

THE SONG

Screenplay by

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Based on THE SONG,
a novel by Dan Radlauer

FADE IN:

BLACK SCREEN

VOICEOVER

I've always loved music. Not just music, but songs, pop songs. Why? Because a good pop song is magic.

MONTAGE

Images and archival footage depicting a selective history of song - ancient Greek lute players, medieval minstrels, 19th century opera icons, crooners and bands from the 20s through the 70s.

VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

When you think about it, songs are the soundtracks of our lives. They meet an undeniable human need for story and emotion. Without song, we can't survive, or at the very least, life would be a lot less fun.

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - DAY

The hustle and bustle of the Strip, replete with period cars and sepia tone. A title is superimposed: "Los Angeles, 1979".

VOICEOVER

It's not surprising I ended up in the music biz. Yes, I write songs like practically every other musician in LA, but I've finally made a few bucks in the Biz as an A&R guy. A&R, that stands for Artist and Repertoire. Basically, I work for a record label looking for the next big hit or musical act. It's a paycheck, and lets me stay close to the music.

INT. LEE'S OFFICE - DAY

Small but cool - wood paneling with the Knot Records logo prominent on the wall. A cluttered desk, a phone, a large professional Nakamichi MR2 tape player, a guitar case against the wall.

VOICEOVER

I'm a little embarrassed to say it,
but music is almost the only thing
I've ever cared about. Almost.

LEE DORFMAN

Sits at the desk. About 30, stylish in a 70s musical artist
kind of way, but still presentable.

LEE (V.O.)

Keep in mind, back in '79 there was
no YouTube or Spotify, no personal
computers, smart phones, email or
internet. We thought we were
sophisticated, but a lot of shit we
never imagined, amazing and
terrible, would go down in the
years to come. No matter. To me, it
was always about the music.

SHOT OF DESK

On the desk a mess of envelopes, cover letters, lyric sheets,
Billboard Magazines. Small packages addressed to "Lee
Dorfman, A&R Department, Knot Records". One particular
packet catches Lee's eye. He tears it open, pulls out a
cassette tape and note.

SHOT OF TAPE PLAYER

Lee puts the tape in a cassette machine and as he hits play,
time stops, a light surreal score starts. Pull back and up on
this frozen moment to see Lee, finger still on the "Play"
button. Understated surreal score begins.

LEE (V.O.)

I'll never forget the first time I
heard it.

SONG TREATMENT

Camera circles Lee, dissolving to close ups of his finger on
the play button, his eyes, his ears, then a long shot of the
room from above, all slightly filtered to give it a surreal
hue.

LEE (V.O.)

What do you do when a pot of gold
lands on your doorstep, delivered
by a unicorn? It was simply the
best song I ever heard, and believe
me, I've heard thousands.

CLOSE UPS

Of the cassette in the player, still frozen with Lee's finger on the play button. Extreme close up of the title "No Way Back" on the cassette. Score and close ups continue.

LEE

How do you write a song that special, that perfect? If I knew, I would be churning them out myself. But the songs I wrote didn't come close to the deceptive simplicity and deep emotional power of this one.

Score stops abruptly and we're back to real time. Close on cassette turning in the machine. A last chord rings out, then tape hiss...

LEE

Pops out the cassette, inspects it closely, refers to the note that came with it.

INSERT OF NOTE

Messily typed, with lots of white out:

"Dear Mr. Dorfman, I have enclosed a cassette of a song I wrote, No Way Back. It's a simple recording and I'm not a great singer but I'm hoping you can send it to one of your recording artists for an album. Thank you for your time, Hugh Barnes."

LEE (CONT'D)

Hugh Barnes? Well, Mr. Barnes, whoever you are, I think you've written a sure fire number one hit - I shit you not.

Lee pops the cassette back in, presses play. Fast cuts of his finger hitting stop, rewind, then play, from different angles.

LEE (V.O.)

I listened again to be sure I wasn't imagining things. The melody floated over the chords like clouds at sunset. Every syllable of lyric fell correctly with the rhythm. It was even more exquisite the second time, and the third, and the tenth...

