M THE DREAM THAT WILL GIVE YOU
MORE AND MORE

The photo freezes and becomes the cover of TIME magazine. A banner reads: THE BROWN SOUND. In smaller print:

CAN THREE GIRLS FROM DETROIT UNITE A NATION?

INT. MANSION - BALLROOM - DETROIT - NIGHT

The ballroom of Curtis' newly purchased thirty-room mansion. The Dreams perform for a racially mixed crowd which includes BUSINESS and CIVIC LEADERS, including the liberal Democratic mayor, JAMES CAVANAUGH.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

DEENA
BOYS, WE'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY, YEAH, YEAH,
YEAH

DEENA & THE DREAMS
WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

DEENA
BOYS, WE'LL ALWAYS CARE

DEENA & THE DREAMS
WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS
WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS
DREAM GIRLS WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU
ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS DREAM

DEENA
AND BABY, WE'LL BE

DEENA & THE DREAMS
THERE

INT. MANSION - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Curtis gives Deena's mother May the grand tour. (The Dreams' off-screen performance continues under.)

CURTIS
...the house was built by Henry Ford. It has a swimming pool, pub, a private theatre, and this magnificent library, which he designed himself.

At the far end of the room, an older black BUTLER circulates with a tray of canapes.

CURTIS
(leans in)
Of course back then, only time a black man came in here was to serve' da drinks and clean' out da ashtrays.

May offers a frosty smile, immune to his charm.

MAY

Were you always interested in music, Mr. Taylor?

CURTIS

When I was little, there was this lady who used to play stride piano in the apartment next door. I listened to her all the time through the walls, dreaming about the day I could work my 'jo like that.

MAY

So you took lessons?

CURTIS

Oh sure. Lessons, special tutors, you name it. I just didn't have the stuff.

It's a rare moment of candor and it works. May softens.

MAY

Well to tell you the truth -- much as I love my daughter, I've never thought she had much of a voice.

CURTIS

Deena's got something better. A quality. Some secret ingredient that makes her fascinating to men and still appealing to women.

MAY

You make her sound like a product, Mr. Taylor.

Curtis considers this, then breaks out in a grin.

CURTIS

A product. I like that.

(takes her by the arm)

C'mon, let me show you the bowling alley.

INT. MANSION - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The Dreams give it the big finish.

DEENA

ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS DREAM

DEENA & THE DREAMS

ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS DREAM

DEENA
ALL YOU GOT TO DO IS DREAM

DEENA & THE DREAMS
JUST DREAM AND BABY

DEENA
BABY

DEENA & THE DREAMS
WE'LL BE THERE
WE'LL BE THERE
WE'LL BE THERE
WE'LL BE THERE

The crowd whoops and hollers. Mayor Cavanaugh jumps onto the stage to shake Deena's hand.

INT. MANSION - BALLROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Effie stands in a corner, watching fans press around Deena. She slips out of the room. Curtis makes his way to Deena, takes her arm.

CURTIS
If you'll excuse us...

He leads Deena away from the crowd.

INT. MANSION - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Light spills in from the hall as Curtis leads Deena inside. He closes the door, leaving them silhouetted.

CURTIS
DEENA, IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING
ONLY THE BEGINNING
I'M GONNA MAKE YOU THE MOST FAMOUS WOMAN
WHO'S EVER LIVED

At the far end of the room, Effie stands alone in the dark.

CURTIS
IT'S GONNA BE YOU
IT'S GONNA BE YOU
YOUR FACE WILL BE EVERYWHERE
YOUR SMILE WILL BE EVERYWHERE

Effie turns away, catching her dim reflection in a window.

EFFIE
WHAT ABOUT ME?

CURTIS
 THEY LOVE YOU, DEENA
 THEY LOVE YOU, DEENA
 YOU'VE GOT THAT AIR
 THEY KNOW A STAR IS THERE

They kiss. Effie shuts her eyes, her face a mask of pain, as we FADE OUT.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT (1965)

Two white PATROLMEN drive through Paradise Valley, a black neighborhood on Detroit's east side. From their POV, we see a half-dozen MEN standing outside a club.

PATROLMAN
 (into a walkie talkie)
 ...right, we got six Negro males
 loitering down here on Hastings.

We remain inside as the cops step out of the car and approach the men. Two immediately move off but the others hold their ground. An argument ignites quickly and the cops pull out revolvers, ordering the men to face the wall. They refuse.

Neighbors and other club patrons emerge and start screaming at the policemen. Bottles rain down from nearby windows. As the cops retreat to the safety of the cruiser, a brick crashes through the windshield. MUSIC starts under.

EXT. WOODWARD AVENUE - NIGHT

The race riot spreads across the city, a massive urban storm of looting and arson. Federal TROOPS in riot gear move down Woodward Avenue, dodging rocks, bricks and beer cans.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 HEAVY HEAVY
 YOU GOT SO HEAVY BABY
 HEAVY HEAVY
 YOU GOT SO HEAVY ON ME

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - NIGHT

The Dreams record a new single. Curtis sits at the mixing board, trying to ignore the sounds of sirens and occasional gunfire just outside the door.

DEENA
 YOU USED TO BE SO LIGHT AND FREE
 YOU USED TO SMILE JUST LOOKING AT ME
 NOW ALL YOU GIVE IS JEALOUS HATE
 COME ON, BABY, BETTER LOSE SOME WEIGHT

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 HEAVY HEAVY
 YOU GOT SO HEAVY, BABY
 HEAVY HEAVY
 YOU GOT SO HEAVY ON ME

Curtis punches the intercom button with his fist.

CURTIS
 Stop!

He jumps up and moves into the recording booth.

CURTIS
 Effie, you're still too loud.

EFFIE
 I'm trying, Curtis...

CURTIS
 If you won't ease up, I'll do it for you.

He repositions the microphone away from her.

CURTIS
 Now get it right.

Effie bites her lip, humiliated.

DEENA
 Maybe we should come back in the morning.

CURTIS
 This album's a month late already.
 (softens)
 Look, I know you're tired. But it's the
 last cut.

DEENA
 Okay.

Effie sees the tender look that passes between them.

CURTIS
 Let's go again.

WAYNE
 Record "Heavy." Take thirty.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 HEAVY HEAVY
 YOU GOT SO HEAVY, BABY

This time Effie's tenor is so strong that it completely overpowers Deena. She and Lorrell stop singing.

EFFIE
HEAVY HEAVY
YOU GOT SO HEAVY ON

She pulls the microphone closer and holds the last note, aiming it directly at Curtis.

EFFIE
ME!

Effie storms out of the booth and right out of the studio. Driving MUSIC continues under.

CURTIS
Where do you think you're going?

EFFIE
Curtis, you're a liar!

CURTIS
Now you watch it, Effie!

EFFIE
You're sleeping with her! I know you're sleeping with her!

She pushes open the door.

EXT. RAINBOW RECORDS - NIGHT

The air is thick with soot and smoke. In the distance, an entire city block is on fire. YOUNG PEOPLE seem to be dancing in the flames.

CURTIS
Effie, get back in here.

A car approaches, the DRIVER taking random potshots with a handgun. Curtis grabs Effie and pulls her back.

CURTIS
(hands up)
Black-owned business! We're black-owned!

DRIVER
Black Power, brother!

The car passes. Effie collapses against Curtis.

EFFIE
I don't feel well, Curtis.

She clutches on to him. Smoke wafts over them.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
ABC's Hollywood Palace presents the
incredible Dreams singing their latest
hit.

INT. "HOLLYWOOD PALACE" STUDIO - NIGHT

Deena, Effie and Lorrell emerge out of smoke, a cheesy dry
ice effect.

DEENA
YOU USED TO WANT NOTHING FROM ME
YOU USED TO SAY LET'S BOTH BE FREE

INT. "HOLLYWOOD PALACE" STUDIO - CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT

Curtis sits next to an irritated TV DIRECTOR.

CURTIS
Tighten up on camera two.

TV DIRECTOR
Move in camera two.

DEENA
YOU USED TO DANCE INSTEAD OF WALK
YOU NEVER HAD TO TALK TALK TALK

INT. "HOLLYWOOD PALACE" STUDIO - NIGHT

Effie looks up, sees that every camera is focused on Deena.

DEENA	EFFIE & LORRELL
HEAVY HEAVY	TALK TALK TALK
YOU GOT SO HEAVY BABY	TALK TALK TALK

INT. "HOLLYWOOD PALACE" STUDIO - CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT

The monitors show Effie pushing past Deena and Lorrell and
leaving the set.

DEENA	EFFIE & LORRELL
HEAVY HEAVY	TALK TALK TALK
HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY	HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY HEAVY

CURTIS
Shit.

INT. "HOLLYWOOD PALACE" STUDIO - BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT
 MUSIC continues under as Deena and Lorrell chase after Effie.

DEENA

What right do you have making all these scenes?

EFFIE

What right do you have stealing my dreams?

LORRELL

Effie, stop screaming. Everybody can hear.

EFFIE

I don't care. Let 'em all hear.

(screeches)

LET 'EM ALL HEAR.

LORRELL

Effie, you're going crazy!

DEENA

Effie, what have I done?

EFFIE

You made him love you!

Curtis barrels down the corridor.

CURTIS

Are we at it again? Every day the same old scene!

EFFIE

Don't tell me you don't know what this is about. Deena's taken the lead by takin' my man.

CURTIS

I won't have that kind of talking around. Effie, I'm warning you now -- stop bringing us down.

Effie stops and starts to heave. The others turn away, disgusted and exasperated. Curtis and Deena share a look.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, the Colosseum at Caesar's Palace is proud to present the sensational Deena Jones and the Dreams!

INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - COLOSSEUM - LAS VEGAS - DAY

The final tech rehearsal. Deena and Lorrell emerge through a tinsel curtain onto a vast stage, where a dozen slender mirrors surround them. There is an empty spot where Effie should be.

DEENA & LORRELL

LOVE LOVE ME, BABY
LOVE LOVE ME, CHILD
LOVE LOVE ME, BABY
BABY BABY BABY
YOU'RE DRIVING ME WILD

Curtis climbs onto the thrust.

CURTIS

The mirrors are supposed to turn.

A STAGEHAND emerges from the wings.

CURTIS

They have to dance, man!

C.C. gives notes to the band. The CLUB MANAGER walks through the house, pulling on his tux.

CLUB MANAGER

Mr. Taylor, I think we have a bigger problem on our hands. Do I have to remind you that it's New Year's Eve?

CURTIS

Don't worry, Burt. It's all taken care of.

CLUB MANAGER

People are paying a hundred bucks and they expect to see three girls.

CURTIS

Trust me.

The manager moves out. Deena steps up to Curtis.

DEENA

Curtis, I just don't feel right about this.

CURTIS

(sharp)
It's done.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Effie moves heavily out of an examination room. The DOCTOR washes his hands in the background.

EXT. CAESAR'S PALACE - DUSK

A cab pulls up under a massive neon sign:

NEW YEAR'S EVE 1966
DEENA JONES & THE DREAMS

A WOMAN steps out of the cab. Wayne takes her by the arm.

INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - COLOSSEUM - DUSK

Wayne leads the woman (still unseen) down a backstage corridor.

WAYNE

Wardrobe needs you first.

INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - COLOSSEUM - DUSK

Deena and Lorrell are in costume now, running through the last number. A complicated lighting scheme creates sharply outlined pools of light surrounded by complete darkness.

DEENA & LORRELL

WE ARE A FAMILY
LIKE A GIANT TREE
RISING UP TO THE SKY

Effie steps into a pool of light. She pulls off her coat.

EFFIE

I'm sorry I'm late.

Deena and Lorrell freeze. The band stops playing. C.C. moves toward the stage.

C.C.

Effie.

