

THE FIVE HEARTBEATS

Dedicated to all the singing groups
who hit the charts and to the ones
that missed the bullet.

**For Educational
Purposes Only**

FADE IN:

INT. LITTLE J'S NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The screen is black. It slowly fades up on a small, local nightclub dive called LITTLE J'S. A sign reads MONTHLY TALENT SHOW. JUNE 7, 1965 fades up on the screen. In a mirror behind the bar we see a reflection of three girls on stage singing. The lead singer is RENEE "BABY DOLL" BROWN, she is very attractive. As the girls take their bow, the M.C. walks across the stage applauding. His name is JOHNNY "BLACKJACK" GREEN. He watches the girls exit into the wings of the stage. He shakes his head and flashes a devilish smile.

Opening credits fades up on screen.

BLACKJACK

My! My! My!
(still shaking head)
That was contestants number
eight. How about another round
of applause for Baby Doll and
The Crystals?

The audience goes wild, applauding loudly. We see Baby Doll head into the wings. She talks to a girl.

BABY DOLL

Did Eddie see me?

Credit fades up on screen.

BLACKJACK

I knew what to do with your
mother, last night. And tell
your momma I want my slippers
back, with your poor, broke,
monkey-ass!

The audience goes crazy, laughter fills the room.

BLACKJACK

Don't get me started! Look at
you, with your funny shaped
head. Last time I saw a head
shaped like that I put a rubber
on it. Well, contestant number
nine is from Columbus, Ohio, and
this man is going places, after
the show he'll be going across
the street to get a sandwich.
(audience laughs)

BLACKJACK

(continuing)

Just kidding. Ladies and gentlemen, contestant number nine, Flash and The Ebony Sparks.

Credit fades up on screen

From the stage wings three men dressed in red suits spin out dancing to the beat. MICHAEL "FLASH" TURNER is in his early twenties, tall and slender. He wears a gaudy, orange sequined jacket with spotted leopard pants. He has the ego and a big phoney smile to wear these clothes well. In the crowd watching is a man, late forties, nicely dressed, but he seems out of place in this club. A waitress comes over and puts a soft drink on his table. We will come to know him as JIMMY POTTER. Flash puts on an outrageous show, doing several pelvic thrust movements and shaking his butt like a Las Vegas stripper.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Blackjack moves through the crowd of performers in the hallway.

CUT TO:

Credit fades up on screen.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The dressing room is really the nightclub storage room. In the middle of the room, a performer practices some dance steps. In his early twenties, TERRENCE "DRESSER" WILLIAMS rehearses. Seated in a chair reading a magazine is his girlfriend, BRENDA HENDERSON.

Credit fades up on the screen.

In the far corner of the room, a young man paces nervously back and forth. ANTHONY "CHOIRBOY" STONE stops his pacing as he suddenly notices Blackjack at the door.

BLACKJACK

What's wrong? Everybody in your group ain't here yet? 'Cause then you're out of the contest unless y'all the new Sam and Dave Plus One. You're on next.

Credit fades up on screen.

Blackjack leaves the room. Dresser shoots a stupid look to Choirboy.

DRESSER

I wish you would relax.

CHOIRBOY

How can I relax? Bobby missed the two rehearsals, hasn't called and we're next. Eddie's not here either.

DRESSER

(quietly)

I'll talk to him when he gets here.

Credit fades up on screen.

CHOIRBOY

I just don't like singing in these bars and taverns.

DRESSER

You're really nervous because the last time we were here you got hit in the head with that bottle.

CHOIRBOY

Yeah, if they didn't like my voice they could've booed. I had to get six stitches and my Father had to come to the hospital. If he knew I was here...

DRESSER

Nobody's forcing you.

Brenda gets up from her chair.

DRESSER

Where are you going?

BRENDA

I'm going to get a good seat out front.

DRESSER

Can't you just wait and walk out with us?

Credit fades up on screen.

BRENDA

Baby, I'm just going out front to sit with Leon and Lester. Have a good show.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE BACKSTAGE WING - NIGHT

Watching Flash from wings is a tall muscular young man in his early twenties. JAMES THOMAS MATTHEWS who everybody calls J.T., watches Flash with a jealous look as the women scream "Flash."

Credit fades up on screen.

J.T. looks at all the pretty ladies in the crowd. He sees one lady that he hones in on like a hypnotist, she looks up on cue. He smiles and she smiles back. Flash seeing the lady distracted looks back at the distraction - it's J.T. Then Flash starts to sing to the lady. J.T. gets upset and looks through the crowd and finds another lady. He smiles and she smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. POOLHALL GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

There are four bare brick walls, a window covered with dark paper, a metal door. Two men stand in front of it like bodyguards. A single light hangs over the center of a poker table that luminesce four players. Two of them are old, tough, serious, criminal types.

Credit fades up on screen.

The third is BOBBY CASANOVA, a tough, scarfaced hood who thinks he's a pretty boy. We see a couple of kings stashed between his legs. He is obviously cheating and signaling the next player. The fourth young man is EDDIE KING, JR, early twenties. He seems at home with the other players at the table. The players sit back and study Eddie, he sits firm. The whole room is silent and still.

PLAYER #2

I'm out. What you got?

Eddie shows his hand revealing a bluff. Bobby nervously takes a sip of beer. As Eddie starts to collect the money, one of the players gently grabs Eddie's hand. One of the men at the door bolts the lock. Underneath the table one of the players smoothly adjusts the crease in his pants, pulling them higher, revealing a pistol attached to his leg. Eddie shuffles the cards then gives them to a player to cut the deck. As he hands them back, Eddie throws the deck in his face, turns over the table, and money flies everywhere. Bobby takes his beer bottle and bashed out the light. They both jump through the closed window.

CUT TO:

Credit fades up on screen.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. WARDROBE CLOSET - NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Hidden in a small wardrobe closet behind several racks of clothes, we find J.T. and ROSE, the sexy girl that was sitting in the nightclub. J.T. kisses her on the cheek, and slowly pulls up her skirt. She watches him. He pulls the skirt slowly past her thighs.

Credit fades up on screen.

ROSE

Stop it! I don't understand you. You say you love me, but you never call, then you bring me up here, and try to screw me in the closet like I'm a whore or something.

J.T.

Stop it right there! No, I didn't call because I've been busy with the group. I thought you understood that the Love Disciples are our ticket out of here. I brought you up here because I thought you were a woman, not some little girl afraid of life. I'm not looking for a cheap thrill or a stolen moment. I wanted to take you to another level. Living a chapter from the most romantic novel. I wanted you to walk with me on the edge of erotica.

The girl is mesmerized by J.T.'s bullshit, and doesn't know what to say.

Credit fades up on screen.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. DARK ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Bobby and Eddie run for their lives down a dark alley while being chased by the two hoods from the poker game. The two men have guns, firing shots at them. Bobby gets shot in the leg.

Credit fades up on screen.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dresser walks over to the closet and opens the door.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM CLOSET - NIGHT

A young man is seated on the floor of the closet. He wears a stained lime green sports coat, checkered pants and a plaid shirt. Quite obviously he doesn't know how to dress. His processed hair hasn't been done in months and is all over the place. He's wearing dark sunglasses and holding a flashlight, writing on torn up pieces of brown paper bag. We see lyrics to songs and titles of songs written on the paper. In his early twenties, DONALD "DUCK" MATTHEWS sits in a world of his own.

DRESSER

Duck!

Duck continues to write, in a semi-daze.

DRESSER

(screams)

Duck!

Duck looks up in a daze. Duck snaps his fingers, working on a rhythm.

DRESSER

Bobby and Eddie aren't here. We need you to sing Bobby's part.

DUCK

Bobby's not here? What is his problem? Why does he keep doing this?! I wrote all the music in five part harmony! Five part! He's starting to make me sick!

DRESSER

Duck, go get your brother. And do something with your hair.

Duck spits on his hands, slicks his hair down a little bit and walks out of the room.

Credit fades up on the screen.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Bobby and Eddie continue to run for their lives down the alley. They run directly through heavy, oncoming traffic.

Credit fades up on the screen.

Eddie's almost hit by a car while Bobby is hit by a car and spins off of it as the two men continue to chase them.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHTCLUB

Dresser and Choirboy walk down the hall toward the stage. Choirboy nervously looks at the door for someone to enter from the opposite end of the hallway. We see two young men coming toward them. LEON MARSHALL, early twenties is tall and nerdy. And LESTER FIELDS, early twenties is tall and slender.

LEON

Brenda told us they ain't here.
We're ready to go on.

LESTER

We know all the words and
everything.

Lester hits a bad note.

DRESSER

They'll be here.

Credit fades up on screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Bobby and Eddie jump over a fence, losing the two men. They land safely and catch their breath. But as they turn around they discover four mean looking Doberman Pinschers ready to attack. Eddie quickly jumps back over the fence. Bobby doesn't make it and is attacked by the dogs.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - STAGE

Flash ends his song on his knees as one of the Ebony Sparks takes his jacket and the other two carry him away. Blackjack walks out on stage, watches Flash pass by in his dramatic state.

Credit fades up on screen

BLACKJACK

The final act tonight is a group
of local boys, they been singing
together since high school.
Ladies and gentlemen, The Love
Disciples.

The lights slowly fade up on J.T., Choirboy and Dresser with their backs to the audience. Duck is jamming behind the piano. Dresser slowly reaches for the mike to begin, but before he can, he sees Eddie running through the backstage door. Dresser stops and smiles, kicks the mike stand. It starts to fall.

Close on the mike falling in slow motion.

Eddie runs faster, drops to his knees, slides across the stage, dives catching the mike and sings on cue.

Final opening credit fades up on screen.

Dresser falls back into line like they planned it that way. Leon and Lester watch from the crowd, a little upset.

LESTER

He had to show up.

LEON

We could've did that.

The crowd is jamming with the group.

Angle on Flash peering from the backstage wings, sizing up the competition. Running up behind Flash are the two, out of breath hoods that chased Eddie from the card game.

Close on Eddie singing, he looks at Baby Doll in the wings, she looks impressed.

BRENDA

I've never heard Eddie sing
lead. He sounds good.

Close on J.T. as he flirts with a different girl in the audience while he sings.

Close on Choirboy, half ducking as customers go for their drinks.

LEON

Just move over Temptations, The
Love Disciples are here. They
make me want to dance.

LESTER

They make me want to party!

Lester stands up to dance and a large, heavy-set woman in the back yells for him to sit down.

FAT WOMAN

Sit your skinny ass down, your
daddy wasn't no glass maker.

Jimmy watches the group perform in a trance like state. He takes a pen from his pocket and writes notes on a napkin. Several girls behind Brenda talk about how handsome Dresser is, she gets upset. Duck, like a mad man, plays his heart out behind the piano ending the song.

BLACKJACK

The Love Disciples. Take a bow!
You did a hell of a job with
four guys. What happened to
your fifth man?

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SAME

We see Bobby, in shock, being put on a stretcher.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE J'S STAGE - SAME

BLACKJACK

Would all the contestants come
out on stage? Can I get a drum
roll?

(drummer rolls)

Thank you! It was a hard
decision but we made it! The
big winner tonight is Flash and
The Ebony Sparks.

Blackjack goes into his jacket pocket, pulls out a envelope and hands it to Flash. The losers of the talent show leave the stage quickly. Flash stops Eddie in the wings.

FLASH

Man, I really like your show.
You guys could've won.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILSON'S DINER - NIGHT

Wilson's is the neighborhood soul food restaurant. The place looks like a shack. The group is inside seated in a booth. Jimmy walks up to the window and watches the group from outside.

CUT TO:

INT. WILSON'S DINER - NIGHT

Seated in a booth with a beautiful girl is Duck. Across the room in another booth are J.T., Rose, Choirboy, Dresser, Baby Doll and Eddie all looking at menus. J.T. looks very shy as Duck points over to him, while talking to the girl.

DUCK

My brother would like to meet you.

GIRL

Then why doesn't he come over here?

DUCK

Because he's really shy, look at his face.

J.T. looks up from the menu with a shy look on his face.

GIRL

Yeah, but whose that girl sitting with him?

DUCK

That's our sister.

GIRL

She doesn't look nothing like y'all.

DUCK

(whispers)

We have different mothers. So, would you give me your number so he can call you sometime?

The girl looks over to J.T. He waves back, painfully shy.

GIRL

Okay. He can call me.

The girl starts to write the number down. In the corner of the restaurant, a customer puts some money in the juke box. A song comes on. It's "My Girl" by The Temptations. We see Jimmy sitting in a booth in the back, watching the group.

Duck joins the group at the table. Everyone is laughing as he quietly slips the phone number to J.T.

EDDIE

I'm telling you the truth. The last of I saw of Bobby was these Dobermans chewing his slow ass up

The waitress comes to the table.

WAITRESS

Can I help you?

J.T.
Choirboy, how much we got?

CHOIRBOY
\$4.86.

J.T.
It's "fo", Choirboy! Stop
sounding like a white boy.

J.T. looks at Rose.

ROSE
I'm not hungry.

J.T.
Good. I'm not hungry either.

DRESSER
Two biscuits.

CHOIRBOY
That's \$1.95.

EDDIE
Side of yams.

CHOIRBOY
Corn on the cob.

DUCK
Order of French fries.

CHOIRBOY
That's \$4.75 with tax. What
about her tip?

DUCK
I got a tip for her, get another
job.

As the waitress leaves, Jimmy comes over to the table.

JIMMY
Excuse me... I don't mean to
disturb you. My name is Jimmy
Potter. I just wanted to say I
really enjoyed your show
tonight. I especially liked
your opening, it was like you
were running for your life. I
don't know where to begin...
But I was wondering if your
group could use a manager. I've
been in the business for fifteen
years. I've managed The Dells,
The Dreamers, The Romantics...

JIMMY (CONT.)

And I've worked on a few tours with the Motown acts. I believe you guys can go all the way to the top if you make the right decisions. A good manager will help you make those decisions. If you would give me one month I could show you everything I'm talking about. One month and I guarantee you will win the talent show. You don't have to sign anything. Your word and your handshake is the only contract. And if you don't win, I'll give you a hundred dollars. Here's my card.

He hands the card to Dresser.

DRESSER

Mr. Potter, I don't know if we can take your offer; we lost one of the lead singers of our group tonight.

JIMMY

Something tells me the piano player can be the fifth person for that five part harmony. Think about it.

Duck smiles at Jimmy and he smiles back.

JIMMY

If you guys are ready we can start tomorrow at seven o'clock at my house.

Jimmy exits as the waitress comes over with a large tray. She places the food on the table. J.T. starts to eat but quickly feels Choirboy's eyes on him, he puts his fork down.

J.T.

I forgot!

They all bow their heads as Choirboy says a prayer over the food.

CHOIRBOY

(slowly)

Thank you Heavenly Father, for the food we are about to receive, for watching over us and guiding us on the right path.

Duck opens one eye looking at Choirboy, waiting for the prayer to end.

CHOIRBOY
(continuing)
Thank you for our aunts and uncles,
our nieces, our nephews...

J.T. opens one eye, looking at Choirboy.

CHOIRBOY
(continuing)
...all our friends and enemies...

Dresser puts his head up, looking at Choirboy.

CHOIRBOY
(continuing)
Please bless this meal Heavenly
Father...

Eddie looks up and everyone stares at Choirboy.

GROUP
Amen!

Everybody starts to eat except Dresser. He still studies the card, then starts to eat.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEANOR WILLIAMS' BROWNSTONE - DAY

Jimmy stands at the door talking with his wife, ELEANOR POTTER, late forties, a beautiful, stately, strong woman.

ELEANOR
Jimmy, why are you doing this?

JIMMY
Eleanor, don't start. I know
what I'm doing.

J.T. and Duck walk up to the front of the brownstone.

DUCK
We're here, Mr. Potter. You
have a nice house.