Cut to Lee, sitting in chair with headphones on. Real time. Natural sound. His eyes are closed, tears stream down his cheeks.

The song ends again. Lee hits stop on the player, removes the headphones, wipes his eyes, blows his nose loudly. He glances at the note again.

INSERT - NOTE

The Song's title - *NO WAY BACK* - highlights itself, as if by magic.

Lee scrutinizes the note.

LEE
(to self)
No phone number. Fuck!

He checks the corner of the packet it came in.

LEE (CONT'D)
Thank God, an address!

Lee grabs his satchel and darts out the door.

INT. LEE'S CAR - DAY

Lee drives recklessly down Santa Monica Boulevard, scanning a voluminous Thomas Brothers map while simultaneously sipping a too-hot coffee and adjusting the volume on his radio, which blares out Toto's "*Hold the Line*."

LEE (V.O.)
As luck would have it, Mr. Barnes didn't live far from my office, although traffic that time of day was a bitch. But I couldn't leave this to chance. From the looks of the messy hand-typed note, Hugh only sent out to maybe a couple of A&R guys. Either that or he buys white out by the gallon. No matter, I had to get to him first.

EXT. DESULTORY APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Your standard shabby two-story twelve-unit building. Low rent but not a slum. Lee pulls up in his Fiat 124 Sport convertible, checks the address, stumbles out.

He approaches the building, spots the mailboxes, checks Hugh's envelope.

LEE
One-oh-eight.

SHOT

Of mailboxes. #108 is puking junk mail.

Lee sidles laterally, rehearsing his pitch.

LEE (CONT'D)
So Hugh, I got your song and I really like it. I'd like to offer you an exclusive songwriting contract with Knot Records... No, no, too bland. Something more Hollywood... um, nice to meet you, Hugh, you're a fucking genius. I want to manage you personally and make us both a million dollars... No, no, too opportunistic, um, Hugh, Dude! Please tell me no other A&R guy has gotten to you, because this song is absolute gold!

NEW ANGLE

A few steps further on, Lee stops in front of a door - 108

Lee punches the doorbell, waits, punches again, then once more for good measure. Nothing. He peers in a dirty window, blinds, pulled, gets a glimpse of nothing.

Just then, Lee notices a business card taped to Hugh's door. He blanches at the sight of it, pulls it off.

CLOSE ON CARD

"Tim Matteson, Artists & Repertoire, Star Records" is printed on it, with a scribbled note on the back: "Hugh, can't wait to talk to you about the song you sent, call me! Tim."

LEE

Does a slow burn, fingering the card.

LEE (V.O.)
Tim Matteson. Bad news. Really bad. Tim was a one-time colleague, now a competitor, who had the ethics of a hyena.

(MORE)

LEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He had stabbed me in the back,
 thrown me under the bus, and danced
 on my grave. All right, actually,
 he stole a song I wrote and took
 credit, which is even worse.

Lee crumples the card and puts it in his coat pocket, then smiles to himself, peers around at the perfectly calm day.

LEE (V.O.)
 Hmm, funny how gusty it can get in
 LA. Stuff just gets blown away and
 disappears...Well, from the looks
 of it, that dickwad Tim must have
 gotten Hugh's song too. He's no
 dummy - he'll know it's a hit
 waiting to happen.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Lee walks the length of the building, looking around.

LEE (V.O.)
 No way I was going to let Tim
 Matteson screw me again.

Lee stops in front of a door - 101 - with a Manager shingle. He rings the BELL. The SOUND of someone moving inside, obviously in no hurry. Finally the door opens.

CAROL
 (acidly)
 Yeah?

CAROL MASON, 60, looks like what you'd expect - the effects of decades of smoke, drink, and bad attitude are plain to see. She puffs on a cheroot cigar.

LEE
 Sorry to bother you. I'm trying to
 reach one of your residents, uh,
 Hugh Barnes, 108?

Carol surveys Lee skeptically.

CAROL
 I respect the privacy of my
 tenants. Unless you're a cop, or
 have proof of official government
 business, like a warrant, I can't
 help you.

LEE

Okay, okay. Fair enough. Can you at least give Hugh my card?

Lee holds one out. Carol isn't having any.