EFFIE

(squinting into the dark)
C.C., I'm sorry I missed rehearsals but I went to the doctor and I'm feeling much better now.

C.C.

Look, don't try to make it tonight.

EFFIE

What are you talking about? It's New Year's Eve.

C.C. climbs onto the stage.

C.C.

Curtis just stepped out to make a call. Why don't you go up to your room and later he'll come and talk to you.

EFFIE

I said I'm fine.

Effie turns to Deena and Lorrell, realizing something's up.

EFFIE

Excuse me, I have to go get dressed now.

Michelle Morris, the company receptionist, enters through the tinsel curtain. She's wearing Effie's costume, which has been cut down and pinned to her body.

MICHELLE

Oh God, I'm so nervous. Jolly taught me all the steps but these harmonies...

She stops when she sees Effie:

EFFIE

(quietly)

C.C., what's going on? Lorrell, what's going on?

LORRELL

This is none of my business.

C.C.

Effie, Curtis was supposed to...

MUSIC starts under.

EFFIE

...love me. Curtis was supposed to love me.

Curtis enters through a side door, sees Effie. He approaches.

CURTIS

There you are, Effie, we've been looking all over...

He stops when he sees Michelle.

EFFIE

I TURN MY BACK AND FIND MYSELF OUT ON THE
LINE.
YOU COULD HAVE WARNED ME BUT THAT WOULD
HAVE BEEN TOO KIND.

CURTIS

I've been warning you for months to clean
up your act. You've been late, you've
been mean, giving all kinds of bullshit
flack.

EFFIE

THAT'S A LIE. THAT'S A LIE. IT'S
JUST...IT'S JUST I HAVEN'T BEEN FEELING
THAT WELL.

CURTIS

Effie, please! Stop excusing yourself.
You've been late, you've been mean, and
getting fatter all the time.

Effie moves onto the thrust and glares down at him.

EFFIE

NOW YOU'RE LYING! YOU'RE LYING!
I'VE NEVER BEEN SO THIN!
YOU'RE LYIN' YOU'RE LYIN' 'CAUSE YOU'RE
KNOCKING OFF
THAT PIECE WHO THINKS SHE BETTER THAN
EVERYBODY!
SHE AIN'T BETTER THAN ANYBODY!
SHE AIN'T NOTHING BUT COMMON!

Deena advances on Effie, trembling with rage.

DEENA

NOW WHO YOU CALLING COMMON? YOU SELF-
INDULGENT, SELF-ABSORBED NON-
PROFESSIONAL!

EFFIE

YOU! I'M CALLING YOU, I'M CALLING YOU
THAT COMMON PIECE HE'S KNOCKING OFF

Deena is right in Effie's face now.

DEENA

NOW LISTEN TO ME, MISS BLAME-IT-ON-THE-
WORLD. SEE I'VE PUT UP WITH YOU FOR MUCH
TOO LONG.

(MORE)

DEENA (cont'd)
 I HAVE PUT UP WITH YOUR NAGGING, I'VE PUT
 UP WITH YOUR BITCHING, AND ALL YOUR
 SCREAMING, TOO.

Lorrell erupts, a wail of frustration:

LORRELL
 AAAHHH, NOW WHEN ARE YOU TWO GONNA STOP
 ALL THIS FIGHTING?

EFFIE
 Stay out of this, Lorrell. This is
 between Deena and me.

LORRELL
 YEAH? WELL, IT'S BETWEEN ME, TOO!
 I'M AS MUCH A PART OF THIS GROUP AS
 ANYBODY ELSE. AND I'M TIRED, EFFIE, I'M
 TIRED OF ALL THE PROBLEMS YOU'RE MAKING
 US.

EFFIE
 I ALWAYS KNEW YOU TWO WERE TOGETHER!

LORRELL
 WHAT?

EFFIE
 ALWAYS KNEW YOU TWO WERE GANGING UP ON
 ME!

DEENA
 SHE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS CHANGE,
 IT WAS YOU
 IT WAS YOU
 ALWAYS THINKING OF YOU!

Curtis climbs onto the stage and bears down on Effie.

CURTIS
 I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE FROM THE START.

EFFIE
 Trouble?

CURTIS
 YOU WERE REAL BAD TROUBLE FROM THE START.

EFFIE
 Curtis, I'm your woman.

CURTIS
 BUT YOU'RE GETTING OUT NOW!
 I DIDN'T BUILD THIS GROUP
 (MORE)

CURTIS (cont'd)
 TO HAVE YOU TEAR IT APART!
 GO AHEAD AND RANT AND SCREAM AND SHOUT!
 DON'T WORRY, BABY, I'LL BUY YOU OUT.

EFFIE
 There's no money dirty enough to buy me
 out! You remember that, Curtis!

C.C.
 LAY OFF, EFFIE, NOW TAKE THE MONEY AND
 RUN.

Effie whirls around.

EFFIE
 You're in this with them C.C.?

C.C.
 COOL IT, EFFIE, THIS TIME YOU KNOW WHAT
 YOU'VE DONE.

EFFIE
 So they've bought your black ass too?

C.C.
 I SAID COOL IT, EFFIE. THIS TIME YOU'VE
 GONE TOO FAR.

EFFIE
 Oh I can go further. I can go further.

MICHELLE
 I DON'T WANT TO STAY AROUND THIS
 I'M NEW IN THIS BUSINESS.
 THIS IS BETWEEN ALL OF YOU
 THIS IS NONE OF MY AFFAIR.

She starts off but Effie takes her arm.

EFFIE
 YEAH? WELL, IT'S BETWEEN YOU TOO NOW,
 SISTER.
 THIS SNOW JOB IS AS MUCH YOUR SIN.
 LOOK AT ME!

She swings Michelle around and grabs her face.

EFFIE
 LOOK AT ME!
 HOW MUCH DID YOU PUT OUT TO GET IN?

Michelle shoves her away.

MICHELLE
 NOW YOU WATCH YOUR MOUTH
 WATCH YOUR MOUTH, MISS EFFIE WHITE.
 'CAUSE I DON'T TAKE THAT TALK FROM NO
 SECOND-RATE DIVA
 WHO CAN'T SUSTAIN.

EFFIE
 I'M NOT FEELING WELL. I'VE GOT PAIN.

The mirrors reflect everyone surrounding Effie, seeming to multiply them.

ALL
 EFFIE, WE ALL GOT PAIN!

Curtis motions to the others, who start to leave.

EFFIE
 FOR SEVEN YEARS I'VE SUNG WITH YOU
 I WAS YOUR SISTER.

DEENA, LORRELL
 YOU WERE OUR TROUBLE.

Deena and Lorrell retreat into the darkness.

EFFIE
 AND NOW YOU'RE TELLING ME IT'S ALL OVER.

C.C., MICHELLE
 AND NOW WE'RE TELLING YOU IT'S ALL OVER.

C.C. and Michelle move off, silhouetted against the glitter curtain.

EFFIE
 AND NOW I'M TELLING YOU I AIN'T GOING.

DEENA, LORRELL, C.C., MICHELLE
 IT'S ALL OVER.

EFFIE
 I AIN'T GOING.

DEENA, LORRELL, C.C., MICHELLE
 (just voices now)
 IT'S ALL OVER.

Effie is alone with Curtis. They stare at each other across the stage.

EFFIE
 AND I AM TELLING I'M NOT GOING
 YOU'RE THE BEST MAN I'LL EVER KNOW
 THERE'S NO WAY I COULD EVER GO
 NO NO THERE'S NO WAY
 NO NO NO NO WAY
 I'M LIVING WITHOUT YOU

Effie moves toward him.

EFFIE
 I'M NOT LIVING WITHOUT YOU
 I DON'T WANT TO BE FREE
 I'M STAYING, I'M STAYING
 AND YOU, AND YOU,
 YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME
 YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME

She reaches out to him. Curtis turns away, embarrassed for her.

EFFIE
 AND I AM TELLING I'M NOT GOING
 EVEN THOUGH THE ROUGH TIMES ARE SHOWING
 THERE'S NO WAY, THERE'S NO WAY

Effie tenderly runs her hands across his shoulders.

EFFIE
 WE'RE PART OF THE SAME PLACE
 WE'RE PART OF THE SAME TIME
 WE BOTH SHARE THE SAME BLOOD
 WE BOTH HAVE THE SAME MIND

Effie moves in front of Curtis, caressing his cheek, his lips, his hair.

EFFIE
 AND TIME AND TIME
 WE'VE HAD SO MUCH TO SHARE
 I'M NOT WAKING UP TOMORROW MORNING
 AND FINDING THAT THERE'S NOBODY THERE

She obliterates the idea with a sweep of her hand. Curtis breaks free.

EFFIE
 DARLING, THERE'S NO WAY
 NO NO NO NO WAY
 I'M LIVING WITHOUT YOU
 YOU SEE
 THERE'S JUST NO WAY, THERE'S NO WAY

Curtis tries to escape but Effie blocks his way.

EFFIE
PLEASE DON'T GO AWAY FROM ME
STAY WITH ME, STAY WITH ME
STAY STAY AND HOLD ME
STAY STAY AND HOLD ME

She clutches on to him, begging.

EFFIE
PLEASE STAY AND HOLD ME, MR. MAN
TRY IT, MISTER, TRY IT, MISTER
I KNOW I KNOW I KNOW YOU CAN

Curtis pulls Effie up from her knees. She tries to kiss him but he recoils. He rushes off the stage and down into the house.

EFFIE
TEAR DOWN THE MOUNTAIN
YELL, SCREAM, AND SHOUT
YOU CAN SAY WHAT YOU WANT,
I'M NOT WALKING OUT

Effie hurls out the words. Curtis is nothing more than a silhouette moving through the darkness.

EFFIE
STOP ALL THE RIVERS
PUSH, STRIKE, AND KILL
I'M NOT GONNA LEAVE YOU
THERE'S NO WAY I WILL

Curtis stops in back and turns. On stage, Effie is doubled over in pain.

EFFIE
AND I AM TELLING YOU I'M NOT GOING
YOU'RE THE BEST MAN I'LL EVER KNOW
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD EVER EVER GO
NO NO THERE'S NO WAY
NO NO NO NO WAY
I'M LIVING WITHOUT YOU

Curtis can't watch anymore. He slips out the back door.

EFFIE
I'M NOT LIVING WITHOUT YOU
I DON'T WANT TO BE FREE
I'M STAYING, I'M STAYING

Effie points into the dark. Not just at Curtis -- she's singing to the world now.

EFFIE

AND YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU
 YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME
 YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME
 OOOH, LOVE ME
 OOOH, LOVE ME
 LOVE ME
 LOVE ME
 LOVE ME
 YOU'RE GONNA LOVE

Effie gulps for air, summoning the power for her final anguished and defiant note:

EFFIE

ME

She holds out her hand and the audience answers her, cheering in the darkness. The mirrors surrounding Effie turn, her reflections multiplying. As the music builds:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Colosseum at Caesar's Palace is proud to present the sensational Deena Jones and the Dreams.

Effie's image in the rotating mirrors is replaced by Deena, Lorrell, and Michelle, who have just burst through the tinsel curtain. Lights flood the stage, spilling onto the cheering black-tie crowd.

DEENA & THE DREAMS

LOVE LOVE ME, BABY
 LOVE LOVE ME, CHILD
 LOVE LOVE ME, BABY
 BABY BABY BABY
 YOU'RE DRIVING ME WILD

We move in on the Dreams, and FADE OUT.

PROMO FILM (1973)

A photograph of Deena and Lorrell at age twelve dissolves into an early snapshot of Michelle. A slightly psychedelic TITLE is superimposed over: I'M SOMEBODY!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It all started on the streets of Detroit,
where three girls named Deena, Lorrell,
and Michelle dreamed about one day
becoming singing stars.

