

"JINGLE BELLES"

Written by:
Jim Boston

1312 N. 48th Ave., #324
Omaha, NE 68132
402 556-3340
Huskercyclone@netzero.net
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FADE IN:

EXT. MUSIC DISTRICT (ALONG BROADWAY) - DAY

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY, NY, 2-4-1959

New York City lives up to its reputation for nonstop hustle and bustle...even on this cold, cloudy mid-morning.

Exhibit A: An area of midtown Manhattan bordered on the south by the Forties and on the north by the Sixties.

Instruments and voices aren't the only things that make music here: The endless traffic of vehicles and PEDESTRIANS works as effectively as any combo.

KIRBY MCCULLUM (25, Black, sarcastic; thick New York accent) walks along Broadway with her head down and her body covered by a not-so-stylish blouse-skirt combination and a heavy winter coat and a large hat.

As Kirby heads toward the mid-Fifties on Broadway, she sees FOUR COLLEGE-AGE MEN who sing some doo-wop on a street corner. (All four men are Black.)

The men, PRESTON REESE (20, first tenor), LEROY SMITH (19, second tenor), CARLTON WINTERS (20, baritone), and EARL CARTER (19, bass), sing a driving rocker that makes Kirby stop in her tracks...and brings a smile to her face.

MORE PEDESTRIANS pass by Kirby and the doo-woppers, who seem more like aliens to the pedestrians.

Preston's, Leroy's, Carlton's, and Earl's act is over, and Kirby pulls four dollars out of her purse and hands a buck to each singer.

KIRBY

Love to stay, but I gotta catch an indoor performance.

(waving at the men)

See ya tomorrow.

The four singers watch Kirby walk down Broadway. When she's out of their view, Earl eyes Carlton.

EARL

That chick's what's keepin' us goin'.

EXT. NEWSSTAND AT 55TH AND BROADWAY - DAY

Kirby heads east on 55th Street; she spots a newsstand, where she eyeballs a copy of "The New York Times."

Kirby grabs the top paper from a stack of "Timeses," produces a nickel from her purse, and hands JACK (50s; the attendant here) that nickel before she moves on.

EXT. AMALGAMATED RECORD STORE - DAY

Amalgamated Records takes up the ground floor of a rather tall building; the main landmark here is a gaudy, technicolor neon sign up front.

Just outside the building, Kirby spots A WOMAN (50s) who toots a harmonica. Kirby sizes her up, then stops alongside the musician.

MAIN TITLES APPEAR OVER ACTION.

Kirby's gaze continues until the end of the harmonica solo.

KIRBY

Lady...it's the wrong time of year
to be out here playin' a mouth
harp.

The harmonica player does a doubletake as Kirby walks inside the store.

INT. AMALGAMATED SALESFLOOR - DAY

Once she arrives inside, Kirby glances at the front page of her newspaper.

She's inside a self-service record store; racks of albums ring the perimeter and take up one corner of the salesfloor. The middle of the store features racks of 45-RPM records; another corner of the room has a few 78s.

At a third corner, toward the front of the store, ATHENA PENELOPE "PENNY" STAVROS (26, perky; a Los Angeles native) mounts a display of the latest albums by music's new breed of hitmakers.

Kirby folds up her paper and browses.

PENNY

Kirby, you're early!

KIRBY

How's that rekkid by the Ninety
Eights doin'?

PENNY

Well, a few people came in the last
couple of days asking about it.

KIRBY

Oh, yeah. My three brothers and one sister.

PENNY

Don't worry. It's only been out a week. Give it a chance.

KIRBY

What it needs is some legs.

Kirby treats herself to a close-up look at Penny's display.

PENNY

Had a chance to check the paper today?

Kirby shakes her head "no" as she lifts an album (by, say, Little Anthony and the Imperials or Jimmie Rodgers) from the display.

KIRBY

All I got was as far as the headline. Somethin' 'bout a plane crash. Twenty-two people died.

PENNY

Well, this plane crash was on page sixty six.

Done with the display, Penny steps back to admire it; she joins Kirby in reading the liner notes on the back of the album in Kirby's grip.

KIRBY

Don't tell me another plane crashed in the East River. And it was carryin' Little Anthony and the Imperials.