JIMMY
Thank you. Duck, J.T., I want
you to meet my wife, Eleanor.
Let's get ready for rehearsal.

As Duck and J.T. walk into the house, Eleanor does a double take looking at Duck's clothes and J.T.'s cool street strut.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The home is furnished with items from the fifties. There is a fireplace with various modeling trophies and diplomas for teaching modeling. A large grandfather style clock rests on the mantel piece. It reads 8:45 p.m. Seated on the couch are J.T., Duck, Choirboy and Dresser. From another room we see Eleanor finishing a modeling class. The students grab their coats and start to leave. Duck sees a girl that catches his eye. He stares at her awkwardly. Her name is TANYA SAWYER. She puts her coat on and leaves. Duck is too shy to say hello.

DRESSER

I'm really sorry about this, Mr. Potter. I don't know what happened to Eddie.

JIMMY

Call me Jimmy, and stop apologizing.

Eleanor stands silently in a corner of the room watching.

JIMMY

Where do you think I could find Eddie?

CUT TO:

INT. SAMMY'S POOL HALL - NIGHT

The pool room is the local hang-out for the dope pushers, pimps and hustlers. The real action in the pool hall is gambling. As Jimmy walks in he sees Eddie right away playing pool in the back. Playing against Eddie is a young street hustler named FRANKIE. He shoots and misses the pocket. Eddie moves about the table trying to find his shot.

JIMMY

I thought you agreed to give me a chance.

Eddie doesn't look at him, he continues to circle the table. Eddie shoots in a ball with force behind it, then shoots in another ball. He walks around the table looking for his next shot. Frankie checks out Jimmy.

FRANKIE

Eddie, who is this?

EDDIE

Nobody.

Eddie takes his time, lines up his shot and softly taps the eight ball into the pocket. He collects money from the pool table edge.

EDDIE

I ain't no lead singer. I do that shit for fun. I thought your little offer was cute but I gotta make some money. I changed my mind.

JIMMY

Eddie, you and your group could be in the big league with The Temps, The Four Tops, The Miracles...

Frankie butts in.

FRANKIE

(loudly)

In the league with The Miracles? You mean that little bullshit group you got is starting to take off? Shit, Eddie ain't got no voice. Bobby's the one with the voice. Chuckie, remember the time we went to the show and Eddie had to sing for Bobby? The nigger nearly threw up on himself he was so scared. You better stick to cards and pool.

Everyone in the bar laughs, including Eddie.

EDDIE

Mr. Potter, thanks but no thanks.

JIMMY

What are you afraid of?

Jimmy starts to leave.

EDDIE

I ain't afraid of nothing. What you talking about ain't shit. I'm talking about making some money.

JIMMY

You ain't' making no money in here. What, five dollars a game? Ten dollars a game? Let's play for some real money. A hundred dollars a game.

EDDIE

I ain't got that kind of money.

The room gets quiet. Jimmy goes into his wallet and pulls out a crisp one hundred dollar bill.

FRANKIE

You ain't said shit but a word.
I got my man covered.

EDDIE

Frankie, I can't...

FRANKIE

Just beat his ass and give it
right back to me. You been
doing it all night.

Frankie pulls out a coin and flips it. Jimmy wins. Jimmy shoots and scratches on the break. Frankie smiles as Eddie eyes the table. Jimmy steps back watching Eddie. Eddie shoots one ball in, then another, but his rhythm is off. His next shot is easy but he misses. Jimmy makes a note to himself as he studies Eddie, then plays. Jimmy shoots a ball in softly. He then shoots another ball into the pocket with a hard back-spin on it. Jimmy shoots two balls side by side, causing them to split. One going in one corner pocket and the other going in another. His next shot is the eight ball a strange position. He clearly doesn't have a shot. Jimmy lines up the stick, smiles at Frankie and shoots. It banks in all the right places. Jimmy collects the money off the table and stuffs a hundred dollar bill into Frankie's pocket.

JIMMY

Now, Eddie, you owe me. So I'll
see you at rehearsal tomorrow;
unless you wanna play another
game.

CUT TO:

INT. JIMMY AND ELEANOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy lays in bed watching Eleanor, who fidgets about the bedroom a little uneasy.

JIMMY

Come on, get in the bed. What's
wrong?

ELEANOR

You know what's wrong. Why are
you doing this to yourself
again? I thought we agreed that
there would be no more of this.

JIMMY

Baby, I got a hunch about these kids.

ELEANOR

Jimmy, you had a hunch about The Four Clovers, The Brownville Boys... And what happened? They hit it and left you. Then all the other groups you've worked with that have never made it. And last time it almost destroyed you and our family. I'm not going to let that happen again.

JIMMY

I'm not going to let that happen again. I kicked the booze - I'm strong now. I've learned from my mistakes and I'm telling you, this is the ticket. I'm asking you to believe in me this one last time.

Eleanor doesn't say anything, she gets in the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eddie stands in front of a trophy case smiling to himself. The trophies are all Jimmy's for excellence and winning at billiards. Jimmy is seated at the piano with the group. Eddie walks over.

JIMMY

Who has the best falsetto voice?

DUCK

We all do.

JIMMY

Let me hear it.

Duck hits a falsetto note, then J.T. competes like a little kid trying to out riff Duck. Dresser sings, then Choirboy. Next, Eddie with a mean riff tops them all, they can't help but smile.

JIMMY

Who sings baritone?

J.T.

We all do.

J.T. sings a note in his baritone voice, then Eddie, then

Choirboy and Dresser. Next, Duck sings, topping the others with a cool riff.

JIMMY

Damn. Who sings bass?

The group pauses, looking at Jimmy.

JIMMY

You all can.

The fellahs nod in agreement.

JIMMY

Five lead singers, this is great. There's something I want you guys to think about. For a new start you need a new name. Think about different names for the group.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Duck is dressed outrageous as ever, jamming behind the piano. Jimmy works with the group, pulling out their talent and showing them new harmonies. Eleanor stands in the doorway watching. The group is jamming until J.T. hits a note off key and blames it on Choirboy.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy works on choreography with the group, they look bad. Duck still looks at his feet and Choirboy can't keep up with the rhythm. Jimmy puts his head down, but Eleanor gets upset watching.

ELEANOR

Starting tomorrow we will work on posture, poise and diction.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LITTLE J'S STAGE - NIGHT

Blackjack is on the stage applauding as an act exits the stage. We see the act is a ventriloquist. Blackjack shakes his head as the audience boos the act.

BLACKJACK

Just because y'all saw Willie's mouth moving. Maybe he planned it that way. The next group has

BLACKJACK

(continuing)

been here before but they have
changed their name to protect
their mothers and fathers.
Ladies and gentlemen, The Five
Heartbeats.

In the wings, Flash taps Eddie on the shoulder and says, "Good luck". The fellahs begin to perform. Jimmy paces nervously in the wings while Eleanor calmly watches. As they perform, Duck glances at the piano player to pick up the pace. Choirboy counts to himself and Dresser sings to close into the mike. Leon and Lester are in the audience singing along with the song and doing dance steps at their table.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LITTLE J'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy stands in the center of the room, counting a hundred dollars into the hands of Eddie. The group stands in the background.

DRESSER

I really feel bad taking your money.
Eddie, let's give it back.

EDDIE

(coldly)

Nah, a deal is a deal, this is
business.

Blackjack enters the room.

BLACKJACK

Flash did it again. You missed
his opening, he slide across the
stage. Man, was it great. I've
got good news. The owner of the
club would like to sign the
group to a contract to appear
here weekly. Now don't get
excited, 'cause he will be
paying you weakly. And I'm
gonna tell you, he's never made
this offer before.

EDDIE

Well, I don't know. You'll have
to discuss that with our
manager.

Jimmy looks at Eddie and smiles as the rest of the group
supports Eddie's decision.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK TUNNEL - NIGHT

The tunnel ceiling is very high up, causing a great echo effect. This is where the guys rehearse. Spray painted on the outside in big bold letters is "THE STUDIO". Duck, J.T., Dresser, Choirboy and Eddie stand inside the tunnel talking. They have a bottle in a brown paper bag that they pass around. Eddie tries to get Choirboy to drink.

CHOIRBOY

Nah man, I don't want any.

EDDIE

C'mon, just take a hit. What's wrong with a little drink?

CHOIRBOY

You know I don't drink.

DRESSER

Why don't you leave him alone?

EDDIE

(to Dresser)

Why don't you mind your own business?

DRESSER

I said leave him alone, Eddie. Why you always fuckin' with Choirboy?

J.T.

It's time Choirboy got a little corrupted.

J.T. and Duck grab Choirboy.

J.T.

(laughing)

Eddie, give him a drink.

Eddie forces the bottle into Choirboy's mouth. Dresser pushes Eddie away from Choirboy. Choirboy struggles and breaks free as the wine runs all over his clothes. Choirboy puts his hands up, ready to fight.

CHOIRBOY

C'mon, let's fight, because that's the only thing you respect.

EDDIE

Choirboy, why you gettin' so upset?

CHOIRBOY

I'm tired of you picking on me!
I'm tired of this bullshit!
I've had enough - let's fight!

Choirboy stands with his fists raised with a crazy look in his eye. All the guys look like they're really scared causing everyone to laugh, including Choirboy. Eddie extends his hand, the guys form a circle. J.T. places his hand on top of Eddie's, then Duck, then Dresser and finally Choirboy.

EDDIE

The Five Heartbeats, together,
forever.

CUT TO:

INT. TENEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Eddie climbs several flights of stairs and goes into an apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. KING FAMILY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is a small two bedroom apartment. Eddie goes into the apartment and slowly walks to his bedroom. He stops in the living room and looks down at the couch. His father, sitting on the couch with a bottle of Jack Daniels, looks up at Eddie with an attitude. His mother comes out from the other bedroom, she looks beaten and worn.

MR. KING

Where you been? Comin' in the
house this late.

EDDIE

I was out.

MRS. KING

I told you he had a show
tonight. How did it go?

EDDIE

It was cool.

Eddie and his father stare each other down.

MR. KING

You ain't gonna be shit either!

MRS. KING

He didn't say nothin'!

MR. KING

He ain't gotta say nothin'! You

MR. KING (CONT.)
ain't gonna be shit 'cause I
ain't shit.

Eddie walks out of the room as his father takes a drink and continues to watch television.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eleanor walks into the room with a large stack of fashion magazines. She walks over to Duck seated on the couch and puts the magazines in his lap.

ELEANOR
Study the sections on
coordinating colors and styles.

Duck, dressed outrageous as usual, glances at the magazines then to Eleanor as if to say "Why?" Eleanor walks over to J.T. who is walking back and forth with a book on top of his head, but is still doing a "street strut" as he walks.

ELEANOR
J.T., you're missing the whole
point. People will still know
you are cool. Relax your arms.

Eleanor walks over to the dining room table. Seated are Eddie and Dresser. The table has been set with a full dinner arrangement. Choirboy stands by the table with a pad in his hand, pouting.

CHOIRBOY
Why do I have to be the waiter?

ELEANOR
Because your diction and manners
are fine. Okay gentlemen,
pretend you're at a four star
restaurant.

Eddie and Dresser smile, looking at Choirboy.

EDDIE
Boy!!

DRESSER
Say, boy, we're ready to order.

ELEANOR
This is serious. You must learn
etiquette.

CHOIRBOY

Yes, can I help you?

DRESSER

What are your specialties?

ELEANOR

If there aren't any specialties...

EDDIE

What would you recommend?

ELEANOR

Good. Now, the food has come,
and you start to eat.

Dresser picks up a bowl with his pinkies out and passes it to Eddie.

DRESSER

How is the weather in Acapulco
this time of year? And will
Aretha Franklin per chance be
joining us for dinner?

Eddie takes a sip from his cup with his pinkies out.

EDDIE

I ain't seen her lately... I
mean...

(looks to Eleanor)

I haven't seen her this evening.

Eleanor smiles proudly.

EDDIE

I believe she phoned and said
she's been detained trying to
get out of her crib and shit.

Eleanor shakes her head. Jimmy enters the room with a little,
hunched over old man in his early seventies. He coughs and
wheezes, smoking a cigarette. He clutches his cane like he
can barely walk, taking little steps. His name is POPS
JOHNSON.

JIMMY

Can I get everybody in here?

Eddie, Choirboy and Dresser enter from the dining room and
take seats on the couch.

JIMMY

I got someone I want you to
meet. Gentlemen, this is Pops
Johnson, he's gonna be working

JIMMY (CONT.)
with us on the choreography.

Dresser jumps to his feet.

DRESSER
I do the choreography!

JIMMY
Dresser, Pops is not here to
replace you. I brought him in
to help out.

DRESSER
What can this old man teach me?
Jimmy, if you didn't like what I
was doing you should've said
something to me first, instead
of going behind my back and
bringing in this old ass....!

POPS
Stop right there, before your
mouth gets you into something
your ass can't get you out of.

Pops takes his cigarette out and puts it out on the floor.

POPS
Let me see your best
combination.

DRESSER
What?

POPS
What my ass....! Let me see your
best combination, boy.

Dresser, totally confused, does a dance combination as Pops
looks on.

POPS
Just as I thought, that ain't
shit! Hold my cane.

Pops throws the cane hard into Dresser's chest.

POPS
Pay attention, you might learn
something.

Pops snaps his fingers finding a beat. He does a quick dance
combination that includes moonwalking, quick spins, stands on
his toes, splits, slides and finally does a triple spin like a
ballet dancer. Duck watches with his mouth wide open.

POPS
Any questions?
(pause)
I didn't think so. We'll start
first thing tomorrow and don't
be late.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NEW DAY

We see Pops taking the group through a serious dance combination. Pops is working them hard. The group is sweating, out of breath and can barely keep up with Pops, whose is smoking a cigarette and not sweating at all.

POPS
C'mon Girl Scouts, let's
concentrate. Duck, what's your
problem?

DUCK
You teach everything too damn
fast.

POPS
Are you retarded? How many
times do I have to show you?
Three hundred? You just can't
dance. Choirboy, stop listening
to the angels and hear the beat.
Dresser, you're pitiful.

Dresser doesn't look at Pops. He just continues to dance, trying to do his best.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pops is looking at the clock on the mantel piece, it reads 7:05. All the guys are there except Eddie. He rushes in apologizing.

POPS
I don't want to here your
excuses! Get in line! Let's go
Girl Scouts! Smooth hands,
clean turns.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NEW DAY

Pops stands alone in the living room, waiting on the group. He looks at the clock on the mantel piece. It's 7:21 - he is pissed and mad. Suddenly the front door flies open. We see

the group walking in with canes, all wearing hats and smoking cigarettes, imitating Pops. They all put their cigarettes out together. Pops refuses to laugh.

POPS
This shit ain't funny!

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy, Pops and Eleanor are seated on the couch, each holding a note pad and a pen. The group performs a smooth dance combination. They turn left, they turn right, then spin. The spin will stop with them on stage at the Apollo Theater.

FADE OUT:

INT. APOLLO THEATER - DAY

The group is on stage going over their steps with Pops. Figures seated in the top balcony watch the group perform. We will come to know them as the singing group, BIRD AND THE MIDNIGHT FALCONS. The lead singer of the group is VICTOR "BIRD" THOMAS, seated next to him is his sister, COOKIE.

GUY #1
You think they could beat us?

BIRD
That ain't the question.
Tonight could be our big break.
I don't want to chance it.

GUY #2
Well, you know my cousin's the
M.C.

BIRD
That's right, yeah, so you talk
to your cousin. Cookie, I want
you to bring some of your
girlfriends tonight and you know
what to do.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APOLLO THEATER - NIGHT

Leon is at the box office window talking loud, while Lester stands with two girls. One girl wears thick glasses and the other is extremely tall.

LESTER
Tell them to look under VIP's.
Our cousins are the stars of the
show.

CUT TO:

INT. APOLLO THEATER - NIGHT

On stage is an all GIRLS GROUP - they are terrible. The crowd is booing and yelling for them to get off.