A clip from a network variety special shows Deena and the
Dreams recreating their ghetto roots on a cardboard inner
city set. They wear Afro wigs and tattered jeans, set off by
inch-long eyelashes and rhinestone belts.

DEENA & THE DREAMS

I'M SOMEBODY SOMEBODY
AND NOBODY GONNA HOLD ME DOWN
NO, NOBODY NOBODY
NOBODY'S GONNA HOLD ME DOWN

News footage shows the Dreams being introduced to Tricia
Nixon...Henry Kissinger...a very mod Princess Margaret and
Lord Snowden.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)

I'M SOMEBODY!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

During their triumphant rise to
international stardom, they've played
everywhere from the White House to
Buckingham Palace.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)

SOMEBODY!

We switch to professionally produced film of Deena and Curtis
cutting their wedding cake.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But for Deena Jones, none of these events
compare to the day she became Mrs. Curtis
Taylor, Jr.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

A screening room. Deena watches the film alone, smoking
nervously.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In just a few short years, Mr. Taylor has
built his music empire into the most
successful Afro-American business in the
United States.

Stills introduce Curtis' stable of recording stars.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

His assembly line of talent has produced such sensations as the Imaginations, DeeDee Dawson, the Family Funk, Jimmy Early, Maxene Reed, and of course the phenomenal Campbell Connection.

Deena smiles at a brief clip of TEDDY CAMPBELL, the 10-year-old singing and dancing lead of the family group.

THE CAMPBELL CONNECTION

GET READY, BABY
'CAUSE HERE THEY COME NOW
DO DO DO DO
DO DO DO DO
GOT TO BE GOOD TIMES

The film switches to interview footage with Curtis.

CURTIS

I think the reason our music is so popular is that it crosses all boundaries. Pro-war and anti-war, young and old, black and white -- everybody can relate to the Rainbow sound.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So what's next for the king and queen of the music scene?

News footage shows Detroit's Mayor Cavanaugh handing them the 'WOODWARD & COLUMBIA' street sign that stood outside the Fox Theatre.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Although they'll never forget the city that created them, the Rainbow family now calls Beverly Hills home.

Curtis and Deena stand on their massive Beverly Hills lawn, where they have replanted the Detroit street sign.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Deena Jones has conquered the worlds of music, stage, and television...

TV appearances include Deena tap-dancing to "Singing in the Rain"... Deena playing Raggedy Ann in a comedy sketch with Tim Conway ...and an animated Saturday morning series featuring cartoon versions of Deena and the Dreams.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...and soon she hopes to take on her biggest challenge yet: movies.

A series of costume sketches depict Deena as Cleopatra.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hollywood screenwriters are currently working on the epic, untold story of Cleopatra's early years, all set to the music of today.

In the screening room, Deena shoots out of her seat. She motions to the projectionist, as Curtis reappears onscreen behind her.

CURTIS

There have been a lot of movies made about Cleopatra but nobody's ever told the real story. People don't realize that Cleopatra was African. She was the most glamorous woman of her time, which is why this is such a perfect part for Deena.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Gilded ceilings, Waterford chandeliers, and furniture fit for a royal court. Deena walks past a giant oil painting of Curtis dressed as a country squire. A white BODYGUARD follows at a discreet distance.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - L.A. HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A high-rise overlooking the brownish ether of the Sunset Strip. Curtis presides, flanked by C.C. and Wayne. The other EXECUTIVES are mostly white, including ADAM BROOKS -- late 20s, pony-tailed -- who runs the movie division.

BROOKS

...now I saved the bad news for last, Curtis.

(a nervous chuckle)

Warners passed on "Cleo."

CURTIS

Why?

BROOKS

Too period. And they're not convinced Deena's got the chops.

Curtis starts to work his jaw, always a bad sign.

CURTIS
Who does that leave?

BROOKS
I'm chasing some munitions money out of
Israel. And there's always Dino.

He lets the grim thought fall off into silence. The others
look down, steeling themselves.

CURTIS
Do the thing, kid.

BROOKS
Sorry, boss?

CURTIS
You know. The thing.

Brooks reddens. He stands and starts hopping on one foot,
making ape noises. Curtis laughs, and soon everyone but C.C.
and Wayne joins in.

CURTIS
Fuck it. We'll finance the movie
ourselves.

Silence descends again. An ASSISTANT enters.

WAYNE
I just don't know how we're gonna swing
that. You're spreading yourself too thin
as it is. The music side is really
starting to suffer, brother.

CURTIS
Music runs itself.

C.C.
Those days are over, Curtis. Just
putting Deena's name on a record doesn't
make it a hit anymore. And our acts are
dying on the road, especially Jimmy. He
needs new material.

The assistant whispers in Curtis' ear.

CURTIS
Jimmy needs to sober up.
(stands)
(MORE)

CURTIS (cont'd)

Wayne, start pitching the networks on an anniversary special. We'll put out a greatest hits tie-in and it'll rake in enough green to make ten movies -- and still pay for all you useless motherfuckers too.

He steps out of the room. The others exchange looks.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - L.A. HEADQUARTERS - CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

Deena stares at a wall of pictures, mostly of herself. Curtis grabs her from behind.

CURTIS

How's my favorite wife?

Deena pulls away. She faces Curtis, her voice trembling.

DEENA

Curtis, I'm not sure how to tell you this.

CURTIS

Just say it, baby.

DEENA

I know how much time you've invested in this movie, but...I can't play that part.

CURTIS

Of course you can, you'll be great. You're just nervous.

DEENA

No, Curtis -- I don't want to.

CURTIS

I promised I'd make you a movie star and "Cleo" will get you there. She was a queen, Deena, the ruler of a nation. Not some hooker, or junkie, or maid.

DEENA

Oh I know, Curtis, it's an important story...

CURTIS

And it's more than you, Deena. Think of all the beautiful black woman who aren't even born yet. One day they're going to say, I can play any part I want to. Look at Deena Jones, she did it.

DEENA

But it's ridiculous, Curtis. She's sixteen years old for most of the movie.

CURTIS

You'll always be sixteen in my eyes.

DEENA

Maybe that's the problem. Maybe you just don't see me for who I really am.

She moves over to the window.

CURTIS

WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU
I SAID "OH MY."
I SAID "OH MY, THAT'S A DREAM.
THAT'S MY DREAM."
I NEEDED A DREAM WHEN IT ALL SEEMED TO GO
BAD
THEN I FOUND YOU
AND I HAVE HAD THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DREAMS
ANY MAN'S EVER HAD

He opens the vertical blinds, revealing Deena's face looming over the Strip.

CURTIS

WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU
I SAID "OH MY. OH MY, THAT'S MY DREAM.
THAT'S MY DREAM."
I NEEDED A DREAM TO MAKE ME STRONG
YOU WERE THE ONLY REASON
I'VE HAD TO GO ON

He takes her hand.

CURTIS

YOU ARE MY DREAM
ALL THE THINGS I NEVER KNEW
YOU ARE MY DREAM
WHO COULD BELIEVE THEY COULD EVER COME
TRUE?
AND WHO WOULD BELIEVE
THE WORLD WOULD BELIEVE IN MY DREAMS TOO?

Deena faces him, melting under his adoring gaze.

CURTIS

WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU
I SAID, "OH, MY. OH, MY!
THAT'S MY DREAM."

They kiss, completely in love.

CURTIS
What would make you happy, Deena?

DEENA
You know.

CURTIS
There's plenty of time for that.

DEENA
(whispering)
Let me have your child, Curtis. Please
...let me have your child.

Curtis holds her but doesn't answer. We CUT TO:

A GIRL'S FACE

Seven years old, pretty. And bored right now.

EFFIE (O.S.)
Magic, read your book.

INT. WELFARE OFFICE - DETROIT - DAY

MAGIC sits in a corner. She's as different from her mother as you can imagine -- thin, quiet, and bookish.

MAGIC
I'm done.

EFFIE
Then read it again.

Effie turns back to her CASE WORKER, a career civil servant.

CASE WORKER
Did you look for work this week, Miss White?

EFFIE
Mister, you can keep asking me that question but the answer's always going to be the same. The only thing I know how to do is sing, and since nobody's beating down my door to do that -- no, I did not look for a job this week.

CASE WORKER
Have you considered asking the girl's father for help?

EFFIE

Magic doesn't have a father. Now are you going to give me my check or do I have to speak to your supervisor?

The man begins processing her paperwork. MUSIC starts under. (This is a new song to be written, reminiscent of Marvin Gaye's "What Going On?")

C.C. (V.O.)

MOTHER, MOTHER
THERE'S TOO MANY OF YOU CRYING

INT. C.C.'S HOUSE - L.A. - NIGHT

A bungalow in Hollywood. C.C. plays the song on an upright. Michelle turns pages while Jimmy and Lorrell sit on the sofa. Everyone looks older but Jimmy is the most transformed, wearing a colorful African robe and a tiki around his neck.

C.C.

BROTHER, BROTHER, BROTHER
THERE'S FAR TOO MANY OF YOU DYING.
YOU KNOW WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY
TO BRING SOME LOVIN' HERE TODAY -- YA

C.C. leans over and kisses Michelle.

INT. BUS - DETROIT - DAY

A crowded bus. A YOUNG MOTHER tries to squeeze past Effie with her baby. Effie sees Magic turn away in embarrassment.

C.C. (V.O.)

FATHER, FATHER, FATHER
WE DON'T NEED TO ESCALATE
YOU SEE, WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER
FOR ONLY LOVE CAN CONQUER HATE

The bus turns onto Woodward Avenue, now a bombed-out wasteland.

MAGIC

Are you ever going to work again?

Effie doesn't answer. She gazes out at Curtis' old Cadillac dealership, where half the letters are missing from the 'SOUND OF TOMORROW' sign. The windows are boarded up and the building is pockmarked with grime and graffiti.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - L.A. - NIGHT

A funky basement studio. Lorrell and Michelle sing back-up for Jimmy, whose performance reveals new emotional depths.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS
 YOU KNOW WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY
 TO BRING SOME LOVIN' HERE TODAY
 PICKET LINES AND PICKET SIGNS
 DON'T PUNISH ME WITH BRUTALITY
 TALK TO ME, SO YOU CAN SEE
 OH, WHAT'S GOING ON
 WHAT'S GOING ON
 YEAH, WHAT'S GOING ON
 AH, WHAT'S GOING ON

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - WHITE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Magic is asleep on the sofa, her face lit by a table-top Christmas tree. Effie's father Ronald holds up a card from C.C.

EFFIE
 Send it back.

RONALD
 There's cash in here.

EFFIE
 You spend it.

RONALD
 Effie White, you are a mule.

Effie leans down to wake up Magic.

EFFIE
 C'mon, baby. Time to go home.

RONALD
 Just as stubborn as your mother.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 IN THE MEANTIME
 RIGHT ON BABY
 RIGHT ON, RIGHT ON

INT. EFFIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Effie puts Magic to bed. She moves into the kitchen, reaches for a bottle of Southern Comfort.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 FATHER, FATHER
 EVERYBODY THINKS WE'RE WRONG
 OH, BUT WHO ARE THEY TO JUDGE US

Effie puts back the bottle, takes a soda instead.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 SIMPLY BECAUSE OUR HAIR IS LONG
 OH, YOU KNOW WE GOT TO FIND A WAY
 TO BRING SOME UNDERSTANDING HERE TODAY

Effie sits, coming to a decision.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - L.A. - NIGHT

Jimmy closes his eyes.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS
 OH
 PICKET LINES AND PICKET SIGNS
 DON'T PUNISH ME WITH BRUTALITY

INT. MARTY MADISON'S OFFICE - DETROIT - DAY

Effie waits in a rundown reception area. The door swings open and Marty emerges. Completely grey now, old beyond his years. He looks at Effie. The pain etched deep on both their faces.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 COME ON TALK TO ME
 SO YOU CAN SEE
 WHAT'S GOING ON
 YEAH, WHAT'S GOING ON

MARTY
 It's nice to see you, Effie.