PENNY

Nope, but looks like we're gonna have a run on Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper.

Kirby frowns her way into an all-knowing nod.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Their plane crashed in a corn field in Iowa yesterday.

Kirby places the album in the exact same spot she found it and turns to page sixty six of her copy of the "Times."

PENNY (CONT'D)

Look at it this way, Kirby: Little Anthony could be the next big thing.

KIRBY

(still reading newspaper)
Penny Stavros, you know better than that. We've known each other for four months now. They ain't gonna make him into the next Elvis.

Penny shrugs as Kirby reads on; as Kirby continues to read, her frown becomes more severe.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

This takes the cake. They've tried everything to stop rock and roll.

Kirby's attempt to fold the newspaper back up becomes a wrestling match of sorts.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

If they can't draft singers, or kick 'em off the air for marryin' cousins, they'll kill 'em.

(gets newspaper folded)
Maybe that pilot was an FBI agent.

Penny puts her hands on Kirby's shoulders as a stream of CUSTOMERS files into the store.

PENNY

Kirby...a lot of customers are in singing groups or just singers.

Kirby nods in an attempt to collect herself.

At the back end of the salesfloor, an office door opens...and NORMAN KRIGSTEN (mid-30s, jaded) comes out onto the salesfloor. He walks over to Penny and Kirby.

NORMAN

Penny...ya wanna help out these customers?

PENNY

Mr. Krigsten, I am.

Norman gives Kirby a tired look and AD LIBS an equally tired salutation.

KIRBY
 (to Penny)
 And the studios just aren't big
 enough to hold 'em. We gotta help
 'em out.

Norman gives Penny a severe look that makes her sprint toward a group of CUSTOMERS looking at singles.

He sizes up Kirby.

NORMAN
 The next platter ya bring in to get
 us to sell had better go gold.

KIRBY
 Norman...it would if ya got busy!

Norman shrugs wildly and walks back to the office.

Once the door's shut, Kirby comes up with a sinister laugh.

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY

With the workday over, Kirby and Penny walk along the street; along the way, they dodge OTHER PEDESTRIANS.

KIRBY
 Let's go over to my office and
 figure this out.

EXT. SUBWAY - DAY

Penny and Kirby head toward the #4 train...but the former looks surprised.

PENNY
 The "D's" an express.

KIRBY
 That's why ya can't get a seat on
 it.

Penny shrugs and gets aboard the subway with Kirby.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Kirby and Penny look for two seats on a subway train teeming with PASSENGERS.

Both women breathe sighs of relief when they find two adjacent seats.

PENNY

It really sounds good, helping out the singers and all that. They do come in and look for the latest hits. And they get ideas from 'em. And we--

KIRBY

We need to write the latest hits. Some good ones...like "Stagger Lee."

A smile slowly forms on Penny's face.

PENNY

Or another "Tall Paul."

KIRBY

I'd just settle for another "Stagger Lee."

Penny shrugs and nods.

EXT. EAST 140TH STREET APARTMENTS - NIGHT

This is a medium-size tenement building that's not so distinguishable from the others around it and across the street from it.

INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The walls inside Kirby's apartment are painted a subdued color; the apartment itself is simply furnished, yet as tasteful as her meager budget will allow.

In fact, the most extravagant item in the living room is a beat-up upright piano from the 1880-1929 period.

Kirby sits at it while Penny sits on a second-hand sofa.

PENNY

If I can clear it with Mr. Krigsten,
(picking up a pencil)
I'm gonna put a notice in the store window.

Penny finds a piece of scratch paper on the coffee table. She scribbles out something akin to a classified ad.

KIRBY

Penny, ya gotta think big! Why don'tcha put an ad in "Variety?"

PENNY

Who left you a mint?

KIRBY

Ya got a better idea?

PENNY

Well, I was gonna call LA 4-1000
and talk to an ad taker from the
"Times."

KIRBY

(getting up from piano)
You can reach more people with
"Variety."

Kirby struts toward the sofa; at her destination, she watches Penny work on a budding classified ad.

PENNY

I don't know about you, Kirby, but
I don't have enough money to put an
ad in "Variety." And besides, we've
got all the budding songwriters we
can find right here in our
backyard.

KIRBY

This neighborhood is crowded enough
as it is!