FEMALE SINGER #1
Would y'all give us a chance?
We trying to do our best for
y'all, but y'all don't
appreciate shit. We the next
Supremes.

FEMALE SINGER #2
That's the problem with black people,
they don't support each other.

Someone in the crowd throws a rotten tomato, hitting the girl.

FEMALE SINGER #2
Whoever threw that, yo' momma.

A man dressed in a clown suit, runs across the stage with a long hook in his hand. He grabs the lead singer by the waist, pulling her off. From the opposite side of the stage enters the Apollo Theater M.C., BUDDY JENKINS, dressed in a tan sharkskin suit. As Buddy walks across the stage, he has a stern look on his face.

BUDDY
I am really disappointed in this
audience tonight. How could you
do that to the next Supremes?
Y'all too cold.
(he laughs)
And now we're gonna continue the
show with the next group. I
think these boys are bad. You're
in for a special treat. Ladies
and gentlemen - Bird And The
Midnight Falcons.

From the wings of the theater Bird And The Midnight Falcons dance quickly on to the stage. Bird goes to work singing to the ladies. On the front row we see Cookie and ten girls. They scream wildly, creating false hysterics to motivate the crowd to cheer even more. Pops watches some of their moves from the stage wings, he leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. APOLLO THEATER DRESSING ROOM

Jimmy, Eleanor, Brenda, Baby Doll and the group wait in a small, drab, backstage dressing room. Everyone has butterflies. The room looks as if a funeral is taking place.

Pops enters the room.

POPS

You guys ain't got nothing to worry about. The group on stage is good, but they can't touch us. And they're the only real competition tonight. It's gonna be a piece of cake.

Eddie is smiling a bit too much. Baby Doll puts a stick of gum in her mouth then gives one to Eddie. Jimmy watches Eddie closely as Buddy enters the room.

BUDDY

You guys are on next, oh and there's a few house rules I want to tell you about. If the crowd starts to boo you and you see the man coming with the hook, get off. And we got a new house policy, the house pianist plays for all the groups.

DUCK

The house piano player? We didn't rehearse with him, he doesn't even know the song, the tempo, the melody.

JIMMY

Duck, let me handle this. Buddy, we will be using our own piano player. Let me speak to the manager, 'cause my boys have worked too hard to get here and to find out about some new house policy that nobody told us about.

BUDDY

Hey, don't get upset at me. I don't make the rules.

JIMMY

Let me talk to your boss.

BUDDY

I'm on y'all's side. I'm sorry, but that's the rules. And if you can't deal with the rules then you won't be going on the stage, plain and simple.

JIMMY

(to group)

We can walk or we can deal with

JIMMY (CONT.)

it, Duck.

Duck hangs his head low, mad. He doesn't say anything.

DRESSER

It won't prove nothing by walking.

DUCK

(to Buddy)

It ain't fair...

BUDDY

You don't have anything to worry about, trust me, he's great.

Everyone starts to leave the room. Eleanor and Jimmy are last.

ELEANOR

Everything is going to be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. APOLLO THEATER STAGE - NIGHT

Bird And The Midnight Falcons finish their number with fancy footwork. Buddy walks across the stage applauding the group. We see Flash in the audience watching. In the wings Choirboy leads the group in a silent prayer.

BUDDY

Ladies and gentlemen, Bird And The Midnight Falcons...take another bow fellahs.

(he pushes the crowd harder)

We've got some special people in the house tonight that I must introduce. Mr. Big Red Davis of Big Red Records, and an artist he discovered right here at the Apollo Amateur Night, Miss Linda James.

BIG RED, a well groomed man, early forties, waves at the crowd. He lifts LINDA, a beautiful girl, by the hand to take a bow. Seated with them is a young street hustler named MONROE DIXON.

Close on Jimmy looking at Big Red with resentment.

BUDDY

Well, we gonna keep the show moving right along.

Angle on Leon and Lester and their dates, sitting in the last

row of the theatre. The girls are upset with their arms crossed.

LEON

Why you mad?

Back to Buddy.

BUDDY

I just talked to this group backstage and they say they are better than Bird And The Midnight Falcons and The Temptations put together.

The crowd starts to boo.

BUDDY

I know, I know, but we shall see. Ladies and gentlemen, The Five Heartbeats.

Buddy applauds and exits into the wing. Jimmy stands in the wing with Pops. Buddy flashes a shit-eating grin.

JIMMY

What the fuck was that?

BUDDY

Hey, calm down, I'm just doing my job. That's just to get the crowd going. Good luck.

The crowd starts to boo as The Five Heartbeats take center stage. As the music starts, it is considerably slow and obviously throwing them off. Duck looks over to the piano player, snapping his fingers trying to give him the beat. Cookie and her girlfriends now sit with their arms crossed, looking bored. From the backstage wings, we see Jimmy and Pops rushing toward the other side of the stage to get closer to the piano player. As they get to the right stage wing, two young men are blocking them from getting on stage.

JIMMY

Step to the side.

THUG #1

Nobody's allowed on stage during the performance.

JIMMY

I said get outta my way.

POPS

Are you deaf or just dumb?!

THUG #1

You heard what I said, Grandpa.

POPS

Grandpa...?! Jimmy, hold my cane. Why don't we step outside right now, and I'll kick your young, punk-ass like you stole something!

Eddie is starting to lose it. The rejection is getting to him. As he tries to continue, he sees his mother and father in the audience. His father looks at him with a twisted smile, glowing at Eddie's failure. As the rest of the group perform, they spin with their backs to the audience and hold a conversation between dancing.

DUCK

He's fucking up my song.

J.T.

Ain't nothing we can do about it.

Choirboy looks really frightened and scared.

CHOIRBOY

Just cool out before they start throwing stuff.

DRESSER

Duck, cool out, they set us up. We lost this one. There'll be other talent shows.

DUCK

Bullshit!

Duck slowly walks over to the piano player. Without any warning Duck kicks the stool from underneath the piano player. He jumps behind the keys of the piano and starts to play. The piano player gets up ready to fight, but before he can do anything J.T. and Dresser dance over, ready to fight, leaving Choirboy in the middle of the stage scared. The two thugs back up the piano player. Eddie stares back at his father, refusing to give him the satisfaction that he's failing. Eddie starts to improvise notes he's never hit before. J.T. and the thugs raise fists, but before a punch is thrown, they freeze when they hear Eddie hits a high note, causing the whole room to take notice. He jumps off the stage and makes his way down to Cookie. The rest of the group jumps from the stage, singing and spinning through the crowd like it was a part of their show.

Close on Pops in the wings, spinning and doing the steps with the group.

Eddie is singing his heart out to Cookie. He takes her by the

hand and looks into her eyes as he sings. In the balcony Big Red sits up and takes notice of Eddie's showmanship. Eddie looks over to Duck.

EDDIE

Duck, let's do it like we do it
in the tunnel.

Duck gets up and joins the group. Flash watches closely as they begin to sing in five part a cappella harmony. Eddie drops to his knees in front of Cookie. She tries to hold back, but can't any longer. Eddie he sings a high falsetto note; he leans in to kiss Cookie but she faints in his arms. The crowd goes berserk. Eddie gently places her back into the seat, unconscious. Girl #1 and Girl #2 fan her. From the right stage wing, we see Bird and his group.

BIRD

(yells)

Get your ass up, Cookie! How
could she do this to me?!

Buddy walks past Jimmy from the wings.

BUDDY

Your boys are a hit. I knew it.

Buddy walks out to center stage.

BUDDY

Ladies and gentlemen, once
again, The Five Heartbeats.

The crowd gives them a standing ovation. The group looks to one another, smiling and taking bows.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEAKEASY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The club is very nice. A local DJ plays records in the corner. Leon and Lester are on the dance floor dancing up a storm. We see the group with their dates seated at a table, except Duck and J.T. Duck makes eyes at a girl sitting at a faraway table. The girl flirts back at Duck, he smiles. Duck whispers in J.T.'s ear.

DUCK

Let's do the "shy brother".

J.T. sees the girl, his mouth drops open because she's so beautiful.

J.T.

Okay, yeah, I'll do it.

Brenda and Dresser are having a quiet argument at the table.

BRENDA

I saw you looking at her.

DRESSER

She said she liked the show and
wanted an autograph.

We see Pops and a beautiful, young, shapely, sexpot all of
twenty-one, come over to the table. Pops has a disgusted look
on his face.

POPS

Great show.

He leaves with the girl.

J.T.

How does an old man like that
get a...

Monroe walks over to the table.

MONROE

Excuse me, I don't mean to
interrupt. I just want to say
congratulations to everybody -
it was a great show and my boss
wants to meet you.

Monroe signals, and from across the room, Big Red walks over.

MONROE

This is Mr. Big Red Davis of Big
Red Records.

BIG RED

I enjoyed your show tonight. I
really enjoyed your showmanship
and style. When you guys start
looking for a record label,
please keep me in mind. I'm
just an old country boy with a
small little company, but I work
hard for my artists. Here's my
card.

As he hands his card to Eddie, Jimmy walks up with Eleanor and
takes the card.

BIG RED

(surprised)

Jimmy, it's been a long time!

JIMMY

I know. These are my boys.

BIG RED
Really? Call me when you start
looking for a record company.
Congratulations again.

JIMMY
(removed)
Thank you.

Big Red leaves with Monroe. Monroe introduces him to Bird on the other side of the room. J.T. leans over and whispers into Duck's ear.

J.T.
It's time.

DUCK
Right, right, "shy brother."

J.T. gets up from the table, goes over and sits with the girl.

ELEANOR
Jimmy's got a surprise for you.
Tell them.

JIMMY
Well, I made some plans win or
lose tonight. I feel it's time
for us to go into the studio.
So this Saturday we're going to
cut our first single.

The group cheers and applauds Jimmy's decision.

CUT TO:

J.T. is sitting with the beautiful girl. He points over at Duck looking shy.

J.T.
Yeah, that's my baby brother
over there.

GIRL
I think he's kinda cute.

J.T.
I'm having a terrible time
tonight, 'cause I gotta babysit
him. He can't dance, he doesn't
know how to talk to girls and
he's still a virgin. Look at
his stupid little face.

Duck now looks painfully shy, overdoing it.

GIRL

Now that you mention it, he does
look stupid.

J.T.

I haven't danced all night; I'm
ready to go home.

GIRL

Would you like to dance?

J.T.

Sure, sure.

J.T. and the girl get up from the table and walk toward Duck,
then past Duck onto the dance floor. J.T. whispers in Duck's
ear.

J.T.

I don't know what happened - you
gotta practice more on looking
shy.

CUT TO:

INT. SUNLIGHT RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

The recording studio is filled with old equipment. Jimmy,
Eleanor, Pops, and the recording studio engineer are packed in
the control booth. The engineer begins the session.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UPPER MIDDLE CLASS HOME - DAY

We see Duck putting several poems into an envelope and seals
it. He slips it in the mailbox. The front door opens and
Duck quickly dashes across the street. Tanya comes out and a
handsome young man in a convertible pulls up. Tanya jumps in
the car with him as Duck, depressed, watches them pull off.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE ROCK RECORD PRESSING WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

We see a record going down an assembly line, a 45. One
machine cuts the record perfectly, another machine sticks a
label on the sides of the record. We see a man standing near
a stack of boxes with a 45 in his hand. As he looks around
the warehouse, it is empty except for a lone security guard
making rounds. He takes the last 45 off the assembly line,
puts it in a box and sneaks out through a back door. The man
hands them to Jimmy and Pops, who are hidden outside.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGHDAD RECORDS - DAY

We see a short little man wearing glasses, sitting behind a large oak desk. He holds the 45 in his hand, smiling, totally pleased. He is DAVID GREEN, owner of Baghdad Records. Jimmy Potter and the Heartbeats are also seated in the room.

DAVID

I love this record, I mean it's hot. It's the sound, you guys are geniuses. You're brilliant, these lyrics move me, they shake me, they bake me, but I only got one problem. I don't think the song is right for this group.

He presses an intercom on his desk.

DAVID

But, I think there's a group that it would be perfect for.
(speaks into the intercom)
Marsha, would you send in The Five Horsemen?

The door swings open and five tall, blond, blue-eyed guys walk in, wearing pastel sweaters, very preppie.

GUY #1

We love the tune, we think it's groovy. We even worked on our own arrangement.

The Five Horsemen sing a mellow, stiff version of the song.

CUT TO:

INT. FREE SOUND RECORDS - DAY

We see an elderly man, behind the desk, holding the 45 in his hand. His staff of employees surround him.

BOSS

We handle everything, promotions, bookings and publishing. Don't be alarmed by that contract. That's just to protect you and us from the other guy.

Jimmy is seated in the center of a couch holding a hundred page contract, surrounded by the guys. He looks up from the contract.

JIMMY

It says here, if we were to die,
any debts would have to paid by
our kids?!

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY JAMES RECORDS - DAY

The office is in total disarray. Posters of James Brown, Screaming Jay Hawkins, and Little Richard decorate the walls. The group sits in the office waiting. A man enters, dressed in a sixties version of the disco-pick-up clothes, complete with gold medallions. His hair stands on his head like Buckwheat. He rushes into the room. He is the record company owner.

BILLY

I'm sorry I'm late, but I was in
the studio all night with this
sweet, young thang. I love your
tune. Only problem I got with
the tune, can I be frank, what I
really think y'all missing is
screaming.

(starts to scream)

Look what it did for James Brown.
You hear what I'm talkin' about?

CUT TO:

INT. BIG RED RECORDS - DAY

The group is seated at a large table in the conference room. Jimmy sits reading a contract, Big Red sits on the edge of the table. Duck studies the gold albums on the wall.

DUCK

All I want is a gold album.

BIG RED

All you've got to do is write
those songs and it could be
yours. Why don't you take that
one for now because yours is
coming real soon. Choirboy,
Jimmy tells me you're big in the
church. Maybe we could do a
gospel tune. You guys want
something else to drink? Sheila
is my secretary, if you need
anything you can call her.

J.T.

Anything?

BIG RED

Anything.

She laughs and exits. Jimmy has finished reading the contracts. He looks up.

JIMMY

The only problem I have is with all these options.

BIG RED

Jimmy, you know the business. When you find something special you want to hold on to it. I'm sure your contract with these boys is for a long time.

JIMMY

I trust my boys, all we have is a handshake.

BIG RED

Really? In that case what's a fair number of options for you?

JIMMY

Well, three is standard. Since you're taking us on, I would say four options.

BIG RED

Sounds good to me. I'll have Sheila change it right away. Any other changes your lawyer would make, would probably be minor, so do we have a deal? It's going to be just like old times, Jimmy.

JIMMY

I hope not.

Big Red laughs and they shake hands. Big Red hugs Jimmy.

BIG RED

This is a moment in history that has to be captured and celebrated.

(goes to intercom on table)

Sheila, can you ask the staff photographer to come up here? Ever since you called me yesterday, Jimmy, I haven't been thinking about nothing but this group. I'm gonna put a major, major push behind your first single. You guys are going to have tailor made suits. Your own personal

BIG RED (CONT.)
station wagon. But the real
bonus of success is that you
will get the pick of the ladies.

J.T.
Now that's what I'm talking
about... You don't have to pay
me nothing.

All the guys laugh as the staff photographer enters. They
huddle around the table preparing to take the picture.

BIG RED
I want to send this picture to
my mother in Georgia. On three
everybody say - Big Red Records.

The group poses for the picture and together they all yell
"Big Red Records", as the photographer snaps a photo.

CUT TO:

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Duck stands outside the house and rings the buzzer. Tanya
comes down and greets him at the gate.

TANYA
Can I help you?

DUCK
Yeah, I'm Duck.

TANYA
Do I know you?

DUCK
I'm the one that's been writing
you the poems.

Tanya looks Duck up and down in disbelief.