Marty takes Effie by the arm and escorts her inside.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A lavish company Christmas party. We see lots of transplants from Detroit, including Wayne, Rhonda and Janice.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aunt Ethel passes little Teddy Campbell, who stands by himself in the hall.

AUNT ETHEL

Teddy, you get yourself back to the party.

TEDDY

(shy, but firm)

I'm waiting for Deena.

She shakes her head and moves on. Teddy presses his ear to the door.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

A private party inside the bigger party. Curtis and Deena are perched on a settee, listening to a master tape of the new song. C.C. and Michelle hold hands, while Lorrell tries to calm Jimmy, whose leg is flapping wildly.

JIMMY & THE DREAMS

(on tape)

TELL ME, WHAT'S GOING ON

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING ON -- UH

RIGHT ON BABY

RIGHT ON BABY

The song ends. There is a long moment of silence.

CURTIS

It's good, man. It's really good.

C.C.

We thought it'd be better to surprise you, Curtis. That's why we went ahead and recorded it first.

LORRELL

(giddy)

Sort of like a Christmas present.

DEENA

It's so powerful, C.C. I loved it.

JIMMY

I tell you, Curtis, it's exactly what I need right now. Like you always say, brother. A new sound.

CURTIS

Still, it's a message song.

A chill falls over the room.

MICHELLE

It tells the truth. People are angry out there. I'm angry. My brother's over in Vietnam fighting a pointless war and I'm angry about it.

C.C.

That's right, Curtis. Isn't music supposed to express what people are feeling?

CURTIS

No, it's supposed to sell.

(stands)

Trust me, Jimmy, we'll figure out some new material for you. Come on, Deena, there's a guy I want you to meet. He might invest in the movie.

Deena stands, embarrassed.

CURTIS

Oh and lose the duds, brother. It's hurting your image.

Curtis leaves. Deena walks over to Jimmy, who looks crushed.

DEENA

I'm sorry, Jimmy.
(to the others)
I'm sorry.

No one looks at her. She steps into the hallway, where Teddy is waiting. Deena lets out a scream.

TEDDY

Want to hang out?

DEENA

Please, Teddy. Not now.

She heads off and Teddy follows, imitating her walk. We peer into the den through the open door. Jimmy clears a spot on the cocktail table.

LORRELL

Aw, honey, you don't need to be doin' that stuff right now.

We catch a glimpse of Jimmy unwrapping a ball of tinfoil.

C.C.

C'mon, brother, it's Christmas.

He reaches down but Jimmy smacks his hand away.

LORRELL

Well I'm not staying around for this.

She gets up and marches out of the room, followed by Michelle and then C.C.

JIMMY

Hey, man. Close the door.

C.C. pulls the door shut on Jimmy, as we FADE OUT.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DETROIT - DAY (1974)

A neighborhood joint that's seen better days. Marty sits at a table having tea with MAX WASHINGTON, who's owned this place since the dawn of time. A WAITRESS moves through, setting up tables.

MARTY

...yeah, but what about Holiday?

MAX

I had Billie here every winter from '42 to '58. Great voice. Bad tipper.

They chuckle at the old showbiz joke.

MARTY

Well I'll tell you, Effie White is the best singer this town has seen since then.

MAX

Last time she performed, the girl fell apart. And that was years ago.

MARTY

She just lost her confidence for a while. It happens. She's different now.

Max checks his watch with an "Oh, yeah?" look.

MARTY

Max, please. For the old days.

MAX

They're gone, Marty.

He finishes his tea and stands, just as Effie bustles in.

EFFIE

Marty! Sorry, but the baby sitter was late.

MARTY

Effie White, this is Max Washington.

EFFIE

Hi, Max. Marty said you needed a singer.

Max shoots Marty a look.

MARTY

I was just telling Max here that you were serious about working. He knows all about you.

EFFIE

Oh you do, huh? Daddy, you don't know the half. One night after you hire me we'll sit down and I'll tell you how I blew through half a million dollars in two years...

Marty leads Effie up the steps to the stage.

MARTY

Come on, Effie, we don't want to take up too much of the man's time. Carl knows the song.

EFFIE

Carl? What happened to Bernard?

MARTY

He had a job in Evanston.

EFFIE

But I can't sing with someone I don't know.

MARTY

Effie, you've got to.

MAX

Look, Marty, I don't have time.

MARTY

Max, please! Just give me a minute.

He pulls Effie into the wings.

MARTY

Now you listen, Effie White. For four months I've lent you money, I've taken you to every club in this freezing town and I'm telling you that this is it! It's time you stopped making excuses so you don't have to prove anything. You're going to have to start proving it just like the rest of us. I don't know, maybe Curtis was right about you. You want all the privileges with none of the responsibilities.

He moves back onto the stage.

MARTY

Hey, Max, listen, thanks anyway. I'm sorry for wasting your time.

He joins Max, who reaches for his hat.

EFFIE

(to Carl)

Do you know this song?

MAX

I told you I didn't want to see her.

EFFIE

Well, you are, mister. You are.

She nods and Carl starts to play.

EFFIE

LOOK AT ME
LOOK AT ME
I AM CHANGING
TRYING EVERY WAY I CAN
I AM CHANGING
I'LL BE BETTER THAN I AM
I'M TRYING
TO FIND A WAY TO UNDERSTAND
BUT I NEED YOU
I NEED YOU
I NEED A HAND

Effie has grown into her voice, which is even richer and more expressive. The waitress stops working and listens.

EFFIE
 I AM CHANGING
 SEEING EVERYTHING SO CLEAR
 I AM CHANGING
 I'M GONNA START RIGHT NOW RIGHT HERE
 I'M HOPING
 TO WORK IT OUT AND I KNOW THAT I CAN
 BUT I NEED YOU
 I NEED A HAND

Effie sings directly to Marty.

EFFIE
 ALL OF MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN A FOOL
 WHO SAID I COULD DO IT ALONE
 HOW MANY GOOD FRIENDS HAVE I ALREADY
 LOST?
 HOW MANY DARK NIGHTS HAVE I KNOWN?
 WALKING DOWN THAT WRONG ROAD
 THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD FIND
 ALL THOSE YEARS OF DARKNESS
 COULD MAKE A PERSON BLIND
 BUT NOW I CAN SEE

Marty steals a look at Max, who wears his best poker face.

EFFIE
 I AM CHANGING
 TRYING EVERY WAY I CAN
 I AM CHANGING
 I'LL BE BETTER THAN I AM
 BUT I NEED A FRIEND
 TO HELP ME START ALL OVER AGAIN

Effie shuts her eyes as the song builds.

EFFIE
 OH, THAT WOULD BE JUST FINE
 I KNOW IT'S GONNA WORK OUT THIS TIME
 'CAUSE THIS TIME I AM
 THIS TIME I AM

Effie holds the note an impossibly long time. We move around her to reveal:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DETROIT - NIGHT

A packed house, a few weeks later. Effie is wearing a ruby-colored dress now.

EFFIE
 I AM CHANGING
 I'LL GET MY LIFE TOGETHER NOW
 I AM CHANGING
 YES! I KNOW HOW

Effie strides across the stage, joyous, her confidence restored. Marty glances over at Max, who is swaying like a man half his age.

EFFIE
 I'M GONNA START AGAIN
 I'M GONNA LEAVE MY PAST BEHIND
 I'LL CHANGE MY LIFE
 I'LL MAKE A VOW
 AND NOTHING'S GONNA STOP ME NOW

The crowd goes wild. MUSIC continues under.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Tonight, live from the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, it's "The Sound of Tomorrow," celebrating ten years of hits from Rainbow Records!

INT. PASADENA CIVIC AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

The Campbell Connection explodes onto the stage, sporting Afros, bell bottoms and platform boots. Teddy has a huge voice and an astonishing stage presence.

TEDDY CAMPBELL
 DON'T BE SO HARD ON US
 DON'T BE SO HARD ON US
 DO DO DO DO
 DO DO DO DO
 LOOK AT ALL WE'VE DONE
 TO GET BACK WHAT WE HAD
 AND ALL WE GOT TO DO

Teddy's moves combine Jimmy's dips and bumps with Deena's pursed lips and outstretched arms, turning them into something all his own.

THE CAMPBELL CONNECTION
 IS TAKE SOME TIME OFF AND HAVE SOME FUN
 PARTY PARTY
 THERE'S GOT TO BE GOOD TIMES
 PARTY PARTY
 WE'RE GONNA SHOW YOU HOW

There are half a dozen cameras recording the performance, including one trained on Curtis and Deena, who sit in a box like monarchs on their throne. Deena wears an ermine cape and Curtis is in black tie.

TEDDY & THE CAMPBELL CONNECTION

PARTY PARTY
 WE'RE GONNA GIVE YOU GOOD TIMES
 GET READY, BABY
 'CAUSE HERE THEY COME NOW
 GET READY, BABY
 'CAUSE HERE THEY COME NOW
 DO DO DO DO

Teddy's phenomenal footwork gets the audience in a frenzy.

INT. JIMMY'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The song continues on the backstage intercom. Jimmy rests his head against the make-up mirror. Not wasted, but definitely high.

THE CAMPBELL CONNECTION (O.S.)

DO DO DO DO
 GOT TO BE GOOD TIMES

LORRELL

Come on, Jimmy. Drink this.

Lorrell forces him to drink some coffee.

STAGEHAND (O.S.)

Five minutes, Mr. Early.

Jimmy lets out a grunt.

LORRELL

I thought you were going to stay clean tonight, baby. You know how important this is.

JIMMY

I was doin' just fine, honey, and then Melba started in on me. You never take me anywhere, Jimmy! I'm sick of staying home every night! And then before I know it, she's coming down the stairs in her party dress!

LORRELL

Wait...wait a minute. Are you telling me your wife is out there? Right now?

JIMMY
What could I do, baby?

She puts down the coffee.

JIMMY
That's why I needed to relax.

Lorrell reaches for a champagne bottle and pours him a glass.

LORRELL
Here, sugar. Have a drink.

JIMMY
Oh thanks, Lorrell.

LORRELL
You know, it's our anniversary too.
Don't you remember? Let me give you a
kiss for each year. One, two, three,
four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight
years...of unmarried life.

JIMMY
Baby, don't tell me we're gonna start
again.

The music from the intercom expands as counterpoint to the
argument, which is half spoken, half sung:

LORRELL
BUT, JIMMY, WE GOTTA WORK THIS PROBLEM
OUT!

JIMMY
BABY, I CAN'T TAKE IT IF YOU START AGAIN
NOW WHY ARE YOU COMPLAINING
ALWAYS PICKING ALWAYS BLAMING?
I GOT PROBLEMS WITH CURTIS
I GOT PROBLEMS WITH SONGS
MY WHOLE CAREER IS GOING WRONG,
YES, IT IS.

He reaches for the champagne, pours another glass.

LORRELL
YOU'RE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT YOUR CAREER
TONIGHT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT US

JIMMY
BABY, IT'S YOUR JIMMY
BABY, YOUR JIMMY
AND JIMMY'S NEVER LIED

He pulls Lorrell onto his lap.

JIMMY
I NEVER LIED TO YOU
BABY, THAT WAS SOMETHING YOU ALREADY KNEW

LORRELL
YEAH, I KNEW YOU WERE MARRIED WHEN I MET
YOU
TOLD MYSELF THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GOT TO BE
BUT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS
THE BEST OF MY LIFE
MY LIFE HAS BECOME A CATASTROPHE

She jumps up, paces the small room like a caged animal.