CAROL

I'm the manager, not a messenger.

With that, she slams the door.

LEE

Charming...

NEW ANGLE

Of Lee, super-securely taping his own card onto Hugh's door.

CUT TO:

INT. LEE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Spartan, unglamorous, definitely bachelor - take out food containers strewn on the kitchen counter, dishes in the sink, clothes on the furniture. More notable are the guitars, guitar cases, piano and various musical accoutrements.

Lee walks in with his satchel, throws it on a table, checks his circa 1970 answering machine, which BEEPS before each message.

MACHINE (O.S.)

Hello there! Two for one dining coupons calling for Mr. Lee, uh, Dorkman?

LEE

It's Dorfman you dufus.

Lee jabs the erase button. The next message begins.

LANA (O.S.)

Hey Lemur.

Lee stops in his tracks, listens closely.

LANA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm going to The Forty Five for songwriter's night. You wanna slum with me? I may do a song or three, if I'm drunk enough.

(laughs)

Call me.

LEE (V.O.)
 Lana, my ex-girlfriend, and still
 my best friend. It's weird, I know.

Lee wanders to the refrigerator and looks at photos held in place by refrigerator magnets.

ON THE REFRIGERATOR

Glimpses of the key people in Lee's life - his mother, with father halved by the edge of the photo, another of her in hospital; Lee in younger days, part of a band; he and LANA, at a festive event, looking happy in love.

LEE (V.O.)
 Lana was the best and worst thing
 that ever happened to me.
 Beautiful, smart, funny, great
 singer and strong songwriter. Yeah,
 I was obviously still in love with
 her, but after what happened, I
 just couldn't trust her.

Lee opens the fridge, pulls out a Chinese take out container, smells the contents. Questionable. He puts it in the microwave anyway.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEW ANGLE

Series of shots: Lee sits with his piano by the tape player, playing snippets of The Song, writing down notes on a "lead sheet." No natural sound, only score.

LEE (V.O.)
 As I scribbled the chords above the
 lyrics, I was again taken by the
 simplicity and freshness of No Way
 Back. I was astounded how it
 affected me. I wished I could write
 a song like that, feel what
 inspired such beauty and be able to
 let it out in music, or life.

Lee pauses, pensively. The microwave BELL dings, snapping him out of his reverie

NEW ANGLE

Later. Lee contemplates the happy photo of him and Lana together. He steps off, throws on a coat, heads out the door.

EXT. 45 CLUB - NIGHT

A small divey music club. Smoky and busy, Skynard's "*That Smell*" blares over the sound system. Music motif decor, framed photos of musicians and acts of various fame and infamy.

At one end there is a small stage. An aging rocker with a comb-over, midlife belly, and plaid bell-bottoms, JIMMY-JIMMY, struts on.

JIMMY-JIMMY

Aloha, beautiful people, welcome to my Lair. Most of you know me - and to know me is to love me - but if you're new to the 45, welcome, I'm Jimmy-Jimmy, yes that Jimmy-Jimmy, of "Crosswalk Daydream" fame. You know, "you're my crosswalk daydream, let me walk you home...?"
Shaboom!

Lee enters the club as Jimmy beams shamelessly, the audience lukewarm. Lee subtly shakes his fist in front of his crotch. This is noticed by a man nearby, ANDY BOWER, 33.

ANDY

Got that right. Friggin one-hit wonder.

LEE

Well at least he had one hit. And the good sense to start up a club instead of blowing the money on cars and drugs.

ANDY

I hear you. So what's shakin'?

LEE

Oh, the usual, still searching for that number one hit.

ANDY

You and me both, brother. Well, in my case, I'm always trying to write one so you can find it, right? Anything interesting come in the mail?

LEE

Ah, I got a line on something. What's up with you, Andy?

ANDY

Your buddy Tim Matteson booked me to sing lead on a big demo session he's doing.

LEE

(scowls)

Tim Matteson? Really, what's the song?

ANDY

Hell if I know. He ain't sharing. He said it was a fucking amazing song... Says we can learn it when we get to the session. Strange but, if Tim wants to burn money on studio time while I learn the song, that's his problem.