TANYA
You? I think your poems are
nice, but I don't think it's a
good idea for you to come by
again.

DUCK
Why?

TANYA
Because.

Tanya's father appears at the door and opens it wider.

DR. SAWYER

Can I help you, son? Are you
here about the stuff for the
Salvation Army?

He stares Duck up and down.

DUCK

No.

Duck walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. WGCJ RADIO STATION - NIGHT

Jimmy walks down a narrow corridor at a radio station. Music
is being piped through an intercom system. We hear the James
Brown song "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag." Jimmy stops in front
of a large window and sees his friend, WILD RUDY of the record
world, hard at work.

WILD RUDY

I'm the only DJ that doesn't
chatter. I cut the talk and
spin the platters. Big butts
dancing is all that matters.

He pushes a button, we hear a Tarzan scream.

WILD RUDY

I'm Wild Rudy of the record world.
Coming up next, we got more James
Brown, The Dells and The Spinners.
But right now we've got the women
with the nice buns singing,
"Nowhere To Run".
(he laughs)

Wild Rudy puts the record on, spins away from the turn table,
and looks up to see Jimmy laughing. Jimmy goes into the
booth, they shake hands and hug.

WILD RUDY

You look great.

JIMMY

You don't look bad for an old
man either, I'm sorry it's taken
me this long to come and see
you. How's Shirley and the
kids?

WILD RUDY

Fine, fine. You know my oldest
son just turned twenty and wants
to get married.

JIMMY

You're starting to make me feel
real old. Whatever happened to
the mellow sounds of Rudy
Walker, the Mellow Man?

WILD RUDY

I wasn't making no money. The
more zanier and crazy you are,
the more kids eat it up. So
what brings you over to this
part of the hood?

JIMMY

I'm managing a singing group now
and I need a favor.

WILD RUDY

Just give me the record.

Jimmy hands Wild Rudy the record, Rudy smiles, looks down at
the record, recognizes the label. A concerned look comes
across his face.

WILD RUDY

What've you gotten yourself
into?

JIMMY

I've got everything under
control and I appreciate this
favor.

WILD RUDY

Listen, Jimmy, you know Big Red.

JIMMY

I said I can handle myself.
Look, when Michael gets married,
I want to be there.

WILD RUDY

Still the same old hard-headed
Jimmy. Just be careful.

Wild Rudy spins his chair back over to the mike at the
turntable and goes to work.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCK AND J.T.'S BEDROOM - MORNING

J.T. sleeps in a bottom bunk with one of his little brothers.
Duck sleeps in the top bunk with two of his little brothers.
They are twisted every which-way. In the another bunk bed
Duck and J.T.'s five sisters sleep. A clock-radio on the

dresser reads: 6:59 A.M., then clicks to 7:00 A.M. - the radio comes on.

D.J.

(on radio)

WGCI - Dougie Mills, playing the early morning jams to get you to the J-O-B. We got The O'Jays, The Delfonics, Little Stevie Wonder and The Four Tops comin' up - but first - a new group with a hot single. The Five Heartbeats - singing, "You Can't Hide From My Love".

The record starts to play. Duck half asleep, sings along with the record waking J.T. up.

J.T.

Duck, would you shut up? And stop trying to sing everybody's part.

DUCK

I'm not trying to sing everybody's part. It's on the radio.

Duck, waking up, realizes where the song is coming from. He springs up fast, banging his head on the ceiling.

DUCK

J.T., it's on the radio!

J.T. springs up from the bed, banging his head on the upper bunk.

J.T.

That's our song!

Duck and J.T. scream, waking up the whole house. They turn up the radio. Their sisters wake up, Leon and Lester run into the room in their underwear, Mr. and Mrs. Matthews run into the room.

MR. MATTHEWS

What the hell's going on in here?!

DUCK

That's our song on the radio!

J.T.

Momma, that's our song!

DUCK

Pops, I wrote this song.

J.T.

Pops, that's me right there,
listen.

Mr. and Mrs. Matthews and the whole family are all smiles. Mrs. Matthews gives her two sons a big hug - the bedroom is chaotic. Duck dances with one of his sisters. J.T. picks up one of the children and spins him around the room. Leon and Lester do the neighborhood "cool dance" to the song.

CUT TO:

INT. BIG RED'S OFFICE - DAY

The fellahs are seated on the couch, excited, talking among themselves. Big Red and Jimmy walk into the office, both upset something has gone wrong. The guys stop talking.

JIMMY

The deal's off.

BIG RED

That's fine with me. I'll have
Sheila tear up your contract.

JIMMY

Good, I regret the day I brought
my group to your company. Let's
get out of here fellahs.

BIG RED

You don't know nothing about the
record business. You and your
group just can't walk in and
take over. You know what you
are?

JIMMY

C'mon, say it to my face.

Jimmy and Big Red are in each others face, ready to fight.
The group looks on, shocked.

BIG RED

You are a fucking...genius.

Jimmy and Big Red hug and laugh, looking at the boys.

BIG RED

Gotcha.

(laughs)

I love this man. You guys have
a hit, it's one of the most
requested records on all the
radio stations! This is
phenomenal for your first time
out. So, Jimmy and I have been

BIG RED (CONT.)
mapping out a strategy, we've
decided to do a twenty city tour, so
boys, get ready for the road. And I
want you guys to get some sleep
tonight, so you can look beautiful
for the album cover photo session
tomorrow morning.

CUT TO:

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY

The guys are dressed in their own clothes, taking pictures as
a photographer shoots away. In the back watching the session,
is a short man with glasses named PHIL SHUMWAY, he is the main
promotion man at Big Red Records. Phil yells encouragement to
the guys. Dresser is clean and doesn't want to joke around.
J.T. makes bunny ears behind Duck's head. Choirboy wears dark
glasses. Eddie has a hangover and Monroe brings him a cup of
coffee.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOREFRONT CHURCH - DAY

On the second floor of the church is an apartment. A heated
argument can be heard between Choirboy's father and mother and
Choirboy.

MYRA
(off screen)
...It's just music.

INT. CHOIRBOY'S HOME - DAY

The family is in the living room having an argument.

PASTOR STONE
How can I preach the word of God
and expect them to listen when
my own son disobeys me? How
does that look?

CHOIRBOY
Daddy, all I'm doing is singing.
God gave me this voice.

MYRA
It's his life. He's got to
experience different things.
Anthony, go on, have fun on the
road. Just try to read your
bible everyday.

PASTOR STONE

Myra, you know this is wrong.
And Anthony, you disappoint me
and you hurt my heart. You
can't serve two masters. Go on.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLARK PARK PLAYGROUND - LATE AFTERNOON

The park is crowded with people. Children playing on swings and sliding boards, etc. A group of basketball players drink cokes. An elderly couple sit on a park bench, playing checkers. Dresser and Brenda are seated on another bench.

DRESSER

Ever since the group has started
to come together, you've had
this attitude.

BRENDA

I just think we should end it.

DRESSER

Why? That's all I want to know.

BRENDA

Dresser, I'm not stupid. When
you get on the road there'll be
all kinds of women chasing after
you. And I know I'm not the
prettiest woman. Dresser, I'm
just a waitress in a donut shop.
I don't belong with you anymore,
you're going to be meeting all
kinds of beautiful women...

DRESSER

Brenda, you're overreacting.

BRENDA

No. Because you're going to be
on the road with J.T. and Eddie;
and when you get around them you
change. I don't want to end up
like Baby Doll and Eddie. He's
screwing everybody and she's
still with him.

DRESSER

I'm not going any place. I only
want to be with you. Do you
remember when we first met. I
was singing at the Austin High
School talent show. I did that
split and busted my pants.

Brenda laughs a little, remembering that night.

DRESSER

Everybody started laughing and I didn't know why. I just kept on singing. I felt a little draft, but I was sweating so much that I didn't even know where it was coming from. And I looked in the audience and I saw you, and you were the only one that wasn't laughing.

BRENDA

(smiling)

Because I was listening to your voice.

Dresser takes Brenda's hand. Brenda smiles even more, and they kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. MATTHEWS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The house is packed with the Matthews family relatives and friends. Everybody in the house is crying or looking sad. Leon enters from the hallway carrying two beat-up suitcases. Duck goes over to the couch where his mother is seated. She is crying uncontrollably. J.T. comes over as well to comfort his mother. Mrs. Matthews hugs both of them, overwhelmed with emotion, gets up, runs out of the room crying. Duck and J.T. start walking towards the front door. Mr. Matthews comes out of the kitchen. His eyes are red, he has been crying, and now he tries to be strong in front of his sons. He puts his arm around J.T. and Duck, hugs them, bringing them in real close.

MR. MATTHEWS

I know there's gonna be a lot of young gals on the road. Just make sure you put a helmet on that soldier, understand?

J.T. and Duck don't understand.

MR. MATTHEWS

You know - put a tent over your tree.

J.T. and Duck still don't get it.

MR. MATTHEWS

Put a hat on your Willy...

J.T. and Duck still don't get it.

Mr. Matthews grabs them and whisper in their ear.

J.T.

Oh yeah, right, right.

DUCK

Oh yeah, use a rubber.

J.T. and Duck pick up their luggage.

LESTER

If anybody gets sick, give a
call, me and Leon know all the
words and the dance steps.

Angle on Leon and Lester doing some of the dance steps.

MR. MATTHEWS

And when y'all get to Texas,
call your cousin Ruth. She's
kin to Betty Jean on your
mother's side of the family.

DUCK

Daddy, we gotta go, bye.

The family watches them walk down the stairs, waving goodbye.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

We see a beat up station wagon heading down the highway.
Painted on the other side of the wagon in big bold letters is
THE FIVE HEARTBEATS HIT SINGLE "YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM LOVE".
The city lights behind the station wagon fade ever so quickly,
as it crosses onto a bridge, leaving the city farther in the
distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - SUNRISE

The city is now gone, only the hills and slopes of a more
rural America can be seen. The guys are all asleep in the car
except for Eddie looking out of the window and Choirboy
reading his bible.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARLEM DUKE - DAY

The station wagon drives pass the club then slowly backs up.
The car stops and everyone gets out looking at the old, beat
up nightclub. There is a tilted sign over the window, it
reads "Performing Here Tonight, The Five Heartbeats",
obviously spelled wrong. Everyone looks in disbelief except
Jimmy.

JIMMY
Welcome to the "Chitlin'
Circuit".

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM DUKE SOCIAL CLUB - NIGHT

The group is on stage performing. There's one and a half mikes with short cords and half a spotlight. The club is packed with people; the group is singing to a track. The crowd is very rowdy and unruly. One customer throws a bottle on the stage. It hits Duck and he just spins with the choreography. Then a fight breaks out in back of the club, someone screams "He's got a gun". We hear shooting and The Five Heartbeats hit the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. SLEAZY MOTEL - DAY

Jimmy gets in the wagon looking very tired. Duck sits in the back of the bus reading a fashion magazine and covering up J.T. who is hiding. A local girl, her three big brothers and her father, with a shotgun, stand outside the car asking questions about J.T. Choirboy is on a phone outside.

CHOIRBOY
I love you Momma. Daddy won't
come to the phone...? Bye.

He finishes his phone call and gets in the car. J.T. screams "pull off!" The station wagon pulls off quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN GAS STATION - DAY

We see a Confederate flag and three redneck types peeking out of a window, watching Jimmy whose half asleep, filling up the gas tank. Choirboy is on the phone yelling and pleading. He finally slams down the phone.

Angle on Choirboy's bible, left in the phone booth as he gets into the car. The car pulls off. Duck is coming out of the mens room. He looks around for the car and sees that it's gone. He yawns half asleep and walks over to the water fountain, takes a drink and splashes water on his face. There is a "colored" water fountain and a "white" water fountain. Duck is at the one marked "white". One of the rednecks inside grabs a shotgun. The station wagon backs quickly into the frame. Jimmy yells, Duck jumps in and they take off.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

In the back seat of the car, J.T. and Eddie are laughing while Duck sits looking mad. Choirboy sits in the back looking out the window. Dresser is reading a letter from Brenda. Something in the letter upsets him, he slowly balls the letter up. Eddie and J.T. are laughing really loud.

J.T.

Duck acted like he was scared.
Got up, ran out the room.

DUCK

J.T. won't you stop with the
story, man.

J.T.

What? You getting sensitive
now?

DUCK

I'm not like you. I gotta feel
something for the girl.

J.T.

Well from now on we're gonna
have to get a code. If I got a
lady with me in our hotel room,
I'll leave a pillow and blanket
outside the door, Mr. Sensitive.
I have feelings...

J.T. stops talking as he sees police lights. Jimmy pulls the
car over. There are two squad cars.

POLICEMAN

Could everyone get out of the
car?

JIMMY

What's the problem?

POLICEMAN

I said get out of the car!

All the policemen draw guns.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

The guys all have their hands on the car. The police have
their belongings spread all over the highway. Another

policeman reads the writing on the side of the car.

POLICEMAN

How do I know y'all a singing
group? Why don't y'all sing
something.

The policeman smiles. With their hands on the car, totally
degraded, The Five Heartbeats reluctantly start to sing.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - HOURS LATER

The station wagon heads down the freeway. All the guys are
quiet with solemn faces, except for Duck, who sings "America,
The Beautiful" to himself while he writes lyrics to a song
entitled "Are We Free". The scene fades to black.

CUT TO:

EXT. . SMALL TOWN BUS DEPOT - DAY

The station wagon is parked at the side of the depot. The
group sits on a bench waiting as a Greyhound bus unloads. We
see Brenda get off. Dresser runs over and hugs her very
tight. Phil gets off the bus, the guys, Pops and Jimmy walk
over to him.

PHIL

You guys look great. It feels
good to be out of the city. A
nice bus ride is just what I
needed. Record's doing well on
the charts and we're just about
to release a second cut. Big Red
sends his best.

JIMMY

Did he send our paychecks?

PHIL

I've got them right here.

JIMMY

Tell Big Red we need more money.
I'm tired of staying in sleazy
motels with toilets that don't
work. Did you bring the report
on record sales?

PHIL

I've got it right here.

J.T.

When are we going to see the
album cover? Do you have it?

PHIL

(hesitant)

Yeah...

The whole group instantly gets excited.

DUCK

Well let's see it.

PHIL

First, let me say Big Red really
believes in you guys. So we
decided to change the cover a
little bit because we see the
big picture - black and white
people buying this album.

Phil goes into his briefcase and pulls out the album. The
group huddles over his shoulder to get a good look. They see
it and are shocked and paralyzed. The album cover is a
picture of a white, all american family, at the beach having a
picnic with two little kids dancing by a radio.

PHIL

(stuttering)

Let me explain... Everyone is
going to know who this group is.
We felt the picture wasn't as
important as it was that we
succeed in crossing over.

JIMMY

Fuck crossing over! I want my
boys back on the cover!

PHIL

It's too late.

JIMMY

We'll see about that!

Jimmy and Pops rush to a phone booth inside the depot.

EDDIE

Why do we have to crossover?
Nobody else crosses over but
Niggers. What? They can accept
our music just as long as they
don't have to see us?

DRESSER

I can see his point. These things take time. We build an audience, then come out strong.

J.T.

Dresser, you know that's bullshit. The crossover is the double cross 'cause the next thing they'll try to change is our sound. Have us sounding like white boys. And all those white boys that sing like niggers... They never cross over to us. I never saw Elvis Presley with five niggers on his cover!

PHIL

Let's not lose our tempers here. This isn't a racial issue; we've all got to look at the big picture.

EDDIE

Fuck the big picture if they can't accept who we are and how we look!

Eddie walks away, pissed. J.T. takes the album from Phil and studies it. Duck walks over.

DUCK

(solemnly)

Everybody's gonna think that The Five Heartbeats are a little white family from New Jersey.

(jokingly)

Oh, I can see us on the album. We're on the other side of the beach behind the fence.