LORRELL
'CAUSE SITTIN' HOME WAITIN' ON A
MAN WHO AIN'T COMING
AIN'T NO PARTY
NO NO NO
I'M SITTIN' HERE WISHIN'
I HAD SOME AMBITION TO GET ME THROUGH
THAT WASN'T ALWAYS YOU

She runs her hands over Jimmy, pressing his face to her chest.

LORRELL
DON'T I GIVE YOU GOOD LOVIN', SWEET DADDY
EVERY TIME SHE LETS YOU SLIP AWAY?
YOU'RE GONNA TELL HER NOW
THAT YOU LOVE ME
AND YOU'RE GONNA TELL HER TODAY!

She pushes herself away from him.

LORRELL
'CAUSE SITTIN' HOME WAITING ON A MAN WHO
AIN'T COMING
AIN'T NO PARTY
NO NO NO
I'M SITTING THERE WISHIN'
I HAD SOME AMBITION
TO GET ME THROUGH
THAT WASN'T ALWAYS YOU

She grabs the champagne bottle and collapses into a folding chair.

LORRELL
WHERE'S MY PARTY?
WHERE IS MY PARTY?
(MORE)

LORRELL (cont'd)

WHERE'S THE CHAMPAGNE?
 WHERE'S THE FLOWERS?
 I'M ALL DRESSED UP IN MY PARTY DRESS
 AND I BEEN SITTING HERE FOR HOURS
 THIS AIN'T NO PARTY

JIMMY

Lorrell.

She pops up like a spring.

LORRELL

NO NO NO
 IT AIN'T NO PARTY

JIMMY

Would you calm down?

Jimmy stands. Lorrell advances, pointing at him.

LORRELL

NOW AFTER ALL THESE YEARS
 IT DON'T TAKE A SMARTY
 TO REALIZE THAT EVEN THOUGH MY MAN THROWS
 CONFETTI IN MY FACE
 IT STILL DON'T MAKE IT NO PARTY!
 THIS AIN'T NO PARTY

Jimmy reaches out to calm her.

LORRELL

Don't you touch me!
 IT AIN'T NO PARTY
 I'M GETTING TO THE POINT OF NEEDING
 SOMETHING TO SOOTHE ME
 YOU CAN'T FIND THE TIME
 I KNOW YOU GOT THAT OTHER WOMAN IN YOUR
 LIFE
 WELL, MAYBE IT'S ABOUT TIME I PUT ANOTHER
 MAN IN MINE
 'CAUSE YOU AIN'T MAKING ME SATISFIED.

JIMMY

NOW, BABY, I LOVE YOU
 YOU KNOW THAT I DO
 BUT, BABY, TELL ME WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO
 DO?

LORRELL

MARRY ME!
 Oh, Jimmy, please, marry me!

JIMMY
 BABY, I'M MARRIED
 THAT'S SOMETHING YOU KNOW
 THERE'S JUST NO WAY SHE'LL LET ME GO

Lorrell is drained. She drops into Jimmy's chair.

LORRELL
 YOU GOT TO TELL HER YOU WANT TO BE FREE
 JIMMY, TELL THAT WOMAN YOU'RE IN LOVE
 WITH ME

JIMMY
 I'LL TELL HER, LORRELL

LORRELL
 When?

Jimmy wraps his arms around her.

JIMMY
 JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME
 AND, BABY, WE'LL WORK IT OUT JUST FINE

She catches his eye in the mirror and knows he's lying.

LORRELL
 THE TIME HAS GONE AND NOW I SEE
 JIMMY, JIMMY YOU DON'T LOVE ME

STAGEHAND (V.O.)
 One minute, Mr. Early.

Jimmy turns Lorrell so that she's facing him.

JIMMY
 I LOVE YOU, LORRELL
 YOU KNOW THAT I DO

He kisses her. She closes her eyes, wanting to believe him.

JIMMY
 BUT RIGHT NOW, I GOT A SHOW TO DO

Lorrell opens her eyes and sees Jimmy backing up to the door.

JIMMY
 I GOT A SHOW TO DO

Jimmy steps out.

M.C. (V.O.)
 And now, the mellow sounds of Jimmy
 Early...

Lorrell stares at the empty hallway.

INT. PASADENA CIVIC AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

The audience applauds politely as the spotlight expands,
 revealing Jimmy in white tie and tails.

JIMMY
 I MEANT YOU NO HARM
 I NEVER MEANT TO MAKE YOU CRY
 YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE
 I'VE EVER LOVED IN MY LIFE

Jimmy wife, MELBA, middle-aged and stern, sits in the second
 row. She nods along to the lyrics, sure that Jimmy is
 singing to her.

JIMMY
 AND THOUGH IT'S HARD FOR ME TO SHOW IT
 I'VE GOT TO LET YOU KNOW IT
 THAT DARLING, I LOVE YOU MORE EACH DAY
 MY WORDS GOT IN MY WAY
 BUT I MEANT YOU NO HARM

Jimmy sees Lorrell standing in the wings. He moves toward
 her.

JIMMY
 AND I WOULD DIE
 IF YOU EVER SAID GOODBYE
 I LOVE YOU
 I LOVE YOU

Jimmy turns back to the audience, focusing again on his wife.

JIMMY
 BUT I MEANT YOU NO HARM
 I NEVER MEANT TO MAKE YOU CRY
 YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE
 I'LL EVER LOVE IN MY LIFE

He steps forward, waves for the band to stop.

JIMMY
 I can't do it. I can't sing no more sad
 songs. Curtis, my man, this is your
 night, and like little Teddy said,
 there's got to be some good times!

The audience laughs and applauds. Curtis waves at Jimmy, playing along for the cameras.

JIMMY

(to the bandleader)

Brian, look, baby, I'm gonna give you a count-off. And the rest of you guys, you come in when I tell you. Okay? One, two, three four. Bass man.

The bass joins in.

JIMMY

Gettin' warm in here! Saxophones -- one, two, one, two -- hit me!

The saxophones follow.

INT. TV CONTROL TRAILER - NIGHT

On the monitors, we see that the cameras are struggling to keep up with Jimmy.

JIMMY

Yeah! Trumpets -- one, two, three -- hit me!

The TECHNICAL DIRECTOR frantically checks a cue sheet.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

What the fuck is he doing?

INT. PASADENA CIVIC AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

The trumpets join in. Jimmy launches into a gospel-tinged rap number that is astonishingly ahead of its time.

JIMMY

One, two, three, four!
 HEY YA, CURLEY
 LET'S RAP WITH JIMMY EARLY
 I GOT A HOME IN THE HILLS
 I GOT A MERCEDES BENZ
 I GOT A HOT SWIMMING POOL
 I GOT LOTS OF FRIENDS
 I GOT CLOTHES BY THE ACRE
 I GOT CREDIT TO SPARE
 AND I COULD WAKE UP TOMORROW
 AND FIND NOBODY THERE
 JIMMY WANT MORE JIMMY WANT MORE
 JIMMY WANT JIMMY WANT JIMMY WANT
 HIT ME!

Jimmy pulls off his coat and tosses it away. He skips across the stage, a move from the old days. The audience is unbelievably turned on, clapping and bouncing in their seats.

JIMMY
 JIMMY WANT A RIB
 JIMMY WANT A STEAK
 JIMMY WANT A PIECE OF YOUR CHOCOLATE CAKE
 BUT MORE THAN ALL THAT
 JIMMY WANTS A BREAK
 'CAUSE JIMMY GOT SOUL JIMMY GOT SOUL
 JIMMY GOT JIMMY GOT JIMMY GOT SOUL

Jimmy's moves are wild and untamed. He rips off his tie, then tugs at his shirt. Curtis stands with a forced smile and slips out of the box.

INT. PASADENA CIVIC AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Curtis moves into the wings, where Lorrell is watching. Jimmy turns and starts unbuttoning his trousers.

CURTIS
 What's he doing?

JIMMY
 I CAN'T DO ROCK
 I CAN'T DO ROLL

INT. PASADENA CIVIC AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT

Jimmy turns to the audience.

JIMMY
 ALL I CAN DO IS SHOW MY SOUL
 JIMMY GOT SOUL JIMMY GOT SOUL
 JIMMY GOT JIMMY GOT JIMMY GOT

He pulls out his shirttails and in so doing drops his pants. The audience whoops. Mabel gasps.

INT. TV CONTROL TRAILER - NIGHT

The technical director yells into his headset.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
 Take it out.

On each of the monitors, a 'PLEASE STAND BY' card comes up.

INT. PASADENA CIVIC AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Jimmy does an exaggerated double-take. He pulls up his pants and takes his bows, then hops off-stage.

JIMMY
HEY YA, GUYS, DO YOU LIKE MY SHOW?

CURTIS
That's it, brother. You gotta go.

The band is still jamming and Jimmy is still rapping:

JIMMY
OH, CURTIS, MY MAN
I WAS KIDDING AROUND
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT
THAT MY PANTS CAME DOWN
MAN, I HADDA DO SOMETHING TO WAKE THEM UP
I LIKE JOHNNY MATHIS
BUT I CAN'T DO THAT STUFF

CURTIS
That's because, Jimmy, you don't trust
the music. And even worse, Jimmy, you
don't trust the words.

JIMMY
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT, CURTIS
THAT SHIT'S FOR THE BIRDS!
'CAUSE JIMMY GOT SOUL, JIMMY GOT SOUL
JIMMY GOT JIMMY GOT JIMMY GOT SOUL
Lorrell, tell the man if you can.

LORRELL
JIMMY WAS DOIN' JUST WHAT HE FELT
AND JIMMY JUST FELT LIKE DROPPIN' HIS
BELT

JIMMY
Tell why, Lorrell. Tell why, Lorrell.

LORRELL
JIMMY KEEPS BEGGIN' YOU, CURTIS
FOR SOMETHING MORE
BUT YOU KEEP IGNORIN' JIMMY
MAKE HIM INSECURE
YOU PUT HIM IN TAILS
YOU MAKE HIS ACT COOL
EVERY TIME HE FAILS
YOU CALL HIM A FOOL
OF COURSE HE'S CONFUSED
IT DON'T TAKE A WHIZ
(MORE)

LORRELL (cont'd)

TO KNOW
THAT ONLY A DESPERATE MAN
WOULD DROP HIS PANTS IN SHOW BIZ!

She wheels around and glares at Jimmy.

JIMMY

Thank you, Lorrell. You told it like it
is.

LORRELL

Yeah, that ain't all I got to say to you,
honey.

CURTIS

Jimmy, my man, we're through!

JIMMY

WHATCHA MEAN, WHATCHA MEAN WE'RE THROUGH?

CURTIS

Damn it, brother, you don't understand.
Your time has passed.

JIMMY

I GOT SOUL, MAN. YOU CAN'T KILL A MAN
WITH SOUL.

CURTIS

Come on, Jimmy. Let's try to end as
friends.

He puts out his hand. Jimmy doesn't take it.

CURTIS

If you ever need help, just give me a
call.

JIMMY

Don't you worry, Curtis, 'cause I don't
crawl. I'm an original! I don't beg.

His voice is a sandpaper rasp now:

JIMMY

'CAUSE I WAS HERE BEFORE YOU AND I'LL BE
HERE LONG AFTER YOU ALL!

CURTIS

Come on, Lorrell.

JIMMY

Wait a minute, baby. I need you now.

She nods to Curtis, who leaves.

JIMMY
Baby, I love you.

Lorrell steps up to Jimmy and gives him a deep kiss.

LORRELL
AND LORRELL LOVES JIMMY
LORRELL LOVES JIMMY
LORRELL LOVES JIMMY, IT'S TRUE
BUT LORRELL AND JIMMY ARE THROUGH

She pulls away from him.

LORRELL
I got a show to do, remember?
OH, BABY, I GOT A SHOW TO DO

She struts off, passing Melba as she enters through the stage door. The two women stare at each other. Lorrell leaves, then Melba turns on her heels, disgusted.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, please take your
seats. We're back live in twenty
seconds.