Lee takes this in with more than a little anxiety.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil!

Andy reaches out his hand to welcome the approaching TIM MATTESON. Tim, 31, is nattily dressed in wide laped blue velour, sports a neatly trimmed mustache.

TIM

Andy, my favorite session singer! How's it hanging?

(to Lee)

Hey.

Andy senses the tension, plays peacemaker.

ANDY

I was just telling Lee about that mysterious session you're having.

LEE

Yeah Tim, what you got cooking?

TIM

(backpedaling)

Uh, nothing really. Hey, gotta go. Good seeing you Lee. You losin' some hair?

With that Tim moves off, is hailed by a couple of aspiring songwriters wielding cassettes. Tim greets them dismissively.

LEE
(sotto voce)
Asshole.

LANA (O.S.)
Lemur!

LANA DANIELS, 29, approaches, guitar case in hand. She has sparkly eyes and a sly cheerful demeanor. She's also doing her best to look the part of siren - tight jeans, loose top, long wavy hair.

Lana comes up to Lee, almost automatically going into an embrace, stops herself awkwardly.

LEE
Oh, I guess we don't do that anymore.

LANA
Yeah. Oh hi Andy. Lee, I'm up right after Andy. I need to get ready.

LEE
That's code for "tune my guitar", right?

Lana gives him an embarrassed, almost apologetic look.

LANA
I'll be in the green room.

Lana smiles and moves off. Andy looks after her approvingly, turns to Lee.

ANDY
I'm confused. Are you two back together, or what?

LEE
Or what.

Lee moves off. Andy looks after him pondering - does he have a shot with Lana?

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

The size of a walk in closet. As Lana readies herself, Lee carefully tunes her guitar.

LANA

Thanks Lemur. Tuning a guitar is the hardest thing in the music business.

LEE

You know the joke - a good guitarist spends half his time tuning, and the other half playing out of tune.

LANA

So true. I got one - what do you call a musician without a girlfriend.

LEE

Homeless?

LANA

Ok, you heard that one. Anyway, I was thinking of doing some of the new songs we worked on.

LEE

The ones about - us?

Lana nods shyly.

LANA

Broken Glass, Talk Talk, maybe One Too Many. What do you think?

LEE

All good songs. Go get 'em tiger.

Flashing a scared smile, Lana straps on her guitar, heads for the stage. Lee looks after her.

LEE (V.O.)

Some might think it was kind of fucked up that Lana spent months processing our breakup by writing songs about it, and then I helped her with the lyrics and chord progressions. Ya, it's weird, but it's where we've landed, even if the songs pour salt on still open wounds.

INT. 45 CLUB - NIGHT

Lee makes his way to a table with a bottle of beer, settles in.

LEE (V.O.)

But they were good songs. And she wasn't shy about taking responsibility for her messed up behavior in our breakup, for what that's worth.

JIMMY-JIMMY (O.S.)

And now for your listening, and quite frankly, viewing pleasure,

ANGLE

On Jimmy-Jimmy doing his schtick intro.

JIMMY-JIMMY (CONT'D)

...here is everyone's favorite ex-girlfriend, Lana!

Lee reacts, annoyed. Then the audience claps and there are a few wolf whistles as Lana seats herself on a stool. She begins strumming her perfectly tuned guitar.

LANA

Thank you, you're very kind. Here's a new one. It's called *One Too Many*.

Andy Bower, now seated with Lee, looks at Lee pointedly. Lee ignores him, holding his gaze on Lana.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES

Showing Lana performing, a little self-conscious at first. There is an ethereal, surreal quality to the montage and the score. No discernible lyric, just snippets of voice and almost unrecognizable instruments with quasi-psychedelic images.

LEE (V.O.)

If Lana could just relax and believe in herself, I think she could really go somewhere. Her songs worked because we've all suffered break ups, doubt ourselves, all just want love. Lana could tap into that because she was so in touch with her own dark side.

(MORE)

LEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She could say for us what we
couldn't possibly say, or even
admit, to ourselves. Plus, she's
damn cute, and when she finally
gets out of her head, she sings her
ass off.