J.T. slings the album into the air with all his might.

CUT TO:

INT. \$6.00 MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open. Duck gets off and walks down the hall. As he approaches his room, he notices a pillow and blanket outside the door. Duck bangs on the door.

DUCK

J.T., I'm getting sick of this shit! This is the fifth time this week!

He picks up the pillow and blanket, walks down the hall. As Duck comes to Jimmy's room, he watches him play the saxophone by the window. As Duck turns the corner, he sees Eddie with a pillow and blanket. They both sit down.

DUCK

What are you doing in the hall?

EDDIE

Choirboy's got some girl in the room.

DUCK

Choirboy? Choirboy!

Suddenly we see Dresser coming down the hall.

DUCK

What's wrong? Where's Brenda?

DRESSER

She's in the room sleeping. I was going to take a walk.

DUCK

What's wrong man? You been acting strange ever since we left Cleveland.

DRESSER

I got things on my mind.

DUCK

What things?

DRESSER

I'm just tired of being on the road. I'm ready to go home. I'm getting a little bored with the tour.

DUCK

Don't you think I know when you're lying to me?

DRESSER

(pause)

Brenda's pregnant.

Eddie and Duck don't know what to say. Dresser sits down.

DRESSER

I don't know what to do. I'm

DRESSER (CONT.)

not ready to be a father. I love Brenda more than anything in life. But I can't afford to raise a kid on what we make. I thought about dropping out of the group so I talked with Jimmy about it and I called Big Red. Big Red gave me the number to this doctor that can...

He goes into his pocket and pulls out a piece of paper with a phone number on it and starts to cry.

Duck and Eddie don't know what to do. Duck wants to comfort him but feels awkward. They've never seen Dresser like this.

EDDIE

You love Brenda, don't you?

DRESSER

Yeah, but I don't have a choice. I don't have the money to get married.

Eddie grabs the phone number from Dresser's hand and tears it up. He then goes into his pocket, pulls out a small wad of money and puts it in Dresser's hand. Duck takes off his shoe, then his sock and pulls out a small wad of money, smells it first then hands it to Dresser. Then Duck extends his hand, Eddie puts his hand on top of Duck's. Not knowing what to say, Dresser slowly places his hand on top of the pile.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL WEDDING CHAPEL - DAY

Dresser is wearing one of the suits he performs in. Choirboy gives Dresser the ring. The minister has a thick Spanish accent. He tells Dresser he may kiss the bride. Dresser and Brenda kiss. They run down the aisle leaving the church as the group throws rice. Duck carries a huge bag of rice, throwing handfuls. He throws a handful and hits J.T. in back of his head. As J.T. turns around Duck pretends that it wasn't him.

CUT TO:

INT. REGAL THEATER - NIGHT

The group is on stage dancing and singing. Eddie sings lead to a new song called "Rip Apart My Love." As he sings, the group backs him up with some fancy foot work. Duck and J.T. talk as they dance to the music. Duck is very upset.

DUCK

I'm sick of you going in my
suitcase and wearing my clothes
and not asking me first! And no
more sleeping in the hallway
either. You understand?!

They both turn, smile and sing into the mike. The audience
applauds, then they go back to arguing.

DUCK

What do you have to say?

J.T.

Duck, you wear my stuff, too.

DUCK

At least I ask! You just can't
bogart my shit. I want some
respect.

J.T.

Stop acting like a bitch. Just
shut up and dance.

Duck doesn't say anything, he continues to dance. As he
spins, doing a hand gesture, he slaps J.T. upside his head.
J.T., surprised, gives him a look - two can play that game.
He turns while doing a low spin, and elbows Duck sharply in
the stomach. Duck loses it, he stops dancing and rips J.T.'s
jacket. J.T. rips Duck's jacket and grabs him into a head
hold. They roll around fighting on stage. Eddie looks over
still singing lead. Dresser and Choirboy move their mike
stands in front of the fight trying to block it from the
audience, as J.T. and Duck continue to fight.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

The group is in the dressing room having a heated conversation
about what just happened. J.T. and Duck both stand in ripped
up uniforms.

J.T.

Duck, it wasn't nothing that we
couldn't deal with. You didn't
have to bring that shit on
stage!

EDDIE

Yeah, Duck, that was some dumb
shit, man.

DUCK

No dumber than you damn near
getting drunk every night before
the show to calm your nerves.

EDDIE

I'll bust your ass!

DUCK

Let's go! Let's go!

J.T.

Hey, it ain't gonna be none of
that!

JIMMY

Hey, let's cool out! What
happened tonight was a mistake
and I don't want that to happen
again! Understand?! But, we've
got to learn to use everything
that happens on that stage.

CUT TO:

INT. FOX THEATER - DETROIT - NIGHT

Eddie is singing lead once again on, "Rip Apart My Love."
Suddenly we see a fight break out between Duck and J.T.
Choirboy holds Duck, Dresser holds J.T. Eddie stops singing.
Everybody looks at the fight on stage.

DUCK

I'm just fighting with you
'cause this girl broke my heart.

J.T.

But did you try to give her your
heart? Or were you hiding
behind the walls of love?

DUCK

Yes, J.T., I was afraid; but I
understand with true love, you
got to expose yourself, so
fellahs, we got to expose
ourselves.

Duck and J.T. are doing some bad acting - then they rip each
other's clothes off. Choirboy rips Dresser's, and Dresser
rips off Choirboy's coat. Eddie rips off his own. The suits
are break-away; as they rip them off, there is another suit
underneath even more stylish with gold sequinned vests. The
crowd goes mad jumping to it's feet applauding, as the group
goes back to singing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BIG RED'S OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy and the group stand talking to Sheila, Big Red's secretary.

JIMMY

I want to talk to him right now.
We have four hit records on the
charts and Big Red hasn't
returned any of my phone calls.
I know he's dodging me.

SHEILA

I'm telling you, Mr. Potter...
Big Red isn't in.

The intercom buzzes. Sheila picks it up and talks on the phone, then hands it to Jimmy.

SHEILA

It's for you.

BIG RED

Jimmy, I'm trying to do my best
for this group. I don't need no
shit from you! If you don't
like what I'm doing, meet me in
the parking lot right now and
I'll kick your natural ass!

Jimmy slams down the phone and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jimmy and the group storm out of the building upset and are greeted by Big Red with a smile. He is seated on the hood of a brand new Cadillac with five more parked in a row.

BIG RED

What took you so long? What
color do you want?

The guys are all smiles, Jimmy looks in disbelief.

JIMMY

You always had a strange sense
of humor.

Big Red throws a set of keys to Eddie then to the rest of the guys.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

The guys are in their new cars, driving in a row down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

This is the beginning of a quick montage of the rising of The Five Heartbeats' career.

EXT. APOLLO THEATER - DAY

The Apollo Theater marquee shows The Five Heartbeats are now headlining. The group stands under the marquee with Jimmy; Dresser is proudly holding his new baby girl as Monroe takes a picture. Also on the bill are The Dells and The Manhattans.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSSTAND - DAY

We see the group at the newsstand buying stacks of magazines. They are on the cover of EBONY, JET, ROLLING STONES and finally, BILLBOARD. J.T. and Choirboy are looking at girlie magazines.

CUT TO:

INT. LE DOME RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Big Red and the guys are seated around a large table in this fancy restaurant. 1966 fades up on the screen. Duck, dressed to kill, is holding their new album. On the cover The Five Heartbeats are dressed in tuxedos with top hats and canes. The title of the album is "A Classy Affair". Everybody is smiling and looking at the album as the waiter comes up.

DRESSER

What are your specialties?

GROUP

And if there aren't any specialties...

We see Phil come in, kind of hurried.

PHIL

I'm glad I caught up with you guys. Jimmy made an error on

PHIL (CONT.)
the books. But we caught it in
time. And here's the check for the
additional money.

The group is all smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER DRESSING ROOM

Eddie and Monroe sit in the dressing room drinking and getting
coked up. As Baby Doll walks in they hide it, but she knows
something is wrong.

BABY DOLL
What do you think I am? Stupid?
Eddie, I've been watching you...
Like I don't know who Monroe is
and what he does.

MONROE
Eddie, what's up with this? You
ain't got your woman in'check?

EDDIE
Baby Doll, I think you're over
stepping your bounds.

BABY DOLL
No! I'm your woman and I've
always been there for you. I
can't do this anymore. I can't
stand back and watch you destroy
yourself. I can't help you.
The only person that can change
this is you. When you started
drinking I watched your back and
did what I could do. But now with
the drugs there's nothing I can do.
It's on you. I just came to tell
you that I'm packing up and I'll be
gone. And let me tell you
something about him. he ain't
worth shit.

Baby Doll leaves.

MONROE
Bitches.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

It is Christmas time and snow covers the ground. J.T., Duck and their brothers and sisters lead their mother and father down a street, blindfolded. They stop and take the blindfolds off very slowly. J.T. gives them some keys as Duck points to a huge house across the street.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD THEATER - NIGHT

The group is waiting in the wings to go on. The Dells are on stage singing "Stay In My Corner". Everyone is there except Eddie. As Jimmy paces, Flash walks up and starts talking to him. J.T. and Choirboy stand talking to two beautiful girls.

Eddie and Monroe come in through the backstage door half drunk and laughing. Eddie instantly and violently reacts to Jimmy talking to Flash.

EDDIE

You can't replace me, Jimmy. I know what you trying to do. But it ain't gonna work. Big Red told me what you're up to.

JIMMY

Eddie, you're talking crazy.

Jimmy walks away.

EDDIE

(to Flash)

And I can see right through you.

FLASH

Eddie, what are you talking about?

EDDIE

I ain't that drunk, Flash. I can see through you like cellophane. Stealing my moves, my style, trying to riff like me... If my woman hadn't left you'd probably try to take her.

FLASH

Eddie, you're wrong.

EDDIE

Get out of way you phony, two-faced, motherfucker. You want my spot, Flash, but you can't replace me 'cause you ain't got it. You're

EDDIE (CONT.)
just an ass-kisser on his way down.

Eddie staggers off into his dressing room.

CUT TO:

INT. FOX THEATER - DETROIT - NIGHT

The group is backstage waiting to go on. The Delfonics are on stage performing. The Eddie is nowhere to be found. Jimmy paces nervously. Choirboy comes over.

CHOIRBOY
Jimmy, I can sing his part.

Jimmy, flustered, not knowing what to do says yes. The stage manager gives the cue and the curtain goes up. The group performs without Eddie. 1967 fades up on the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The montage ends as we discover J.T., Duck and Dresser outside of a hotel room, with a hotel maid opening the door with a pass key. They walk into the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL V.I.P. SUITE - NIGHT

The hotel room has a large living room area with a fireplace. The guys walk back to the bedroom. Dresser sees and picks up several empty bottles of liquor off the floor. Duck looks at a bottle of pills on the night table, he picks them up and throws them in a trash can. Eddie lays asleep in the bed with a girl. J.T. gently shakes Eddie, waking him up. Eddie looks at the group, then looks at the clock next to the bed and says nothing. The girl wakes up, as she gets out of bed we see another girl laying on the other side of her.

J.T.
Eddie, what's going on?

DUCK
Eddie, can't you see through
Monroe? He's bringing you down.

EDDIE
No you guys are blind. I did
what I did tonight on purpose.
'Cause Big Red told me Jimmy's
on a power trip. Talkin' shit
about replacing people in the

EDDIE (CONT.)
group. So I just wanted to show
that motherfucker what time it was.

DUCK
So you left us hanging because
of some shit between you and
Jimmy?

EDDIE
'Cause Jimmy thinks he knows...

DRESSER
Eddie, that ain't got nothing to
do with what we're talking
about. We spoke on this
drinking and drug shit before.
You said you would cool out, so
we left you alone, hoping you
would come around. But it's
affecting you and that's
affecting the group.

EDDIE
Are you guys crazy? I have a
few drinks every now and then,
and now I'm an alcoholic.

DUCK
It's not enough that you're
destroying yourself, but did you
have to bring Baby Doll down
too?! You're worse than your
old man!

Eddie, in a fit of rage, jumps from the bed and quickly
attacks Duck and punches him in the mouth. Before he can
swing again, Dresser and J.T. grab Eddie. Eddie catches
himself. He looks at Duck on the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. JUSTINE'S NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

We see a nightclub packed with people, waiters with trays of
drinks and appetizers. A huge banner reads "Big Red Records
Congratulates The Five Heartbeats On Their First #1 Hit".
Duck is talking to a group of people in the corner. A woman
taps him on the shoulder, he turns to see Tanya. A waiter
walks by and Choirboy takes one of the drinks off the tray. A
beautiful girl reaches for one of the glasses but the waiter
doesn't see her, and continues to walk away. Choirboy sees
her and turns to give his glass to the girl. She smiles. Her
name is SANDRA TILLMAN, early twenties.

SANDRA

Thank you. But you didn't have to, I could have chased him to the other side of the room.

CHOIRBOY

You would have never caught him, these guys are assholes.

(pause)

So, are you enjoying the party?

SANDRA

I'm having an okay time. I'm here with my girlfriend, Janet. I don't even know who this group is.

CHOIRBOY

You never heard of The Five Heartbeats? Baby where you been? In a cave?

SANDRA

No, I'm really into jazz. From Bird to Miles, that's my speed.

Choirboy smiles.

CHOIRBOY

Oh, really? That shit's too slow for me.

SANDRA

My girlfriend Janet dragged me down here because she has a crush on one of the guys in the group, named Pigeon or something.

CHOIRBOY

You mean Duck.

SANDRA

Do you know him?

CHOIRBOY

I'm one of the lead singers of the Heartbeats. I put the group together.

Choirboy points at a large poster on the wall. The girl looks at the poster and sees Choirboy on it, then looks at Choirboy, feeling very embarrassed and stupid.

SANDRA

I didn't even know it was you.
Would you please excuse me?

CHOIRBOY

My name's Anthony. What's your
name?

SANDRA

My name is Sandra.

Duck is all smiles as he talks to Tanya. Another woman comes
up and whispers something in his ear. Duck exits through two
large doors and heads down a mirrored hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Duck walks down the hallway past several dressing rooms.
Coming out of one of the dressing rooms is Big Red with
several men, talking business. He sees Duck.

BIG RED

You're not leaving the party, are
you?

DUCK

Nah, I'm just looking for J.T.

BIG RED

I think he's in his dressing
room or maybe in Eddie's...

Suddenly Big Red is interrupted by Bird.

BIRD

I need to talk to you, Big Red.

BIG RED

Give me a minute, can't you see
I'm talking here?

BIRD

No, I wanna talk to you right
now about my royalties and how
you keep your books!

BIG RED

You know my office hours are
from nine to five.

BIRD

Fuck your office hours! I want
to talk to you right now,

BIRD (CONT.)
motherfucker!

Big Red doesn't blink. Without warning, he yanks Bird down the hallway. He punches Bird in the face several times and pushes him into the ladies bathroom, the other men follow.

CUT TO:

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Big Red punches Bird harder and harder. Several women run out of stalls. As they exit, one of the men holds the door closed.

BIG RED
Open the window.

The other man opens the bathroom window. Bird is on the curled up in pain. Big Red grabs him by the feet. Bird tries to cling to the bottom of the a radiator. The other man kicks his hand to make him let go. He then helps Big Red push Bird out the window. As Bird desperately claws to keep from being pushed, Big Red manages to push Bird out the window. Bird hangs out of a fourteen story window. Big Red and the man hold Bird by his ankles in mid air. Bird screams for his life.

BIG RED
What about my books? What do
you want to talk about?

Big Red shakes Bird by the ankles.

BIRD
Nothing!!

The man lets go of Bird's leg. He screams.

BIRD
(screaming)
I said nothing!!!

They pull Bird back through the window and drop him on the floor. Bird shakes uncontrollably.

BIG RED
If you have any other problems
with your royalties and my
books, my office hours are from
nine to five and we can talk
about it again.