Jimmy is jostled by DANCERS getting into position for their entrance. An ominous CHORD plays under.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ten, nine, eight, seven, six...

A SECURITY GUARD steps up to Jimmy.

SECURITY GUARD
Time to go, Mr. Early.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
...five, four, three, two, one.

We move in on Jimmy, who remains immobile.

INT. TIFFANY'S - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY (1975)

Deena signs for a purchase. She hands the box to her bodyguard.

DEENA
Put this in the car, Mike. I'll be right
out.

Deena heads for the back. She walks past the bathroom and slips out the rear entrance.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Deena wears sunglasses and keeps her head down as she moves through the lobby. She steps onto an elevator and stares ahead, avoiding eye contact.

WALSH (V.O.)

You are an incredibly beautiful woman.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - SUITE - DAY (LATER)

Deena sips from a cup of tea and smiles demurely.

DEENA

Well thank you, Sam.

SAM WALSH paces the sitting room. He's a successful film director from the Hal Ashby school -- beads, shades, bandana wrapped around stringy grey hair.

WALSH

No, I mean -- you're too beautiful. This movie's about three grifters heading to Vegas for one last score. When Dawn goes down on that truck driver, you have to smell her desperation. It's gotta be ugly, man.

DEENA

I know, that's what I love about her. There's no pretense, no fucking bullshit.

Walsh turns to his producing partner, JERRY HARRIS, who grins.

HARRIS

Wow. America's sweetheart has a potty mouth.

Deena picks up her tea, knowing she's probably overplayed the street thing.

DEENA

Of course if I were to become involved, we'd have to do some work on the part.

HARRIS

What do you mean? Sam spent a year on this script.

DEENA

And it's good. But she's not real yet.
To start with, what kind of name is Dawn?
I've met a lot of sisters in my life, and
not one of them was called Dawn.

WALSH

(stung, also intrigued)
Maybe we can get together when Al's back
in town. Run through some scenes, play
around with it.

DEENA

I'd like that.

This is a chess match and Deena's just gained some ground.

HARRIS

What about Cleopatra? I heard Curtis is
still trying to pull it together.

DEENA

My husband has his hands full with the
music side right now. That's why I
didn't want to bother him with our
meeting here today.

This is a lie and everyone agrees to ignore it.

HARRIS

But let's say we offer you this part.
Will Curtis make you available?

DEENA

That won't be a problem, Jerry.

She takes another sip of tea. MUSIC starts under, a driving
dance beat.

DEENA (V.O.)

STEP STEP
STEP STEP

THE DREAMS (V.O.)

STEP ON OVER
STEP ON OVER

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - L.A. HEADQUARTERS - RECORDING STUDIO -
DAY

Deena, Lorrell, and Michelle lay down a vocal track, over a
pre-recorded bed with a thumping bass line and soupy
synthesized strings. The sound doesn't have a name yet but
we recognize it as early disco.

DEENA
 STEP STEP STEP ON OVER
 STEP STEP STEP ON OVER
 WANTING YOU
 NEEDING YOU

THE DREAMS
 STEP ON OVER STEP ON OVER
 STEP ON OVER STEP ON OVER
 WANTING YOU
 NEEDING YOU

From the Dreams' POV, we see Curtis and C.C. having a raging argument in the control booth.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 WANTING YOU
 NEEDING YOU
 TOUCHING YOU
 LOVING YOU

Deena stops singing and pulls off her headphones.

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - L.A. HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY
 (CONTINUOUS)

C.C. bursts out of the studio, followed by Curtis.

C.C.
 ...I didn't think it was possible,
 Curtis. I didn't think you could squeeze
 even more of the soul out of my music.

CURTIS
 I just made it more danceable.

C.C.
 What about the lyrics? That rhythm takes
 all the feeling out of the song.

CURTIS
 This is what you've been asking for -- a
 totally new sound, bigger than rock or
 R & B ever was. People are getting ready
 to dance again, and when they do, they'll
 be dancing to our music!

C.C.
 Your music, Curtis. It has nothing to do
 with me anymore.

He heads toward the reception area.

CURTIS
 Aw, come on, brother.

He reaches out for C.C., who brushes him off.

C.C.
Kiss my ass. Brother.

C.C. stops when he sees people emerging from offices, gathering in the halls. Some are crying, a few hug.

CURTIS
Now what the fuck is wrong?

There is a sharp scream. Curtis and C.C. turn to see Lorrell, hopping up and down in anguish. Deena tries to hold her.

TV NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
...the body was found down here at the El Dorado hotel on Main Street.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Local news footage shows a covered stretcher being carried out of an SRO hotel.

TV NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
Police say that Mr. Early had been dead for over a day, the apparent victim of a heroin overdose.

C.C. and Michelle stare blankly at the TV. Curtis downs a glass of Scotch. He looks stricken.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Deena cradles Lorrell in her arms.

LORRELL
She won't even let me see him, Deena.
She won't let me see my Jimmy.

Deena strokes her hair. MUSIC starts under, an instrumental version of "Family."

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

On TV, the REPORTER stands outside a house in Beverly Hills.

TV NEWS REPORTER
...plans are being made to fly the body back to Detroit, where there will be a private burial.

CURTIS
What a thing. A terrible, terrible thing.

C.C.
(gets up)
Well...thanks for the drink.

MICHELLE
Tell Lorrell I'll stop by tomorrow.

CURTIS
C.C.
(takes his hand)
No matter what troubles we've had --
there's nothing as important as family.
You're my family, brother.

C.C.
It's over, Curtis.

He withdraws his hand.

C.C.
I'm sorry.

Curtis is shaken, tries to cover.

CURTIS
Jimmy did this to himself. You know
that.

C.C. has nothing to say. He and Michelle start out.

CURTIS
Michelle.

She turns back.

CURTIS
C.C. can leave. You can't.

Michelle acknowledges the point with an exaggerated bow.
Curtis moves to the window. He stares out at the old street
sign from Detroit.

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Magic takes the steps two at a time.

MAGIC
What's a wake?

EFFIE
It's when friends get together and share
their love for someone.

MAGIC
Mama, why are you so slow?

EFFIE
'Cause I'm old, baby.

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Effie stops to catch her breath while Magic runs down the hall. She knocks on her grandfather's door and it swings open. C.C. looks down at her.

MAGIC
Who are you?

Effie sees C.C. She turns back into the stairwell.

C.C.
Effie!

He starts after her, while Ronald leads Magic inside.

MAGIC
Who is that man?

RONALD
That's your uncle, little girl.

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

C.C. runs into the stairwell.

C.C.
Effie!

The door slams a few flights down, Effie exiting to the lobby. C.C. curses under his breath.

INT. BAR - DETROIT - NIGHT

A neighborhood dive where local MUSICIANS, some of them ancient, have gathered to jam and trade stories about Jimmy. Effie sits at a front table with Marty. An elderly JAZZ SINGER (think Shirley Horn) stands at the piano.

JAZZ SINGER
...he wasn't Thunder Early then, just Little Jimmy. How old was that boy, Marty?

MARTY
I don't know. Prob'ly twelve.

JAZZ SINGER

Well he had the hands of a fella twice that age and he wasn't shy about using them.

Everyone laughs.

MARTY

Oh yeah, Jimmy was a real little shit. A real little shit.

Marty tears up. Effie puts her arm around him. The singer nods to the PIANO PLAYER, who starts to play.

JAZZ SINGER

I MISS YOU, OLD FRIEND
CAN I HOLD YOU?
AND THOUGH IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME,
OLD FRIEND
DO YOU MIND?

The BASS PLAYER joins in. In the back of the bar, C.C. stands by himself.

INT. BAR - BASEMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

Effie heads up the stairs, where C.C. is waiting. Effie stops, trapped.

EFFIE

What gives you the nerve, C.C.? Coming here after all these years.

C.C.

Effie, there's nothing I can say.

He moves one step down.

C.C.

Except I was young. I made a mistake.

EFFIE

Yeah, and what's so different about you now?

C.C.

I grew up.

EFFIE

I'm telling you, C.C., I won't be used. Not by you, not by anybody. Never again.

EFFIE
I'VE WAITED SO LONG TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT
TO ME

She reaches out to him.

EFFIE
SAY IT AGAIN! SAY IT AGAIN!

He takes her hand.

C.C.
EFFIE, SING MY SONG THE WAY IT SHOULD BE!

They finally embrace. The music shifts to a minor key.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DETROIT - DAY

Effie's voice is pure honey.

EFFIE
YOU WANT ALL MY LOVE AND MY DEVOTION
YOU WANT MY LOVING SOUL RIGHT ON THE LINE
I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT I COULD LOVE YOU
FOREVER
THE ONLY TROUBLE IS YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE
THE TIME

In the control booth, C.C. runs the mixing board.

EFFIE
YOU'VE GOT ONE NIGHT ONLY
ONE NIGHT ONLY
THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO SPARE
ONE NIGHT ONLY
LET'S NOT PRETEND TO CARE

EXT. GRAVESITE - DETROIT - DAY

Jimmy is laid to rest on a nasty winter morning. Marty, Effie, and C.C. stand far back in the crowd.

EFFIE (V.O.)
ONE NIGHT ONLY
ONE NIGHT ONLY
COME ON, BIG BABY, COME ON

INT. BREWSTER PROJECTS - WHITE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Magic sits next to the stereo, listening intently to a cassette recording of the song. Effie, C.C., and Ronald watch her.

C.C.
I promised I'd write you a hit song,
Effie. Let me do it for you now.

EFFIE
I don't need you.

C.C.
No, Effie. I need you.

He moves down the stairs.

C.C.
EFFIE, IT'S BEEN ALL THESE YEARS
AND YOU HAVEN'T EVEN SAID "HELLO"
I'M YOUR BROTHER, EFFIE
SAY "HELLO"

Effie turns away.

C.C.
COME ON, EFFIE, YOU KNOW I'M SORRY
I SHOULD HAVE COME BEFORE TODAY
HOLD ME
IS ALL I HAVE TO SAY

EFFIE
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE BABY

C.C.
BUT I'M TRYING TO CHANGE

She faces him.

EFFIE
AND SO AM I

C.C. & EFFIE
IT'S TAKEN ALL THESE YEARS TO BE FREE

EFFIE
OF LOVING THAT MAN

C.C.
FINDING MYSELF

EFFIE & C.C.
AND GETTING A HOLD OF THE ANGER IN ME

C.C.
EFFIE, I HAVE A SONG AND ONLY YOU CAN
SING IT THE WAY IT SHOULD BE

EFFIE (V.O.)
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 WE ONLY HAVE TILL DAWN
 IN THE MORNING THIS FEELING WILL BE GONE
 IT HAS NO CHANCE GOING ON

Magic sneaks a look at her mother. Trying to make the connection between the person she lives with and the voice she's hearing.

INT. RADIO STATION - DETROIT - NIGHT

A local black DEEJAY slips the cassette into a tape deck.

EFFIE (V.O.)
 SOMETHING SO RIGHT
 HAS GOT NO CHANCE TO LIVE

INT. RECORD STORE - DETROIT - DAY

Effie signs albums. The line isn't as long as it was in the Jimmy Early days, but the fans are devoted.

EFFIE (V.O.)
 SO LET'S FORGET ABOUT CHANCES
 IT'S ONE NIGHT I WILL GIVE

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DETROIT - NIGHT

Effie wows the crowd at Max Washington's club.

EFFIE
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 YOU'LL BE THE ONLY ONE
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO RUN

Max directs C.C.'s attention to a table in back, where Nicky Silvano sits. He's the gangster who helped Curtis push "Steppin' to the Bad Side."

EFFIE
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO SAY
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 WORDS GET IN THE WAY

INT. RAINBOW RECORDS - L.A. HEADQUARTERS - CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

Curtis and Wayne listen to a cassette of the song.