Lana wraps up to enthusiastic applause.

LEE

Claps appreciatively.

LEE (V.O.)
I knew then and there that I had to
tell her.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRTY DINER - NIGHT

A spiffy retro all night joint in North Hollywood. The place
is bustling with artists and eccentrics.

INT. DIRTY DINER - NIGHT

Lee and Lana are seated at a corner table, gaining them a
modicum of privacy. Dr. Hook's "*When You're in Love with a
Beautiful Woman*" plays on the diner jukebox. A WAITRESS
arrives with their order.

WAITRESS
Cheesecake?

Lana signals.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
And hash browns - these are great!

LEE
Thanks. I love salty greasy things
late at night.

Lana digs into the oversized slice.

LANA
So what's the big mystery? Are you
pregnant and I'm the mother?

LEE

Not exactly. Listen, this is gonna sound weird, but I need to talk to someone I trust, and I need to be sure it's kept...

Lee searches for the right words.

LANA

Private, like, a secret?

Lee nods.

LANA (CONT'D)

And you actually trust me?

LEE

Ya, I guess... this is a different kind of trust. The kind where we keep our clothes on.

Lana winces.

LEE (CONT'D)

I just need someone to talk to about what's going on. But you gotta promise, you won't discuss it with anyone.

LANA

Okay, okay, I'm totally intrigued. Let's hear it - if you're sure you really want to tell.

LEE

I do...

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

Of Lee telling his story, Lana listening raptly. SCORE underscores the intimacy of this moment. Lee finally wraps up.

LEE

...it's just the best, most powerful damn song I've ever heard. I actually cried.

LANA

Wow, Lemur, that's awesome.

LEE

Yeah, the thing is, since there was no phone number, I went to the guy's apartment. Nobody was home... but I found Tim Matteson's card on the door.

LANA

Shit! So you think Tim got the song too?

LEE

What else could it mean? And then Andy said Tim hired him to sing lead on a recording session to demo an amazing new song. But, he didn't send a cassette for Andy to learn it. Said he could learn it at the studio.

LANA

Yeah, that's kinda strange, but it doesn't mean they are going to record that song. I know Tim's a sleaze, but this sounds paranoid. So come on, Lemur, what's the name of this masterpiece?

LEE

No, you already know too much.

Lana laughs.

LANA

So you're going to have to kill me now?

LEE

I know I'm being dramatic, but I'm telling you, this isn't just a hit, it's a fucking number one, maybe song of the year.

Lana slams down her fork.

LANA

Okay! Now, dammit, you gotta play the song for me.

LEE

I know it's crazy but...

LANA

So what do you want from me, Lemur?

LEE

I don't know. I just needed to tell someone.

A pause as they peck at their food.

LANA

So let's find this amazing songwriter - Hugh Barnes - and record the fucking song!

LEE

Of course that's what I want. But how am I going to find him? And maybe Tim already has and I lose out again to that d-bag.

LANA

Bastard.

LEE

Jerk off.

LANA

Poo poo head!

Lee laughs.

LANA (CONT'D)

Tell you what. I'm a woman, in case you've forgotten, and I have some feminine wiles that might be helpful in this shitty male dominated industry.

Lee looks at her questioningly.

LANA (CONT'D)

(faux Euro accent)

Let me ask around. I have, how shall I say, my sources?

LEE

Lana, please, don't do anything. I'm gonna figure out a way to reach this guy.

LANA

(reluctantly)

Okay. But if I just happen to hear something, I'll let you know.

Lee looks at Lana, nods, ruminating.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESULTORY APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Series of shots showing Lee checking back on Hugh's apartment, day after day. Lee parks surreptitiously across the street, peers through binoculars.

INTERCUT BINOCULAR SHOTS

Of Hugh's mailbox spewing more junk mail; Lee's card still securely fastened and untouched on Hugh's door; Carol the manager peering out her window, back at Lee through her own binoculars, frowning.

LEE (V.O.)

I kept checking back on Hugh, but couldn't catch him. Where was this guy? And my card was still taped to the door. Weird.

INT. GUITAR CENTER - DAY

An iconic, large music store where all the pros go.