CUT TO:

INT. J.T.'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

J.T. is sitting in the dressing room looking very sad.

DUCK

J.T., did you hear what I said?

J.T. sits there, lifeless.

DUCK

What's wrong?

J.T.

Nothing.

DUCK

No, there's something wrong.
You're just sitting here by
yourself and there's a major
party going on outside for us.
What's the deal? All the ladies
upstairs keep asking about you.

J.T.

They don't care nothing about
me. They just want to be seen
with J.T. of the Heartbeats.

DUCK

That's always been a part of
your rap; "Hello, I'm J.T. of
The Five Heartbeats."

J.T.

I know but I'm starting to feel
different about things, Duck.
I'm getting older. I don't want
to be an old man still chasing.
I'm tired of hanging out with
different ladies. It's like a
drug. I really don't get nothing
out of it. Sometimes I wish I
could be with one woman like
Dresser with Brenda and settle down
and have some kids. But I know I
can't do that. I like being with
different ladies. I can't control
myself.

DUCK

I don't know what to say. They
got places for alcoholics and
drug addicts, but I don't know
if they have any dick control
centers.

J.T.

Duck, I'm serious.

DUCK

I'm serious too. I don't know why you're sitting in here beating up on yourself. I think it's great that you're becoming aware of certain things. You're just starting to deal with what's real. One day you'll find that one lady, when it's right it's gonna happen. You can't force it. You know, this would make a great song.

He takes out a piece of brown paper bag and writes down some notes. J.T. looks up at Duck and smiles.

DUCK

When you have those kids just remember to name one of those crumb snatchers after me.

Duck leaves the room and heads back down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A couple comes out of Eddie's dressing room. Duck smiles and goes in.

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Duck pushes the door, spins into the room ready to party. He is greeted by two bodyguards that push him harshly. A voice from across the room tells the bodyguards to let Duck enter. Duck looks around the room, sees Eddie and Monroe and about fifteen other people huddled around a table. There is a large mirror on the table and a large pile of cocaine. A small, skinny man sits at the center of the table, laughing to himself and chopping up the cocaine with a razor blade. Monroe snorts up two lines, spins the mirror over to Eddie. He does several lines of cocaine. Duck just stares at Eddie.

EDDIE

Relax Duck, don't you understand? We're rich. We can do anything we want to. C'mon Duck, try a couple of lines.
(laughs)

EDDIE (CONT.)

Try it. We gotta hit, we're number one, Duck.

DUCK

And I want to stay there. Eddie, these are not your friends. They'll be your friends as long as you continue to buy this shit!

MONROE

Duck, nobody invited you in here. But you can stay, take a seat, do some lines, don't do no lines, more for me. Sit down 'cause the real freak show is gonna start in a minute. Vanessa, do your dance for Duck.

VANESSA

Ooh, let me get my hit first.

Vanessa takes a hit of the cocaine, then slowly dances over to Duck. She lifts her skirt, revealing garters, and dances in front of Duck. He pushes her away.

DUCK

I'm not impressed with this shit. Everybody dances for somebody. Next week Big Red will have your ass in some pumps and garters, Monroe.

MONROE

Fuck you, Duck. You startin' to ruin the party. So why don't you take your clown-ass outta here.

The group starts to laugh at Duck. Duck gets pissed off. Duck is enraged and kicks over the table. Cocaine flies everywhere. Half the people in the room go after Duck, and the other half hit the floor trying to snort up what's left of the cocaine. Duck runs. Before he can get to the door the two bodyguards grab him. Duck swings wildly and punches Bodyguard #1 in the face. Duck opens the door halfway and screams for J.T. Duck pushes Bodyguard #2 off of him, Duck falls on the floor of the room. J.T. quickly opens the door. Duck is now on the ground being stomped in the face by Bodyguard #2. J.T. punches bodyguard #2. Duck and J.T. prepare to fight more but Monroe steps in to break up the fight. J.T. looks over to see Eddie still seated.

EDDIE

He brought it on himself.

J.T. and Duck slowly back out of the room and into the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB HALLWAY - NIGHT

J.T.
What happened Duck?

DUCK
Monroe called me a clown.

J.T.
Duck, you are a clown.

DUCK
Yeah, I know, but he don't know
me that well.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSER'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The home is very warm and cozy. A large television set is on and tuned to a fight. Brenda enters the room with a bucket of freshly popped popcorn. Dresser and Duck are seated on the couch, while J.T. sits on the floor with Dresser's little daughter. Choirboy is on the telephone in an adjacent bedroom.

DRESSER
Joe Frazier cannot beat the
champ.

DUCK
You'll see. The kid is too cocky.

Duck looks at the T.V.

DUCK
It's show time. There's
Smoking Joe.

DRESSER
(chanting)
Ali, Ali, Ali, Ali.

They all watch the television, yelling and screaming, Choirboy yells from the other room.

CHOIRBOY
Hey, I'm on the phone in here.
Could you keep it down? Shit!

Dresser yells back, "Sorry".

Choirboy walks into the living room with a big stupid smile on his face. All of the guys give him stupid smiles back, mockingly.

DUCK

I've never seen you act this crazy before over any girl.

CHOIRBOY

She's not just any girl - she understands Anthony.

DUCK

Choirboy...

CHOIRBOY

(correcting Duck)

Anthony...

DUCK

I mean, Anthony, just be careful. Her friend Janet is a gold digger, big time. Just be leery of women that know the names of all the expensive cars. Test her.

CHOIRBOY

I'm telling you she's not like that.

DRESSER

All we're saying is be careful. This is your first date with her and she's got your nose open already.

CHOIRBOY

(coldly)

My nose is not open, Dresser. I can handle myself. I gotta go. Enjoy the fight.

J.T.

Who you gonna be?

CHOIRBOY

Anthony.

Choirboy heads down the hall and Dresser follows him.

DRESSER

I don't know what kind of shit

DRESSER (CONT.)

J.T. is putting in your
head, but you've changed.

CHOIRBOY

No. Grown. I just see through
all your games.

DRESSER

Your father called me...

CHOIRBOY

I gotta go.

Choirboy walks out of the door, Dresser watches him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIG RED'S HOUSE - DAY

Big Red's house is a mini-mansion with a couple of acres of
land surrounding it. Jimmy pulls up in front of the house.
Big Red opens the door with a big, warm down-home smile.
Jimmy smiles back.

JIMMY

Now, what couldn't wait till
tomorrow, Big Red. I'm missing
the fight.

BIG RED

I'm missing the fight, too. And
I got money on Ali. This ain't
gonna take that long.

Jimmy takes off his hat and walks into the house. Big Red
closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BIG RED'S STUDY - DAY

A large mahogany desk sits in the center of the room. Seated
in a large leather chair next to the desk is Eddie. Jimmy
looks a little startled, seeing Eddie in the room. Big Red
calmly takes a seat behind his desk. Eddie doesn't say
anything.

BIG RED

Jimmy, I wanted to talk to you
because I think it's time for
some changes. I think you have
done a great job with the boys.
But now I feel it's time for the
boys to have a more experienced

BIG RED (CONT.)
manager...to take them to that next
level. Sometimes in relationships
you outgrow each other, that's
life.

JIMMY
What's the joke?

BIG RED
It's not a joke.

Big Red pulls out a large check book from his desk drawer.

JIMMY
What the fuck are you talking about?!

BIG RED
(calmly)
I'm talking about buying you
out, just give me a figure. I
promise you you'll walk out of
here today a very rich man.

JIMMY
Are you out of your mind?!

BIG RED
No.

Big Red pulls out a contract from one of the desk drawers and
hands it to Jimmy. Jimmy looks at the contract, sees Eddie's
signature on it.

JIMMY
Eddie, what's this all about?!

EDDIE
Jimmy, you know what it's all
about. I don't need no manager
out to replace me. You're not
out there singing. You don't do
shit but get paid.

JIMMY
So this was all your idea.

EDDIE
That's right.

JIMMY
Eddie, it wasn't your idea. Big
Red is playing you like he
played me years ago. Back then
he had another guy just like

JIMMY (CONT.)

Monroe.

(to Big Red)

This contract means nothing. You don't own the Heartbeats!

BIG RED

Eddie is the Heartbeats. The other guys can be replaced with anybody. And besides, the other guys can't go any place until they pay me for the cars and the clothes. I got a long list of expenses. Jimmy, you know show business - 99% business, 1% show.

JIMMY

I think you better look at the contract between you and me, because the name "The Five Heartbeats," is registered under my name. So Eddie can be in a group, but it won't be called The Five Heartbeats.

Big Red starts to laugh.

BIG RED

You were always smarter than I thought. So, I guess today is going to be a real big pay day for you. How much can I buy the name for?

JIMMY

You're not getting away with this. I'll see you in court first.

BIG RED

How much can I buy the name for?

JIMMY

You greedy motherfucker!

BIG RED

How much Jimmy? Give me a figure.

JIMMY

You're trying to muscle me like you used to muscle those new groups. And I remember what you did to get your way... We can talk about that in court, too.

BIG RED

Get the fuck out of here! Get
the fuck out of my house!

Jimmy turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCK'S APARTMENT

Duck walks into his apartment cautiously, he hears a noise and walks back into the bedroom. We see Tanya in a negligee seated on the bed, tearing up several paper bags into little pieces.

TANYA

You told me you had a lot of work
to do tonight, so I thought I'd
help out.

Duck smiles like a little boy and kisses her.

CUT TO:

INT. SANDRA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The apartment is furnished with inexpensive, simple furnishings. Choirboy sits in the center of a small couch, waiting for Sandra, who is in the bathroom putting on make up. He takes a gold coin from his pocket and flips it around to amuse himself.

CHOIRBOY

Nah, when we're not working
everybody goes their own way.

Choirboy gets up off the couch and paces around the apartment, flipping his coin back and forth.

CHOIRBOY

I've been thinking about getting a
new car. What kind of cars do you
like?

SANDRA (O.S.)

I don't know anything about
cars.

CHOIRBOY

I knew it. I told Duck you
weren't a gold digger. He said
your girlfriend, Janet, was a
gold digger.

SANDRA (O.S.)

Really?

CHOIRBOY

Duck's just being paranoid. He thinks it's hard to find a woman who likes you for you, when you become successful. I'm going to tell him tomorrow he's dead wrong.

Choirboy smiles to himself. He flips the coin too high. It hits the ceiling, then rolls down the hallway past the bathroom into the bedroom. Choirboy goes into the bedroom and discovers the coin in front of the dresser. He bends down, picks up the coin. As he stands up, he notices pictures of the group on Sandra's dresser. He sees posters of the group on the walls, he sees cut-out pictures of himself, and the group's three album covers framed. He sees newspaper and magazine articles of himself, glued to an entire wall of the bedroom. There is a picture of a couple getting married with Choirboy and Sandra's face glued into it. The room looks like a shrine that has been put together over the years and dedicated to Choirboy. As he turns he discovers Sandra standing right at the door.

SANDRA

It's not what you think. Let me explain. I've been in love with you for years.

Choirboy turns and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. JIMMY POTTER'S HIGH-RISE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jimmy stands in the living room holding the telephone. He says: "Hello," once more, and hangs the phone up. Eleanor comes down the hall, she sees Jimmy hang up the phone.

ELEANOR

Jimmy, who was that?

JIMMY

I don't know.

ELEANOR

Something is wrong.

JIMMY

I'll be fine.

He goes into the closet, puts on his leather jacket, grabs his saxophone and starts to leave. Jimmy looks at Eleanor and gives her a great big hug. He walks out the door, Eleanor

watches him cross to the elevator. As she closes the door, the telephone rings. She looks at the phone, lets it ring twice, then three times and finally picks it up.

ELEANOR
(hesitantly)
Hello?

VOICE
Jimmy...

ELEANOR
(on the phone)
Jimmy's not here, may I ask
who's calling?

VOICE
Tell Jimmy...tell Jimmy...

ELEANOR
Who is this?

We hear the telephone click. Eleanor slowly hangs up the phone, worried about Jimmy. She rushes out the door after him.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Eleanor looks at the elevator. It is headed down. It stops on the fourth floor. Eleanor runs towards the exit and heads quickly down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Jimmy stands alone in the elevator. He glances at his watch then up to the light on the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Eleanor runs down the stairs frantically, faster and faster.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - NIGHT

The doors to the elevator open and Jimmy steps off. The door man walks over to Jimmy and he gives him the keys to his car.

DOORMAN
I'll get it out of the garage.
Just a second, Mr. Potter.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Eleanor continues to run down the stairs. She is out of breath. She misses a step and almost falls. She desperately holds on to the rail, continuing down the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Jimmy is outside waiting for his car. A car comes zooming down the street. Jimmy looks up the block, sees the car speeding in his direction. As the car gets closer to him Eleanor exits the stairwell and sees Jimmy. As Jimmy turns to see her, he jumps back looking at the car. Several teenagers or a joy ride throw beer bottles out the window toward Jimmy. He heads toward his car. A derelict walks up asking for money. Jimmy goes into his pocket, the man pulls a gun and shoots Jimmy several times at point blank. He drops the gun and runs off into the night. Eleanor rush out to Jimmy's body, screaming.

CUT TO:

INT. THIRD STREET BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The church is packed with people. The coffin is open, revealing Jimmy's body. Eleanor sits in the front row. She is surrounded by family members and close friends. Pops, Wild Rudy, Baby Doll and Brenda all sit together. Seated in the pulpit are Eddie, Duck, J.T., Choirboy and the minister. Dresser takes a seat on the pulpit. The minister walks over to the podium.

MINISTER

We will now have remarks from a
close friend of Mr. Potter's,
Mr. Ernest Johnson.

Pops starts to stand up, trying to hold himself together. But as he tries to make his way down the aisle, he falls back into his seat, crying uncontrollably. The minister watches the whole thing from the pulpit.

MINISTER

Now we have a selection from The
Five Heartbeats, "I Feel Like Going
On".

Choirboy, Dresser, J.T. and Eddie assemble at the mike on the podium. Duck takes a seat at the piano and starts to play. He sings a few lines of the verse, Eddie begins to sing, but is overwhelmed with emotion and breaks down crying. Dresser and J.T. lift Eddie up, taking him back to his seat in the pulpit.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE STUDIO TUNNEL - NIGHT

The group is assembled in the tunnel, still dressed in their clothes from the funeral. J.T. paces, Duck sits on the floor of the tunnel playing in the dirt. Choirboy stands with his head down. Eddie sits on a wooden crate with his back against the tunnel wall, wearing dark glasses. Duck plays in the dirt with a twig. He makes a large heart and writes within it, "Duck and Tanya." Choirboy looks at the heart over Duck's shoulder. J.T. walks over and looks at the heart.

CHOIRBOY

What's taking Dresser so long?
It's not like him to be late.

Duck looks up to see Dresser walking into the tunnel. He carries a briefcase and papers in his hand. Without warning Dresser punches Eddie in the face, knocking him off the crate. Dresser kicks and stomps him on the ground like a mad man. Eddie does not fight back. J.T. and Duck grab Dresser, restraining him. Choirboy races over to Eddie to help him to his feet.

J.T.

What the hell is wrong with you?

DRESSER

It was you, you stupid mother
fucker. You fucked it all up. You
tried to sell the group out to Big
Red.

The whole group freezes, waiting for a response from Eddie. He says nothing.

J.T.

Eddie, is it true?

Eddie says nothing, just stands there.

DUCK

Say it ain't true.

Eddie just turns and walks away.

SLOW FADE OUT:

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Baby Doll opens the door, Duck and J.T. can be seen. She lets them in. They walk over to Eddie. He doesn't acknowledge them, he just stares blankly at the T.V.

J.T.

You doing okay?

DUCK

We know you never meant for anything to happen to Jimmy. Big Red just used you.

J.T.

The police have a lead on who killed Jimmy. Someone on the street connected Monroe to it.