Penny puts the finishing touches on her ad.

PENNY

You know how Los Angeles is full of
people who wanna get into movies?
And if they can't do that, they'll
try television?

KIRBY

And if they can't make it on TV,
they'll settle for parking cars.

Kirby grabs Penny's ad and reads it.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

"Can you write the next Top Ten
smash? Come join us!"

(gives Penny back the ad)
I'd settle for Top Thirty.

PENNY

New York's full of people who wanna write the next, uh, "Purple People Eater."

Kirby rests a hand on Penny's shoulder.

KIRBY

Look here: Cats and chicks in the city ain't worried about no "Purple People Eater." They're worried about roaches!

Kirby removes her hand from Penny's shoulder.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

If we're gonna get this music-publishing firm off the ground, we're gonna need to hear from the whole country!

Kirby walks around.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Cats that do their writin' in a barn with cows for an audience! I used to know a chick who, back in high school, wrote songs in class all day...even in study hole.

PENNY

How's she doing now?

KIRBY

She's on welfare. Got eleven mouths to feed.

Kirby stops in her tracks.

PENNY

(hand on Kirby's shoulder)
Call her up!

KIRBY

Her songs were lousy...ya know, you oughta get holda some of those Californians and tell 'em to give up on tryin' to be movie stars and tell 'em to write songs.

Penny strides toward the phone.

PENNY

You go ahead and tell 'em.
 (picks up receiver)
 I'm gonna call LA 4-1000 and shake
 up the natives.

A puzzled Kirby goes back to the piano.

EXT. NEWSSTAND AT 55TH AND BROADWAY - DAY

Penny plucks a "New York Times" from the top of a stack of newspapers. She goes right to the classifieds...and finds the ad in question.

It reads: "CAN YOU WRITE THE NEXT TOP TEN SMASH? JOIN US! NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED, BUT MUST BE ABLE TO WRITE LIKE A PRO."

Jack looks over Penny's shoulder...and looks annoyed.

JACK

Hey, lady, don'tcha think ya oughta
 pay for that paper first?

Penny nods, hands Jack a dollar, and walks away with nineteen copies of today's "Times."

Jack looks puzzled.

INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kirby sits at the table with a cup of coffee; she turns to the classified section of her copy of "Daily Variety."

The ad she reads also starts out: "CAN YOU WRITE THE NEXT TOP TEN SMASH? JOIN US!"

A satisfied Kirby pumps a fist into the air.

INT. AMALGAMATED SALESFLOOR - DAY

Penny goes to the bulletin board to place a larger copy of her "New York Times" ad on the board.

She keeps a watch out for anyone about to enter the store.
 (It's quiet.)

The office door opens...out strides Norman, who walks over to Penny.

NORMAN

Penny...go help out some customers.

Penny backs away from the bulletin board and admires the ad.

PENNY

I will...soon as we get some today.

Norman shrugs wildly and walks back toward the office.

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY

Kirby tries to hide her copy of "Daily Variety" inside her coat and finds it a struggle.

She passes by Carlton, Earl, Leroy, and Preston; the four singers huddle up against a building, where they do a ballad.

Kirby stops to listen...and, once again, she's impressed.

KIRBY

You guys are gonna get some help.

PRESTON

Ya mean we're gettin' another member?

KIRBY

Not that kinda help...some songwriting help.

LEROY

But we don't write!

KIRBY

I know.

Kirby pulls out her "Daily Variety" and turns to the classified section.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Dig this.

She points to the ad in question...and the singers huddle around her to get a good look.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Me and this girl from Amalgamated Rekkids are gonna start this music-publishing company...so we can get the singers some decent songs.

CARLTON

Hey, baby...what's wrong with the songs we're singin'?

KIRBY

Nothing.

(closes "Daily Variety")

We just wanna get you some more
decent ones.

Earl, Leroy, Carlton, and Preston nod.

Kirby waves as she heads further down the street.

EARL

(shouting at Kirby)

Hey! Let us know how it goes!

As soon as Kirby's out of the singers' view, Earl turns to the others.

EARL (CONT'D)

See...I told ya that chick's what's
keepin' us goin'.

Earl's colleagues nod.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The rain continues to pelt New York City as if no tomorrow's in sight.