Lana is perusing a display of guitar strings when Andy Bowers "just happens" to notice her.

ANDY

Oh hey, hi Lana.

LANA

Oh hi, Andy. I'm thinking of getting some heavier strings, since the B keeps breaking. But you know, they're harder to play.

ANDY

Yeah, but you get used to 'em. I must say you look nice today.

LANA

Uh, thanks. What's new?

ANDY

Oh man, I been getting booked for so many sessions. Life is good.

LANA

Oh yeah? Lee said you were doing
some kind of session with Tim?

ANDY

What? Oh that. Yeah, it got
cancelled.

LANA

Oh really, why?

ANDY

You want to grab a coffee and I'll
tell you about it?

Andy issues a smile, nods toward the door. Lana subtly gulps,
nods.

LANA

Sure, why not?

INT. KNOT RECORDS - DAY

Lee in his office on the phone.

LEE

Yeah Cliff, lunch sounds good. See
you there.

Lee glances at his watch jumps up to leave. The phone RINGS.
He grabs it. INTERCUT with Lana at a pay phone on a busy
street.

LEE (CONT'D)

This is Lee.

LANA

Lemur, I've got intel on your song.

LEE

What? What is it? I only got a
minute.

LANA

We shouldn't talk about it on the
phone - it might be tapped.

LEE

Very funny. So what's the big news?

LANA

Well, it's gonna cost you.

LEE
What'd you have in mind?

LANA
You gotta play me the song.

LEE
No deal, at least not yet.

LANA
Okay, then make me dinner. I got
nothing in the fridge.

LEE
I just bought fixings for my famous
shitty tacos.

LANA
Perfect, I love your shitty tacos.
And you can put on the new guitar
strings I just bought. That's all
part of the intel. Seven?

LEE
What? How can new strings be part
of the intel...?

LANA
You'll find out..Seven?

LEE
Okay.

Lee hangs up, ponders.

INT. KNOT CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Lee hurries in, takes a seat at a large, antique table.

Around the table are various other A&R guys, and even an A&R
chick, shuffling materials in front of them, casually
chatting.

Now MARK HANSON, 47, saunters in. Mark has a more buttoned-
down but still casual appearance. His air is self-assured,
almost smug.

LEE (V.O.)
Monday morning was pitch session
time at Knot. We brought in songs
and artists we thought might fit
the Knot Records mold and have some
success.

MARK

Morning everyone. Let's hear the gold you've found.

LEE (V.O.)

Mark Hanson was the owner of Knot. He was a once big exec at Reprise Records and supposedly brought them Jimi Hendrix.

One extremely young and brash A&R GUY jumps in.

A&R GUY

Ok Mark, listen, I was at the Whiskey on Saturday and this incredible punk band was playing. I got their cassette. Let me play if for you.

A&R Guy brandishes said cassette. Mark waves him off.

MARK

Hard pass there, Seth. As I've said countless times, our focus is exclusively on pop, specifically pop that can play on AM radio and hopefully become a number one hit. That ain't Punk! Come on! Anyone got some fuckin' Top 40?

Lee thinks long and hard.

LEE (V.O.)

I was wondering, should I say anything about No Way Back? But I felt so territorial about it. Would he let me produce it, or let Lana sing it - yes, I was thinking of it for her.

Lee is about to volunteer when JACKIE, the A&R CHICK, speaks up. Jackie looks like a Joan Jett wannabe, wearing all black and sporting a tattoo and piercings ahead of their time.

JACKIE

Mark, I found this amazing act, all girls. They totally rock. They're called The Go Gos-

Mark cuts her off, smiles indulgently.

MARK

An all girl ROCK band? That's cute, very cute but I don't think so.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

It'll never sell. I mean, who would take them seriously, and Rock is serious business. Come on people, you know the drill.

Jackie stifles her frustration. Mark looks around the room.

MARK (CONT'D)

Lee, you usually have some good stuff. What you got?

Lee folds his fingers together, thinks hard.

LEE (V.O.)

It'd be crazy to pitch a song where I hadn't even contacted the artist, and that also I wanted for my girlfriend, er, ex-girlfriend to sing. Sure, Mark had been successful in the past, but I couldn't trust him to do the right thing with this one, at least not yet. Or maybe I couldn't trust myself.