DUCK

When the trial starts, we're going to need you to testify about what happened in the meeting with Big Red and Jimmy.

J.T.

And Eddie, I don't know how to bring this to you, but the group voted, and everybody feels that it would be better if you weren't in the group because...

EDDIE

I don't know what happened. It's hard to explain. I never felt like I belonged here. I felt funny signing autographs. It never felt real. I felt like I was faking it. Sometimes I felt like I was cursed, like maybe my old man was right. I'll be just like him, 'cause I came from nothing. I could never be nothing.

The thought of what happened to Jimmy haunts Eddie. He slowly rises up and goes into one of the back bedrooms.

CUT TO:

INT. RAINBOW REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

Duck, J.T., Choirboy, Dresser and several record executives are seated at a long table in the back of the rehearsal room, auditioning singers to replace Eddie. We see a series of weird looking people auditioning. A guy 6'9 with a falsetto voice... A guy four feet tall with a bass voice... A huge, fat singer... A very effeminate guy... An Eddie look alike... A real skinny singer... A handsome, muscular, weight lifter singing a soulful rendition of "Everything's Coming Up Roses"... Record executive #1 is an attractive woman in her early thirties. Her name is SYLVIA TODD. An older executive sits on the end, he's a heavy set man, early

forties. His name is MARK SAYLES. The singer finishes his number is escorted out. The guys look very tired. We see Leon and Lester being brought into the room. Duck and J.T. put their heads down, Mark flashes a big grin.

MARK

We saved the best for last.
This could be our lucky day. I
didn't know you had relatives
that could sing. They almost
didn't get in. But, when I
heard they were your cousins, I
didn't want to take them through
any preliminary auditions.

(laughs)

I don't want to let any of your
family get away and sign with some
other label.

Duck and J.T. look to each other. Leon and Lester take center stage. They wear matching pants and shirts, as well as matching gold medallions.

LEON

First thing, we don't want any
special treatment, because Duck
and J.T. are our first cousins.

LESTER

'Cause we got our own talent,
and we can do our own thing. My
name is Lester.

He spins around smiling.

LEON

My name is Leon.

He spins around back to back with Lester. They both smile big smiles.

LEON/LESTER

And we're here to audition for you.

They begin to do a bad rendition of "I'm A Soul Man." J.T. and Duck put their heads down. Mark stops them after one verse.

MARK

Thank you, I think I've heard
enough.

Leon and Lester look at each other, slap five, and walk out like they got the job. They look back, wink at Duck and J.T.

DRESSER

These last few days have just

DRESSER (CONT.)
been a waste of time. We've wasted
six days.

MARK
You got to be patient. You can't
fill a lead singer's position
overnight.

SYLVIA
We can find other established
artists that haven't quite
broke. What about Sammy Taylor?

DRESSER
Nah, Sammy's an ass-kisser and
doesn't want to be black.

MARK
What about Bobby Casanova?

DUCK
I heard Bobby's in the hospital.
Some woman stabbed him at a disco.

CHOIRBOY
You know who I always thought had
some talent, was that dude Flash.

J.T.
Nah, I don't like him.

SYLVIA
I think the combination would be
phenomenal.

MARK
Flash wouldn't really be a
replacement, he'd add another
element to the group.

CUT TO:

INT. A & B RECORDS - MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

Flash is seated in a chair in the center of the room,
flamboyantly dressed. He is being questioned by everyone in
the group but J.T., who is appears to be detached from the
meeting. We see J.T. is seated on a couch, reading a
newspaper. The headline reads: RECORD MOGUL, RED DAVIS,
FOUND GUILTY OF KILLING FIVE HEARTBEATS MANAGER. Flash is
calm and cool, answering questions from the hot seat.

CHOIRBOY
We are not looking for somebody
who wants to be a star. The
group is the star.

FLASH

I totally understand.

DUCK

I don't know what else we can ask you. You seem cool, we've never done this before, so this is as awkward for us as it is for you.

DRESSER

I really don't have anything else to ask you, you Choirboy?

CHOIRBOY

No.

J.T. is now sitting with his arms crossed, he speaks up.

J.T.

Yeah, I got a question for you. You've been so understanding about the Heartbeats and what we're trying to do. Why did you leave your group? What happened to you and The Ebony Sparks?

Flash doesn't take J.T.'s remarks lightly. He quickly gets up from his chair and answers the questions.

FLASH

I left the Sparks because they weren't ready to change. They wanted to do that same do-wop shit and it was getting old. I'm here because I like what you do. I dig the Heartbeats because you guys have always been innovators. I ain't got pipes like Eddie, I don't even want to try to be like him. And it ain't about the singing no more, it's about the music. For example, your last song, "Stranger To Love", if you would've arranged it differently with a harmonica or maybe a violin, you would have had a number one hit.

DUCK

Instead of the sax?

FLASH

Yeah, everybody uses that same sax. It's time for a new sound.

Flash looks to Dresser.

FLASH

And the choreography, turn it into a party. You got to give them a show, lights, explosions, colors of pink, red, orange, and green. Y'all dress like waiters wearing them dark tuxedos, you can't tell who's performing and who's serving drinks.

Duck smiles looking to Dresser. Duck looks over at Dresser and nods as Choirboy nods to Mark. Duck walks over to Flash.

DUCK

Congratulations and welcome aboard.

Choirboy and Dresser huddle around Flash, waiting to greet him. J.T. gets up unnoticed and exits the room, clearly upset.

CUT TO:

INT. BEACON THEATER - NIGHT

The Heartbeats stand with their backs to the audience, silhouetted by blue light. SEPTEMBER 4, 1972, is supered on the screen. There is an explosion on one side of the stage, then one on the other side. A police siren goes off. Six multi-colored spotlights start to circle, then all the stage lights come on. The Five Heartbeats are dressed in pink suits, trimmed with pink rhinestones. They are accompanied by five girls in short dresses. The choreography is now less graceful and more acrobatic.

Angle on Duck singing to Tanya in the crowd. The crowd is eating it up. Flash grabs the mike.

FLASH

Duck, they don't want to hear the song again, I didn't hear them say nothing.

The crowd screams even louder, "YES."

DUCK

Did you hear that?

FLASH

Oh yeah, I heard that, but do they like the way we sing it? 'Cause different people would sing it in a different way. If Sam Cooke were here tonight he would probably sing it like this...

Flash does an impression of Sam Cooke's singing the song.

FLASH

If Jerry Lewis dropped by he
would sing it like this....
(does impression of Jerry
Lewis)
If Sammy Davis, Jr. dropped by,
the candy man would know how to
make it hot...

He does an impression of Sammy Davis, Jr. The Heartbeats join
Flash in singing the end of the song.

DUCK

Ladies and gentlemen, Michael
"Flash" Turner, take a bow, take
a bow!

Flash takes a bow and the crowd cheers and screams for him.
The rest of the Heartbeats bow. They run off stage into the
wings as the band starts to play something different.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE WINGS - NIGHT

Mark and Sylvia greet the group as they head into the wings
with smiles and thumbs up. The group changes clothes for the
next number. Duck and J.T. change clothes in one corner of
the stage. Duck is excited.

DUCK

J.T., did you see Tanya in the
front row? She looks good
tonight.

J.T.

Yeah, I saw her.

DUCK

I think this is one of the best
shows we've ever done. What's
wrong?

J.T.

The dance steps are too fast,
the clothes are too loud. There
are too many lights. We're
supposed to be a singing group,
not a circus act. The boy is
turning us into clowns, man.

DUCK

What is the problem?

J.T.
I just don't like him.

DUCK
Fine, okay. Keep it to
yourself.

Duck continues to get dressed, minding his own business.

J.T.
You really want to know what's
wrong? Listen to that crowd,
who's name are they screaming?
Listen to the women.

DUCK
Flash.

J.T.
Right. That yellow pretty boy
has come in and taken all the
women from me. I can't compete.
I ain't light skinned and I
don't have good hair.

DUCK
That ain't got nothing to do
with it.

J.T.
Then tell me why the women don't
scream my name anymore.

DUCK
Because, you got the same old
rap, you haven't changed any of
your lines. You still doing
your same show. Flash hasn't
taken anything from you. You
just haven't been trying.

J.T. and Duck are now dressed and exit.

CUT TO:

INT. BEACON THEATER - NIGHT

The guys in the group turn up their jacket lapels like they
have just been caught in the rain. Flash begins to sing but
J.T. steps in and slows down the band.

J.T.
Break it down, come on fellahs,
break it down.

The rest of the group looks puzzled because this isn't part of
the show. The members of the band are totally thrown off,

they race through their sheet music looking for a cue.

J.T.

Has anybody ever messed up a good thing...? Lost a good woman...? Fellahs you know the kind of woman I'm talking about...the kind that makes you want to stay home day and night. But then you get stupid and greedy, and take that good lovin' for granted. And you want to try something on the side, you know - play the field - but it don't work. That's what happened to me. I made that mistake. But now I'm ready to try again. I've been a bad boy. But now I'm just looking for one good woman that will take me in.

The women scream and cheer. J.T. takes off his jacket, goes into the audience and walks over to a beautiful girl. She screams, pulling at him. J.T. stops, smiles at her.

J.T.

I want you to hold my jacket like you're holding me. How would you hold me if I were your man?

J.T. hands her the jacket. The girl squeezes it.

J.T.

Hold me tighter, you know I need to be held.

Flash goes over to the girl, takes J.T.'s coat out of her arms, throws it on floor, and hugs the girl. J.T. is pissed. Refusing to be up staged, he falls to the floor, ripping open his shirt. J.T. sings to the girl, then Flash sings to the girl. They battle back and forth. J.T. hits the final note, ending the song. The crowd eats it up. J.T. still looks upset but smiles, taking his bows.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE MOON RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

Flash, J.T., Dresser, Choirboy and some record company executives are all listening to the new album. Everyone is all smiles.

MARK

This album is going to be a monster.

DRESSER

I love the new direction. Every song is jamming.

J.T.

Flash, you've got to give it up, man. This album is happening.

FLASH

Hey, it wasn't all me. Your brother wrote some serious stuff.

J.T.

Where is Duck?

MARK

He called and said he was going to be a little late.

Suddenly we see Duck at the door with a big smile on his face.

J.T.

Where've you been?

MARK

Duck, we love the album!

DUCK

Thank you. Everybody, I have an announcement to make. I getting married.

He grabs Tanya, whose hidden in the hallway.

DUCK

Say hello to the future Mrs. Tanya Matthews. I picked up the ring today. Show the ring off, baby.

Dresser walks over and gives Duck a big hug, saying "Congratulations." Flash comes over and hugs Duck. Choirboy and Flash welcome Tanya into the family. J.T. is shocked. He grabs Duck by the arm and yanks him into the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO HALLWAY - NIGHT

J.T. pulls Duck into a corner of the hallway and starts to yell.

J.T.

What the fuck are you doing!

DUCK

Why are you getting so upset?!

J.T.

You don't even know that girl!

DUCK

J.T., I love her. That's all that matters. She makes me happy. It ain't got nothing to do with you. I talked everything out with Momma already. It's going to be a big, big wedding. So don't freak out on me 'cause you know you're my best man. So could you just relax and say congratulations or something?

J.T.

Congratulations.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY

A long white stretch limousine drives down the street, attracting some on-lookers.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE LIMOUSINE - DAY

Seated inside the limo, we see Flash, J.T., Duck and Tanya, Choirboy, Dresser, Sylvia and Mark. Everyone seems to be in good spirits. Choirboy is holding the album cover. The group is dressed like private investigators with magnifying glasses. The title is "The Crime Of Loving You". Mark appears to be overly excited. Duck is kissing Tanya.

MARK

Something tells me that this is going be your first gold album.

DUCK

(to Tanya)

Baby, our wedding is going to be the social event of the year. I love you.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWER RECORDS - PARKING LOT - DAY

The parking lot is filled with people. Police barricades have

been set up to keep the crowd from rushing into the packed record store. Several security guards and policemen wait in front of the store. On the wall are several large billboards of the top ten albums. In the front we see Bobby Casanova, "God's Gift To Women". As the limo pulls up, Dresser notices a banner outside the store. It reads: "Welcome Flash and the Heartbeats."

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE LIMOUSINE - DAY

Dresser snatches the handle of the car door before the guard can get it all the way open and slams it shut.

DRESSER

Who put that shit up there?

The rest of the group looks out the window at the banner.

MARK

It must have been the management
at Tower Records.

J.T. is very upset, he shoots a look to Flash.

FLASH

What are you looking at?

MARK

We will take care of this. I'll
get on it right now. I don't
want anybody getting upset
because of that banner.

Dresser pushes the door open and the groups exits the car. They stand in front of the limo signing autographs and taking pictures, looking very upset.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

We see Duck and J.T. at a desk talking to the head nurse. They both have on doctor's jackets.

DUCK

We appreciate this. Anytime
we're in town, you have front
row seats.

Duck signals to Dresser, who sneaks out of a room carrying a birthday cake with lit candles.

Angle on J.T. giving a signal. We see Choirboy, Brenda and Tanya walking into a room with several gift wrapped presents. From another part of the hallway we see Bobby Casanova being wheeled in on a stretcher.

ORDERLY

We got an emergency... This man
was hit by a drunk driver...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

They walk into the room with surgical masks on. They yank the
masks off singing "Happy Birthday".

Angle on Pops connected to various medical tubes and monitors.
He still manages smile. Duck kisses him on the forehead.
Pops wipes it off with his hand.

POPS

(in a low, gruff
voice)

I ain't no fag.

DRESSER

Same old Pops.

POPS

All these gifts for me?

DUCK

We've got more in the car.
Tanya, will you go and get them?

TANYA

Sure.

CHOIRBOY

I'll help.

They leave the room.

POPS

Let me get a cigarette.

J.T.

The nurse said you're not
suppose to be smoking at all.
That's why you're in here.

POPS

Whose birthday is it? Mine or
the nurse?

DUCK

Pops, don't nobody here smoke.

POPS

Look in my jacket pocket.

Duck goes over to the window and starts to go through Pops' jacket looking for cigarettes. Outside the window he sees Tanya and Choirboy arguing. Duck stops and watches. Tanya turns away from Choirboy very angrily. He grabs her by the arm, it looks heated. But then we see Tanya and Choirboy hug. They grab the presents out of the car trunk and head back towards the hospital. Ducks stands in a daze.

POPS

Duck, can I get my cigarettes this year?

DUCK

Oh, yeah, I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. TANYA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Duck is in the living room talking over wedding plans with Tanya and her parents.

DR. SAWYER

Between your list and our list we need to have more invitations made up. We've got over five hundred people.

DUCK

That's my fault. My mother is inviting everyone because I'm the first son to get married.

DR. SAWYER

I had to pull back Dorothy's list. She had a hundred people just from her medical school. So don't worry, I'll keep everything under control.

TANYA

Daddy's too organized.

DUCK

Goodnight everyone.

Duck and Tanya walk out on the porch. It's raining.

TANYA

Is everything okay? You seem a little tense.

DUCK

I'm okay. All the publicity work on the album burned me out a little bit.

She kisses Duck.

TANYA

I love you.

Duck politely smiles back and leaves. The rain pours down as Duck leaves. He gets in his car and drives down the street and turns into an alley. He turns his lights out and drives slowly. He stops at the beginning of the alley and parks. He is directly across the street from Tanya's house. Duck turns on the radio. He sits there looking at Tanya's bedroom window. The clock in the car reads 7:15 PM. We see a dissolve on the clock, it is now 10:45. Duck still sits looking up at the window. Suddenly the light goes out. Tanya comes out of the house, gets into her car and drives off. Duck follows her.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCK'S CAR - NIGHT

The windshield wipers go quickly back and forth. Duck turns the radio knob looking for another station. He stops on a radio commercial.

ANNOUNCER

(female Jamaican accent)
For only \$239 you can escape to
Jamaica. Call me, An-gela, at
Kiwi Travel today... and escape.