EFFIE (V.O.)

ONE NIGHT ONLY

ONE NIGHT

ONE NIGHT

ONE NIGHT

Curtis turns it off.

CURTIS

He thinks he's making a fool of me.

WAYNE

Nicky says the record's only got local distribution, black stations mostly. But it's starting to take off.

CURTIS

If C.C. wrote it, don't I own it?

WAYNE

Technically yes, at least until we settle his contract. I'll get the lawyers to draw up a letter and demand half the royalties.

CURTIS

No. This is the perfect song to launch the new sound. I want to re-record it with Deena and the girls.

WAYNE

Come on, Curtis, their record's already moving.

CURTIS

So what? If I can buy a hit, I can buy a flop.

WAYNE

(uncomfortable)

Hey, man. This is Effie's big break. There are other songs.

CURTIS

This is business, Wayne. Now get on it.

Wayne starts out. MUSIC starts under, a simple bell tone.

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK

Strings glisten and glide as we come upon a narrow sliver of light in the darkness. Deena moans with sexual pleasure.

DEENA (O.S.)
 MMMMMM MMMMMMM
 MMMMMM MMMMMMM

We move down the spotlight to discover Deena standing with her back to us, on an otherwise dark stage.

DEENA
 AAAAH...YES
 AAAAH...BABY

The strings expand as two other pin spots find Lorrell and Michelle. The thumping beat speeds up.

DEENA	THE DREAMS
YOU'LL GET	ALL MY LOVE
YOU'LL GET	ALL MY LOVE
YOU'LL GET	ALL MY LOVE

There's an enormous sweep of sound and the song explodes. Lights smash on, revealing:

INT. DISCO - NIGHT (1975)

A massive dance club. Deena and the Dreams are on a vast circular drum, elevated above a sea of PEOPLE dancing.

DEENA
 YOU WANT ALL MY LOVE AND MY DEVOTION
 YOU WANT MY LOVING SOUL RIGHT ON THE LINE
 I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT I COULD LOVE YOU
 FOREVER
 THE ONLY TROUBLE IS I REALLY REALLY
 DON'T HAVE THE TIME
 I'VE GOT

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 ONE NIGHT ONLY

It's all here -- the whistles, the rotating disco ball, the (literal) smoke and mirrors. Curtis smiles down from a perch above the dance floor, knowing he's struck show business gold for the second time.

DEENA
 THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SPARE

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 ONE NIGHT ONLY

DEENA
 LET'S NOT PRETEND TO CARE

Deena winks at Lorrell, who is doing her best to look interested.

INT. RADIO STATION - DETROIT - DAY

Nicky Silvano shakes hands with the black DEEJAY we saw earlier.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
ONE NIGHT ONLY
ONE NIGHT ONLY

The Deejay takes Effie's cassette of "One Night Only" from his shelf, replaces it with Deena's.

DEENA (V.O.)
COME ON, BIG BABY, COME ON

The Deejay tosses Effie's cassette in the garbage.

INT. TV STUDIO - STAGE - DAY

Deena and the Dreams are surrounded by MALE DANCERS doing strenuous disco moves.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
ONE NIGHT ONLY

DEENA
WE ONLY HAVE TILL DAWN

THE DREAMS
WE ONLY HAVE TILL DAWN

We PULL BACK to reveal the number playing on a TV set.

INT. EFFIE'S APARTMENT - DETROIT - NIGHT

Effie, C.C., and Marty sit on the sofa, staring at their worst nightmare.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
(on TV)
ONE NIGHT ONLY
ONE NIGHT ONLY

C.C.
I'm so sorry, Effie.

Effie squeezes C.C.'s hand, letting him off the hook. She gets up and moves to the bedroom.

DEENA & THE DREAMS
 (on TV)
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 ONE NIGHT ONLY
 ONE NIGHT ONLY

She closes the door.

INT. CLUBS - NIGHT (VARIOUS)

The disco craze sweeps the country. Black clubs, straight clubs, gay clubs -- everyone is dancing to "One Night Only."

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 ONE NIGHT ONLY COME ON COME ON
 ONE NIGHT ONLY COME ON COME ON

DEENA (V.O.)
 ONE NIGHT

THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 ONE NIGHT
 ONE NIGHT

EXT. HOUSE - MALIBU COLONY - DAY

Jerry Harris leads Deena through his house and onto a rear balcony that overlooks the beach.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 ONE NIGHT ONLY COME ON COME ON
 ONE NIGHT ONLY COME ON COME ON

Sam Walsh stands and introduces Deena to the MALE STAR of the movie, a Jon Voight type.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 ONE NIGHT ONLY COME ON COME ON
 ONE NIGHT ONLY COME ON COME ON

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Ancient Egypt is coming to life on a Hollywood soundstage. Curtis and the PRODUCTION DESIGNER walk through the partially-built set of Cleopatra's bedroom.

DEENA & THE DREAMS (V.O.)
 COME ON
 COME ON
 COME ON
 COME ON

Curtis knocks on a massive column made of papier-mache. He's a kid in a candy store.

INT. DISCO - NIGHT

The circular platform rises as the number reaches its climax. Gold confetti rains down on Deena, Lorrell and Michelle.

DEENA & THE DREAMS

COME ON COME ON
 COME ON COME ON
 COME ON COME ON
 COME ON COME ON
 COME ON COME ON
 COME ON COME ON

They raise their arms and hold the pose. We CUT TO:

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A BUTLER pops a bottle of champagne. He fills Deena's glass.

CURTIS

...so Cecil Osborne finally committed.
 He's soaking me for a million bucks but
 it's worth it, the man's got two Oscars
 and he's great with actors.

The butler fills Curtis' glass, then glides off.

CURTIS

This is your first film and you're going
 to have the best, sweetheart.

Deena doesn't speak. She sips her drink.

CURTIS

We start pre-recording next week.
 Background tracks first, so you'll have
 plenty of time to rehearse...

Deena fidgets with her napkin.

CURTIS

What's wrong?

DEENA

Nothing, Curtis. I guess I never really
 thought it was going to happen.

CURTIS

You made it happen. You're the queen of
 disco, baby.

A weak smile from Deena.

DEENA

Maybe I'm just tired.

CURTIS

Of course you're tired, it's been a crazy week. Interviews, the photo shoot for "Vogue." And all those trips out to the beach.

Deena looks up sharply.

CURTIS

Do you think I'm stupid? When were you going to tell me?

DEENA

I'm sorry, Curtis, I should have talked to you. It's just...it's such a great part, and exactly the kind of movie I should be making.

Now it's Curtis' turn to be silent.

DEENA

I know you love Cleopatra, but it's just not right. Singing R&B on a barge floating down the Nile -- people are going to laugh at me. At us.

She leans over and takes his hand.

DEENA

Nobody knows music the way you do, Curtis. It's in your blood. But movies are different.

CURTIS

Do you know why I chose you to sing lead, Deena? Because your voice has no personality. No depth. Just what I put in there.

This was meant to sting, and it does.

CURTIS

No one understands you the way I do, baby.

DEENA

They offered me the part and I'm taking it. There's nothing you can do to stop me.

CURTIS

Oh yeah? Read your contract. Baby, you can't even take a shit unless I say it's okay.

DEENA

I'll get myself a lawyer.

CURTIS

You think those honkies are gonna wait around while you take me to court? Forget it, Deena. It's over.

DEENA

(reaches across)

Please, I'm begging you now, Curtis. Let me do this movie.

Curtis pushes back his chair and stands.

CURTIS

I'm sorry, honey, but I won't let those men handle you. They don't know how.

He moves behind her.

CURTIS

And don't worry, Deena. I forgive you.

Deena closes her eyes. Curtis puts his hands on her shoulders and squeezes.

CURTIS

You're always going to have Curtis to look out for you.

Curtis leaves. Deena stares down in misery.

DEENA (V.O.)

BUT I WANT TO WAKE UP
TO WHAT I'M DREAMING OF

INT. CLEOPATRA'S PALACE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Deena languishes in bed, surrounded by ATTENDANTS. She is in full Cleopatra regalia and has never looked more beautiful. (This is a new song, to be written. These temporary lyrics are by Bill Russell, from "Sideshow.")

DEENA
 DREAMING THAT SOME DAY
 SOME NIGHT
 I COULD FIND LOVE
 WILL I FIND LOVE?

CECIL OSBORNE, the movie's distinguished British director, rides the crane with the CAMERAMAN, while Curtis paces below.

DEENA
 LIKE A FISH PLUCKED FROM THE OCEAN
 TOSSED INTO A FOREIGN STREAM
 ALWAYS KNEW THAT I WAS DIFFERENT
 OFTEN FLED INTO A DREAM

The crane swoops toward Deena as she moves to the balcony. Kitschy as it is, the scene is also affecting, because the song is powerful and Deena's performance is heartfelt.

DEENA
 I IGNORED THE RAGING CURRENTS
 RIGHT AGAINST THE TIDE I SWAM

Deena stares out at a rear projection of the shimmering Nile. Curtis inches closer to get a better view.

DEENA
 BUT I FLOATED WITH THE QUESTION
 WHO WILL LOVE ME AS I AM?

CURTIS
 Okay, cut. Cut it!

A bell rings and the playback stops. Deena turns, exasperated. Osborne smiles frostily at Curtis as the grips guide the crane down.

OSBORNE
 You know, darling, that's why we directors have a union. So tasteless producers can't call cut.

CURTIS
 You must be blind, man! Her eyes were open too wide. Deena, honey, you're doing that thing with your eyes again.

DEENA
 It's called acting, Curtis.

Osborne whispers something catty to the cameraman, who laughs.

There is a commotion at the far end of the soundstage, where several PEOPLE stand in the open doorway, arguing with a SECURITY GUARD.

CURTIS

What is going on over there?

Wayne steps up to Curtis and whispers something. Curtis squints, sees Effie, C.C. and Marty silhouetted against the harsh daylight.

CURTIS

How the fuck did they get in here?

WAYNE

Someone called in a pass.

Deena stands behind a column in Cleopatra's bedroom, watching intently.

CURTIS

Well what do they want?

More whispering from Wayne. A look of concern crosses Curtis' face.

CURTIS

Okay, let's break.

1ST A.D.

That's lunch, everyone.

INT. STUDIO OFFICE BUILDING - CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

C.C. and Marty sit with DAVID MORGAN, a lawyer from a downtown white shoe firm. Curtis breezes in with Wayne.

CURTIS

Well, Marty, it's been a long time.

MARTY

Yeah, Curtis, and you're still a second-class snake.

CURTIS

Gentlemen, please. Give me a break.

C.C.

Why, Curtis, did you give Effie one?
I could kill you for what you did to her.

CURTIS

I assume there's a reason you all barged in here. Other than insulting me, I mean.

MORGAN

Mr. Taylor, we're planning to go to the federal authorities.

CURTIS

Who's this cat?

MORGAN

I'm David Morgan.

C.C.

Our lawyer.

MARTY

Yeah, we're going to tell the feds how you killed Effie's record. Payola, man.

Curtis listens with a patient smile.

C.C.

Remember, Curtis, I've witnessed it all. The whole dirty operation, going back to "Steppin' to the Bad Side."

CURTIS

You're talking through your hat, baby. And who's gonna listen to you anyway? Just another guy who's pissed off 'cause he got fired.

Morgan opens his briefcase and starts placing documents on the desk.

MORGAN

We have documented evidence, Mr. Taylor. Falsified sales orders to cheat investors out of their profits. Goods-quality merchandise listed as cut-outs to disguise the fraud.

Curtis and Wayne exchange looks as the papers keeps coming.

MORGAN

Mob-backed loans. And a payola operation stretching back eleven years.

CURTIS

Who gave you these?

C.C.
You are going to jail, mister.