LEE

Just that band I gave you before, Huey Lewis?

MARK

Ah. Listened to the demo. Not bad, but too rough. I don't know, maybe you can give them some input, you know, help them get a more commercial sound. Otherwise, forget it.

Lee takes this in, nonplussed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUPER SOUND STUDIOS - DAY

A nondescript one story windowless building with a simple painted sign out front - SuperSound.

INT. SUPER SOUND STUDIOS - DAY

It's daytime but might as well be night, dark, low light, the eerie colorful glow of the mixing board and music equipment.

LEE (V.O.)

I dropped in to see my friend
Cliff, a bass player and
synthesizer wizard. He was doing a
session for a new group with a big
shot producer, Paul Champion.

Lee makes his way into a room marked "Studio B".

INSIDE

A quasi "New Wave" band - their drum set proclaims them to be
"The Glams" - blast a clubby tune. CLIFF plays the synths
expertly until a break.

CLIFF

Comes up to Lee.

CLIFF

Just about to go on lunch break.
One more take.

LEE

It's cool. I like watching Paul
Champion do his thing.

They exchange knowing glances.

NEW ANGLE

Lee watches as the band and the studio players do the take.

LEE (V.O.)

Yeah, it was a stupid disco tune
with one annoying repetitive lyric.
But I've been around enough to know
there's plenty of room for stupid
songs. After all, I'm still pulling
royalties for a tune I placed
called "Santa from Atlanta", so I'm
not going to throw stones.

As the take wraps up, Lee is approached by PAUL CHAMPION, 50,
open shirt, chains, too tight pants, and an overexcited coked
up demeanor.

Paul dances to the pulsing music, bopping up to Cliff's
synth. He turns a knob wildly, causing the synth to emit
screeching feedback. Cliff gives Paul an annoyed look, but
Paul is oblivious.

PAUL

This shit is kickin'!

The take ends with all present seemingly enthusiastic.

Lee approaches Paul.

LEE (V.O.)

I wasn't above kissing some well-placed producer ass, even if it was obnoxious. Paul had a great track record, which included multiple hits, grammies, and lawsuits.

LEE

Hey Paul.

Paul peers at Lee through glazed eyes.

PAUL

Hey Lee, good to see you. You here to see our synth magic?

LEE

It's a fun song. It'll go over good in the clubs.

PAUL

Fuck yeah, baby. The heat is on with the club tracks. This one is gonna be huge. Hey, we might need some background vocals, are you still screwing that delicious background singer, what was her name - Lindy?

Lee winces at this turn, but hangs in there.

LEE

Lana?

PAUL

Yeah, that's her, Lana. She was great in the studio, what a voice! And man, you're one lucky dude to be gettin' it on with her.

LEE

Well, we aren't "gettin' it on" anymore, but we still write together and I'm producing the stuff.

Paul appears surprised.

PAUL

Well, I hope you can pull that off. I can barely be in the same room with any of my exes, let alone try to do something creative with them. I only heard Lana doing backups, but I can tell a great voice when I hear it. And with her looks, it could work.

Paul gives Lee a nudge-nudge wink-wink look.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Anyway, when you've got gold, let me know. I'd like first crack at working with you guys.

(softly)

Just between you and me, fuck Mark Hanson and Knot Records. I'm tied in with majors, so sky's the limit. You dig? Lana, huh?

LEE

Yeah. All right, Paul, good to know.

PAUL

Seriously, when you've got something, call my agent.

Paul holds up an invisible phone to his ear. Lee smiles and fires a finger pistol at Paul, who roars off to dominate another conversation.

INT. LEE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lee is in his tiny galley kitchen, browning some ground beef, cutting up tomatoes and avocado. The Beatles "*Get Back*" plays on the stereo.

Lana walks in through the unlocked door with a couple of limes, Coronas, and her guitar.

LEE

Almost ready.

Lana places the limes on a cutting board, searches out a knife.

LEE (CONT'D)

You might want to rinse off that board, unless you want your beer to taste like onions.