RADIO NEWSCASTER

This is Levi Thompson on WRON
with Newsbreak. An early
morning fire took the lives of
nine people in an apartment
building on Jefferson and Second
Avenue.

(pause)

Eddie King, Jr, ex-lead singer
of The Five Heartbeats, was
involved in a shootout with
police today while trying to rob
a neighborhood liquor store. He
was shot several times and is
listed in critical condition.

(pause)

Black teenage unemployment is on
the rise, says Illinois State
School Superintendent,
Daniel Sayer. He puts major
blame on the poor public school
system not encouraging Black
teenagers.

Duck continues to follow Tanya a few cars behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. GEORGE HOTEL - NIGHT

Tanya's car pulls up in front of the hotel. She gets out and goes inside. A valet attendant takes her keys and parks the car. Duck parks across the street, watching. He gets out of his car and walks slowly across the street to the hotel. Duck starts to walk into the hotel and is greeted by the doorman.

DOORMAN

I know you, Donald "Duck" Matthews, one of The Five Heartbeats. I got all your albums, been to all your shows. Can I get your autograph? This has been a good night. Two Heartbeats in one night.

Duck looks up. The doorman pulls out a piece of paper.

DOORMAN

Yeah, your brother just went upstairs. Sign right next to his, my wife won't believe this.

Duck signs his autograph almost in tears. He finishes signing the autograph, turns and heads away from the hotel, gets in his car and drives off.

SLOW FADE OUT:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tanya and J.T. are having an argument.

J.T.

What kind of game are you running? It wasn't suppose to be like this! It was fun when we were just seeing each other, but now you've gone to far. You're talking about marrying him. I don't want to see my brother hurt. So I want you to tell Duck the truth and call this shit off.

TANYA

Call it off, J.T. Why?

J.T.

Because you don't love him.

TANYA

But he loves me. He wants to marry me, J.T. All you want to

TANYA (CONT.)
do is fuck me. Well I'm tired of
being fucked.

J.T.
I don't want to see my brother
hurt.

TANYA
Then don't.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUR SEASONS ROOF TOP PARTY - DAY

A big banner reads "A & B Recording Company Congratulates The
Five Heartbeats On Their First Gold Album". All the people at
the party are huddled around a large stage.

The Five Heartbeats walk to the front of the stage, each
holding a gold album.

CHOIRBOY
There's so many people that I
want to thank but time won't
allow it. So I really want to
say thank you to my family.

Angle on Choirboy's mother and father in the crowd.

CHOIRBOY
Especially my father.

DRESSER
I hope we can get one of these
every time. Thank you A & B
records. I love you Brenda and
Monica.

J.T.
I just want to thank the record
company and all our fans. I
really want to thank the newest
member of the Heartbeats for
coming in and doing a terrific
job... Michael "Flash" Turner.

J.T. gives Flash a big hug. The crowd starts to scream for
Flash. The screaming is so loud Flash can't be heard on the
mike.

FLASH
Well, thank you. But I couldn't
have done anything without four of
the most talented, warm, giving
brothers on this planet. They
really deserve the applause.

The group takes a bow. J.T. yells over to Flash, "I love you man."

FLASH

They opened their arms and welcomed me like a brother. But sometimes in the best interest of things you have to go on. So today is a happy occasion as well as a sad one. That's why I don't know how to say this, because it hurts me to announce...that I'm leaving the group. I just want to say thanks again guys for everything and thank you for this gold album A & B... And I hope we can accomplish the same thing with my new solo album. God bless you, bye.

J.T., Choirboy and Dresser look shocked and betrayed. Duck laughs as he walks up to the podium to deliver his speech.

DUCK

I'd like to thank everyone for this gold album. This is all I ever wanted. I thought when I got this I'd be on top of the world. But today, I just feel fucked up.

People in the crowd react to Duck's profanity.

DUCK

You know it's funny... A critic said it when he was reviewing our first album... "Donald Matthews is going to be a great writer one day, when he suffers more". I read that and said what the fuck is this motherfucker talking about.

Close on Tanya looking at Duck, startled.

DUCK

And now I know what he was talking about. I'm on my way to being a great writer. And I'd like to thank two people in particular. My fiancée, a gold digging bitch from a bougie family, that doesn't want to be black. Secondly, I want to thank my brother whose always been the same, selfish motherfucker since we were kids.

J.T. goes over to Duck and grabs the mike. Duck pushes him away.

DUCK
Get the fuck away from me!

J.T.
Duck, not here...

DUCK
Where J.T...! Where am I going to put on? Those five hundred fucking invitations...?! Let me say this... You can hear it from me first before you read it in all the little cheap papers. My wedding is off. I don't know how to be diplomatic about the shit...

Duck looks to Flash.

DUCK
Eddie was right about you. You've always been a solo act. Maybe I could get a deal somewhere like yours, because today is my last day with the Heartbeats, too.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK:

FADE UP:

EXT. CHICAGO CITY SKYLINE - DAY

The screen fades up to a morning sunset view of Chicago's skyline off of Lake Michigan. SUPER - August 12, 1986. Various angles of Chicago's skyscrapers are seen through a large picture window in a high-rise building.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCK'S APARTMENT - DAY

We see Duck sitting behind a baby grand piano playing. He looks out at the view of the city. He looks older, playing the piano reflectively.

DISSOLVE TO:

A MONTAGE OF EVENTS

EXT. LIVE STONE BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

There is a crowd of people gathered outside of the church. A large yellow ribbon is being held up by two deacons.

Choirboy, now much older, stands in front of the church, smiling. He hands a pair of large gold scissors to his father to cut the ribbon.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

A theater marquee is being hung by two workmen. They put the last bolt in, locking it into position. We see the name of the choreographer, Terrence "Dresser" Williams.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - DAY

A dance rehearsal is in progress. Dresser stands in front of forty dancers, teaching a dance routine.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

The street is flooded with cabs, lights blink off and on. On a marquee we see THE FIVE HEARTBEATS PERFORMING LIVE.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS SHOWROOM - NIGHT

J.T. stands at the mike singing his verse of "Rip Apart My Love," dressed in a tuxedo. He spins around and Leon sings a verse, then he spins away, and we see Lester wearing a bad toupee, singing lead. They are performing in a lounge, it is filled with senior citizens on a tour. Leon sings and performs magic at the same time. He swallows a lit cigarette, makes a dove appear, makes a red handkerchief turn yellow. J.T. looks embarrassed, applauds Leon, and tells him to take a bow.

The MONTAGE ENDS.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE UP:

EXT. CHICAGO HIGH RISE - DAY

Duck is jogging through the park. He sees an attractive woman. Duck stares, smiles and does not see where he's going. He runs into a postman, causing his mail to scatter. Duck apologizes and helps the postman pick up the mail. Duck picks up ROLLING STONE magazine. The caption reads, "Where are they now?" We see a montage of pictures on the cover which include The Dells, The Supremes, The Temptations, James Brown and finally, the Heartbeats. Duck begins to reminisce.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Duck sits behind his desk opening his mail. On the wall behind him we see all the albums of The Five Heartbeats, including their first one with the white family. He opens a personal letter. It reads: "Dear Duck, I know it's been years, and we haven't been in touch. I miss your friendship and laughter. I have invested a good portion of my earnings from the group into my father's church. The first service will be this Sunday. Will you please come? It would mean the world to me if we were blessed with your presence. I love you, I miss you, together, forever. Choirboy. P.S. I have a special surprise for you."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVE STONE BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The church is beautiful. Duck looks in awe at the beautiful large stained glass windows. The service is in progress. The minister is addressing the congregation.

PASTOR STONE

How can any man say that he
loves God, who he can't see -
and not love his brothers who he
can see? That's what I want to
talk about this morning. Love.
True love. Unconditional love.
God so loved the world that he gave
his only begotten son, that we may
have life everlasting. Love is
gentle, love is understanding, love
is forgiving.

CLOSE ON

Pastor Stone looking at Choirboy.

PASTOR STONE

It is the greater man that can
admit to the world his failure
and shortcomings. To grow, one
must die and shed all the
negative things that are not of
God. This morning in our new
home - I want us to reaffirm our
faith that God is alive and
ready to heal and mend our
confused hearts. Before I come
to you with the word, I would
like the choir to bless us with
a song.

Choirboy conducts the choir. The music sounds familiar to Duck but he doesn't remember from where. Suddenly he remembers it was a song Jimmy always played on his sax. He hears a man's voice singing the words to the song for the first time; "I Feel Like Going On". Duck sees Eddie. Choirboy looks back from directing and smiles at Duck. From the choir Baby Doll comes out joining Eddie, and they sing a duet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVE STONE BAPTIST CHURCH - LATER THAT DAY

The service is over, people are filing out. Choirboy walks down the aisle, he sees Duck and they hug.

CHOIRBOY

Thanks for coming, this really makes me feel good. So did you like my surprise?

DUCK

Man, Eddie looks good.

CHOIRBOY

Yeah, he's been a member here for four years now.

DUCK

That's great, Choirboy! Congratulations on everything. This church is really something else.

CHOIRBOY

Have you talked to your brother lately? You know he's married now, he's got two kids.

DUCK

Yeah, my momma told me. I don't have nothing to say to J.T.

Eddie and Baby Doll walk down the aisle. Eddie stops and shakes his head, laughing at Duck.

EDDIE

You still writing on brown paper bags?

DUCK

(smiles)

Yeah.

EDDIE

Why haven't you called me? Baby

EDDIE (CONT.)
Doll and me got married. I got a
little boy this big. You gotta
come by the house.

DUCK
I'll come by.

EDDIE
Really, you gotta come by the
house. I heard what happened
between you and J.T. People
make mistakes, I know. Give him
a call.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Duck is driving slowly down a nice upper middle class
residential street. He has a piece of paper in his hand,
looking for an address. He sees the house. It has a long
driveway. As he pulls into the driveway he hears voices
coming from the back of the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. J.T.'S HOME - BACKYARD AREA - DAY

Duck drives back slowly, he sees J.T. in his yard playing with
his kids. The little girl is about five and the boy is about
three. J.T.'s wife sits in a swing reading a book. As the
car pulls up, J.T. looks up and sees Duck. He freezes and
stands. Duck gets out and walks over. The children stop
playing and look at Duck.

LITTLE GIRL
Daddy, who's that?

J.T.
Y'all go over to your momma.

The girl runs over to her mother. The boy stays attached to
his father's leg, trying to get a better look at this
stranger. Duck and J.T. stand awkwardly, not knowing where to
begin. The little girl yells to her brother.

LITTLE GIRL
You heard what Daddy said.
Would you get over here, Duck?
Duck, come on.

Duck looks at J.T.'s son then back to J.T. The boy takes off
running to his mother. J.T. walks closer to Duck - they stand
face to face. They hug but it's awkward. J.T. pulls away.
Duck spins around.

J.T.
I feel stupid.

DUCK
I should've never come.

J.T. grabs Duck again, hugging him passionately.

DUCK
Your kids - do they know who I
am?

J.T.
Yeah.

DUCK
What did you tell them?

J.T.
I told them you were in jail.

Duck and J.T. laugh.

DUCK
You told them I was in jail?

J.T.
I didn't know what else to say.
So pretend you just got out.
Make up something.

J.T. and Duck walk back toward the swing.

CUT TO:

EXT. J.T.'S BACKYARD - DAY

The backyard is packed with people. Choirboy wears an apron and a chef's hat. On the grill he's cooking ribs and chicken that are overcooked and burnt. Brenda, Baby Doll, Eleanor and J.T.'s wife, PAM, are seated around a table playing cards. Duck is seated in a lawn chair with his nephew, Little Duck, on his lap, asking him questions.

LITTLE DUCK
Why did you go to jail?

DUCK
I wasn't in jail. I was really
a spy like James Bond working
for the government.

LITTLE DUCK
Really?!

Eddie is seated at a table surrounded by Leon and Lester.
They are talking his ear off.

LESTER

It took us a long time to figure it out, but now we know who we are.

LEON

I'm Leon.

LESTER

I'm Lester.

LEON/LESTER

We're The Double L's.

LEON

You guys were the real crooners, but that wasn't for us, we are really rappers.

Leon starts to do a human beat box sound effect, while Lester starts to rap.

LESTER

Chill out fly girls, don't dis me.

LEON

Then I start scratching.

Leon produces a album from behind his back. The album cover features Leon and Lester dressed in Kangol hats and sweat suits, with gold chains. The title of the album is "Double L Is More Than A Letter".

LEON

See, we are rappers. All the other rappers are like eighteen; at thirty-five that's our hook.

In another area of the yard, a portable T.V. is on and, we see several of the young girls huddled around the T.V. watching music videos on VIDEO SOUL.

DONNIE SIMPSON

(on T.V.)

Hi, I'm Donnie Simpson and you're watching a special Video Soul from the Martin Luther King Hospital, because my co-host, who was thrown from a horse last week, couldn't make it to the studio. His album is sizzling on the charts. It's titled "God's Gift To Women". My co-host, Mr. Bobby Casanova...

BOBBY

Thank you Donnie. And thanks to all my fans for the nice cards and letters. I'm going to kick the show off with one of my favorite videos... Number one for the eighth week in a row... Flash, with "Jungle Boogie Madhouse".

The little girls scream "Flash" with excitement. Eleanor gets up from the table and runs over to the T.V. Flash is older and wilder than ever, jumping around the screen in tight leather pants. Choirboy looks at the T.V., shakes his head. J.T. stares at the T.V., watching the girls react to Flash. J.T. gets upset and turns the television off.

LITTLE GIRL #1

Uncle J.T., we wanted to watch Flash.

ELEANOR

C'mon, J.T., these girls are all excited.

J.T.

I'm sorry but they won't be watching Flash at my house.

DRESSER

J.T., leave those kids alone. If they wanna watch that show it's okay.

J.T.

They are not going to watch that junk in my house. That ain't no music.

PAM

Then you better teach them what real music is.

J.T.

You ain't said nothing, Heartbeats, front and center.

Choirboy comes over with his apron on, wiping off his hands. Dresser walks over with a broomstick in his hand.

J.T.

Let's do it like we did it in the old days. Remember when we used to go to the tunnel?

CHOIRBOY

How could we forget the tunnel?

DRESSER

Remember the pact we made before
every show?

Dresser extends his hand, J.T. puts his hand on top, Choirboy
puts his hand on top. The three of them look to Duck and
Eddie, still seated.

CHOIRBOY

C'mon Eddie, like the old days.

Eddie sits thinking, looking at the fellahs.

DRESSER

C'mon, Eddie.

Eddie slowly rises, and places his hand on the pile. J.T.
looks at Duck.

J.T.

Duck, what are you waiting on?

DUCK

Hey, I ain't sang in years.
Y'all count me out.

J.T.

You sure?

DUCK

Yeah, I'm sure.

J.T. and Duck share a private moment that leaves them both
uncomfortable.

J.T.

Cool.

(to the rest of the
group; mocking Pops)
All right Girl Scouts, let's
fall in line. We don't need
Duck, he was the worst dancer anyway.

Duck laughs. The group starts to dance. They do spins and
turns all out of sync, laughing and clowning through it all.
Duck slowly gets up and joins the group.

DUCK

I wasn't the worst dancer,
Choirboy was.

CHOIRBOY

(jokingly)
Shut up!

Duck falls in line with the group. They start to do one of
their old routines. They clap hands, spin and turn.

J.T.

The year was 1965, the song
was...

DUCK

"You Can't Hide From My Love."

The group starts to sing a cappella, dazzling the crowd with harmonies once forgotten. They turn, spin, and finally do the legendary steps they are famous for. The screen freezes frame with the group caught in a dance position.

THE END

As the credits roll, we will see stills of the greatest male singing groups of all times. Including The Moonglows, The Drifters, The Dells, The Spinners, The Temptations, etc.