CURTIS
Yeah, well I won't be the only one.

C.C.
You don't understand, Curtis. I don't mind going to jail if it means they put you away for a long time.

Curtis flips through the documents, getting more agitated.

CURTIS
I want to know where you got these papers. They're kept in a private place, no one has access to them except me and my...

A look of dread as he starts piecing it together.

CURTIS
Shit. Where's Effie?

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DEENA'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Effie lets out a laugh. She is sitting opposite Deena in her plush dressing suite.

EFFIE
Don't you wish you could see his face right about now?

Deena's smile is sadder.

DEENA
BELIEVE ME, EFFIE, UNTIL C.C. CALLED
I NEVER KNEW
WHAT CURTIS WAS DOING TO YOU
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY WE HAD TO MEET LIKE
THIS
HOW MANY TIMES, OH, EFFIE, HOW MANY TIMES
I WANTED TO SEE YOU
YOU WERE MY CLOSEST FRIEND

EFFIE
AND YOU WERE MINE

DEENA
I KEPT WONDERING, HOW IS EFFIE?

EFFIE
I KEPT WONDERING, HOW IS DEENA?

DEENA

I KEPT WONDERING, HOW IS SHE FEELING? IS SHE ALL RIGHT?

EFFIE

I KEPT WONDERING, HOW SHE IS FEELING? IS SHE ALL RIGHT?

DEENA

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

EFFIE

I'M SO HAPPY, DEENA
I HAVE A CHILD WHO LOVES ME
AND THAT HELPED PULL ME THROUGH
OH, I'M SO HAPPY
I'M HAPPY. ARE YOU?

DEENA

You have a baby?

EFFIE

Well, Magic's not exactly a baby any more. She's almost nine now.

This hits Deena like a body blow.

EFFIE

I wanted to tell you, Deena. At the time, I really wanted to tell you.

The door swings open and Curtis enters.

EFFIE

Deena, he doesn't know.

CURTIS

Well, Effie. I see you're just as much trouble as you ever were.

EFFIE

(stands)

Hello, Curtis. You haven't changed much either.

She pushes past him.

EFFIE

Actually, I take it back.

(turns)

You're looking a little heavy, baby. You could lose some weight.

Effie steps out. Curtis turns to Deena.

CURTIS
I'll deal with you later.

Deena ignores him, still reeling from Effie's news.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

C.C., Marty, and Morgan wait outside the dressing room.
Effie joins them, followed by Curtis.

EFFIE
So?

MORGAN
Mr. Taylor agrees that it's in everyone's
interest to try to ameliorate the
situation without resorting to draconian
measures.

EFFIE
Say it in English.

C.C.
Nationwide distribution for our version
of "One Night Only," Effie.

MARTY
On our own label.

MORGAN
And all of it paid for by Mr. Taylor
himself.

EFFIE
Hmmm. Sounds good.

C.C.
And remember, Curtis. If our
negotiations fail, you're going straight
to jail.

EFFIE
That's right, Curtis. You stopped me
once, but you're never gonna stop me
again.
(sings)
'CAUSE THIS TIME, EFFIE WHITE'S GONNA
WIN!

She turns on her heels and leaves, followed by the others.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DEENA'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Curtis opens the door, steps inside.

CURTIS

Deena!

The room is empty. The Cleopatra wig lies on the floor.

EXT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

There is a taxicab waiting in the circular drive as Curtis pulls up.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Curtis blasts through the front door.

CURTIS

Deena! Get your ass down here!

Deena's mother, May, steps out of the main room.

MAY

Hello, Curtis.

Curtis attempts a polite smile.

CURTIS

May, what are you doing here? I thought you hated L.A.

MAY

Oh, I do.

MAY

But my daughter said she needed me and so I'm here.

Deena comes down the stairs.

DEENA

Go wait in the car, Mama.

May heads out. Deena swings past Curtis.

CURTIS

Baby, that was a real nasty trick you pulled on me!

DEENA

I had to do something to stop you. How could you do that to Effie?

CURTIS
I did what I had to. She was trying to
wreck my dreams.

DEENA
Your dreams are dangerous, Curtis. Look
what they've done to you.

INT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Deena moves to a chair, where a suitcase lies open.

CURTIS
Where do you think you're going?

DEENA
Out looking for a new sound, baby. Just
like you.

CURTIS
(laughs)
Come on, Deena. You can't leave.

DEENA
Why, because you own me? Well I don't
care. You can sue me, Curtis, you can
take everything I have. But it doesn't
matter, 'cause I'll start over. Effie
did it, and so can I.

CURTIS
I'm not living without you, Deena.

Deena folds the suitcase closed. Curtis puts his arms around
her. Their two portraits looming over them.

CURTIS
I love you, baby. You're all I can see.

She closes her eyes. MUSIC starts under.

CURTIS
YOU ARE MY DREAM

DEENA
NOW I'VE GOT DREAMS OF MY OWN

CURTIS
ALL THE THINGS I COULD NEVER BE

DEENA
DREAMS YOU'VE NEVER KNOWN

CURTIS
 YOU ARE MY DREAM
 THEY'LL NEVER TAKE MY DREAM FROM ME

DEENA
 I can't stay anymore.

CURTIS
 WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU
 I SAID, "OH, MY!"

DEENA
 I'm sorry, Curtis.

CURTIS
 YOU'RE MY DREAM

DEENA
 Goodbye.

She picks up the bag and leaves.

EXT. CURTIS & DEENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A lonely trumpet plays as the cab pulls away, leaving Curtis alone in the front drive. We move up to discover the 'WOODWARD & COLUMBIA' sign in the foreground, then move back down to reveal:

EXT. FOX THEATRE - DETROIT - NIGHT

The marquee reads:

DEENA JONES & THE DREAMS: THE FAREWELL PERFORMANCE

There's electricity in the air as a black-tie AUDIENCE files inside. Curtis steps out of a limo and is escorted by a PUBLICIST to the press line. REPORTERS from around the world call out his name. One punches through:

REPORTER #1
 This must be a bittersweet night, Mr. Taylor. How's it feel to be saying goodbye to the Dreams?

CURTIS
 They're all talented ladies and I respect their decision to explore new opportunities. Besides, I don't believe in goodbyes, just hellos. And I want you all to say hello to Tania Moore.

TANIA MOORE joins him on the line. Beautiful, and barely older than Deena was on the night she met Curtis.

CURTIS

We're releasing Tania's first album next month, and let me tell you, it's dynamite. A totally new sound.

Curtis is drowned out by FANS who scream as Effie steps onto the red carpet, with C.C., Ronald, and Magic in tow. The press rushes her.

REPORTER #3

Miss White, your record's gone to number one. You must be pretty excited.

EFFIE

It feels good, yes.

Effie acknowledges Curtis, who nods back at her.

REPORTER #4

Any plans to move to California?

EFFIE

No, this is home. And people are too skinny there.

The reporters laugh.

REPORTER #5

Who's the little lady, Effie?

Effie glances at Curtis, who is heading into the theatre. She invites Magic to step forward. She's wearing a blue gown and looks stunning.

EFFIE

This is Magic. She's my daughter.

Curtis stops. He turns and looks and gets it, in an instant. As Effie smiles at him, there's a burst of MUSIC, and we hear:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, in their farewell performance -- the incredible Dreams!

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT

A wave of love from the audience as the curtain rises for the last time on the Dreams. They wear their signature white gowns and are frozen in place.

Deena takes a breath, waiting for the cheering to stop. She winks at Lorrell and Michelle and they slowly turn to face the audience.

DEENA
 WE DIDN'T MAKE FOREVER
 WE'VE EACH GOT TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAY
 AND NOW WE'RE STANDING HERE HELPLESS
 LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO SAY

Magic sits in the front row between Effie and C.C. Around them, people are already wiping away tears.

DEENA
 WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER A LONG TIME
 WE NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD END
 WE WERE ALWAYS SO CLOSE TO EACH OTHER
 YOU WERE ALWAYS MY FRIEND

DREAMS
 IT'S HARD TO SAY GOODBYE MY LOVE
 HARD TO SEE YOU CRY MY LOVE
 HARD TO OPEN UP THAT DOOR
 WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE GOING
 FOR

DEENA
 WE DIDN'T WANT THIS TO HAPPEN

LORRELL
 BUT WE SHOULDN'T FEEL SAD

MICHELLE
 WE'VE HAD A GOOD LIFE TOGETHER

Deena catches Curtis' eye in the audience.

DEENA
 JUST REMEMBER

LORRELL & MICHELLE
 REMEMBER

DEENA, LORRELL, MICHELLE
 REMEMBER THE GOOD TIMES WE HAD

Michelle smiles at C.C. and he blows her a kiss. We see other familiar faces in the crowd -- Marty, May, Ronald.

DEENA
 YOU KNOW I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU
 YOU KNOW I'LL ALWAYS CARE
 AND NO MATTER HOW FAR

LORRELL & MICHELLE
 FAR I MAY GO

DEENA
 IN MY HEART I KNOW YOU'LL ALWAYS BE THERE

The Dreams raise their hands in a smooth, precisely choreographed wave. It's a tiny move but it captures their essence perfectly, and the audience responds with cheers.

DEENA	LORRELL & MICHELLE
IT'S HARD TO SAY GOODBYE MY	IT'S SO HARD
LOVE	BABY IT'S SO HARD
HARD TO SEE YOU CRY MY LOVE	IT'S SO HARD
HARD TO OPEN UP THAT DOOR	

DEENA, LORRELL, MICHELLE
 WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE GOING
 FOR

DEENA	LORRELL & MICHELLE
GOODBYE MY LOVE	IT'S SO HARD
THIS TIME IT'S FOREVERMORE	BABY IT'S SO HARD
I CAN FEEL THERE'S SOMETHING	IT'S SO HARD
MORE	

DEENA, LORRELL, MICHELLE
 WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE GOING
 FOR

DEENA
 BUT WE'VE GOT TO GO
 WE'VE GOT TO TRY
 THOUGH IT'S HARD SO HARD
 WE'VE GOT TO SAY

DEENA, LORRELL, MICHELLE
 WE DIDN'T MAKE FOREVER
 HOW COULD WE LEAVE EACH OTHER
 WE DIDN'T MAKE FOREVER
 HOW COULD WE LEAVE EACH OTHER

LORRELL & MICHELLE
 IT'S SO HARD
 BABY IT'S SO HARD
 IT'S SO HARD

The audience takes up the move and returns it, becoming a sea of waving hands. We DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FOX THEATRE - STAGE - NIGHT (LATER)

Deena takes the microphone and walks to the lip of the stage.

DEENA

Well, I guess it's about that time. The last song. You know, we've been together a very long time. I promised Lorrell I wouldn't cry.

Lorrell waves her away, her eyes brimming with tears.

DEENA

And I'm not, I'm very happy. Because all of our family is here tonight. There aren't really three Dreams, you know -- there are four. And we're really happy because tonight, we're all here to sing that song for you.

She turns toward the wings.

DEENA

Effie.

The crowd cheers as Effie enters to the triumphant strains of "One Night Only." She wears a smart off-the-shoulder dress that sets her apart from the others.

Effie quiets the audience and pushes aside the microphone. Her voice fills the house.

EFFIE

EVERY MAN HAS HIS OWN SPECIAL DREAM,
AND THAT DREAM'S JUST ABOUT TO COME TRUE

Effie sings to Deena:

EFFIE

LIFE'S NOT AS BAD AS IT MAY SEEM

She turns to Lorrell and touches her hand:

EFFIE

IF YOU OPEN YOUR EYES TO WHAT'S IN FRONT
OF YOU

Deena, Lorrell and Michelle step back, taking their rightful place behind Effie.

THE DREAMS
WE'RE YOUR DREAM GIRLS

Effie lets loose, singing the song the way she always wanted to.