Through that rain, attention jumps to a rather modest-looking, brightly-painted house in Queens; a 1955 Plymouth rests in the driveway.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Penny's house is furnished to the hilt; the dark furniture provides a sharp contrast to the brightly-painted walls.

Penny and Kirby place bowls of potato chips on the coffee table. (Both women wear jeans.)

PENNY

I can't wait 'til somebody shows
up. It's been an hour.

KIRBY

They'd better. We got enough of a
handicap not bein' in the music
district.

Kirby grabs a can of mixed nuts from off the coffee table and heads for the kitchen. But before she reaches the kitchen:

KIRBY (CONT'D)
 Penny, why don'tcha listen for
 cars? I'm gonna find me a can
 opener.

INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kirby reaches the counter; she pulls out one drawer after
 another until she finds the silverware drawer.

She searches the silverware drawer in a mad hunt for a manual
 can opener, but frustration causes her to look a second
 time...and a third...until:

KIRBY
 Hey, Penny, whatcha open up ya soup
 with? A blowtorch?

PENNY (O.S.)
 On the counter over by the toaster!

Kirby spots the toaster at last; an electric can opener rests
 nearby. She places the can into position.

KIRBY
 If I could make more money offa
 songwritin' and producin', I could
 get me one of these, too.

A satisfied Kirby, open can of nuts in tow, walks away from
 the kitchen.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kirby sets the can of nuts on the coffee table.

KIRBY
 Why don'tcha do some of them songs
 you wrote?

Instead, Kirby hears the sound of Penny's vacuum cleaner.

While she tries to steady the vacuum cleaner with one hand,
 Penny pulls a dustrag out of a jeans pocket with the other
 hand.

Kirby nods as she strides over to Penny to take the dustrag.

KIRBY (CONT'D)
 I get the message!

Kirby moves to an end table to go work on it.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A late 1950s car pulls into the driveway.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Penny and Kirby continue to work to tidy up the former's living room when a KNOCK rings out on the front door.

But they don't quite hear the knock.

A SECOND SERIES OF KNOCKS doesn't arouse Kirby and Penny, either.

A LOUDER, STRONGER KNOCK gets the job done.

In fact, it...almost puts a hole in the door.

Penny turns the vacuum cleaner off while Kirby, cloth in hand, opens the door.

PENNY

Don't worry about the door. Some wood putty'll take care of it.

A surprised Kirby gestures DULCEY MAE WEATHERALL (20, optimistic, somewhat polite; Tennessee twang) inside.

Dulcey Mae wears a medium-length coat and totes a full guitar case with her. As she walks in, she gazes at Penny.

DULCEY MAE

Why, Ah didn't thank the people around here could afford to hire he'p.

Penny shakes her head from side to side.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Ah know thangs are lookin' up in the--

Kirby slams the door and stares in anger as Dulcey Mae moves toward the sofa.

Before Dulcey Mae can sit down, Penny moves in between her and Kirby.

PENNY

Hi. I'm Penny Stavros.
(hand on Kirby's shoulder)
And this is my partner, Kirby McCullum.

Kirby still bristles, even if the scowl is now less hostile.
 Dulcey Mae looks too embarrassed and too humbled to react.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 Come on, you two, say something.
 (to Dulcey Mae)
 At least take off your coat.

Dulcey Mae and Kirby continue to stare at each other in complete embarrassment.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A few more cars (some built in the late 1940s) stop in the vicinity of Penny's house.

INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dulcey Mae's coat now rests on a kitchen chair, and Dulcey Mae herself wears a sweater/skirt combo.

She, Kirby, and Penny stand at the counter, where Penny tries to cajole Kirby and Dulcey Mae into peace.

PENNY
 Come on, you two. Shake hands.

Kirby goes to the refrigerator to pull out an ice tray.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 Sing a song. Do something!

Dulcey Mae goes to a cabinet and pulls out three glasses. She sets them on the counter, where Kirby sets the tray of newly-broken ice.

Penny grabs Kirby with one hand and Dulcey Mae with the other, nods the two women into a handshake...and breathes relief once the handshake happens.

DULCEY MAE
 Hi there, Kirby. Ah'm Dulcey Mae
 Weatherall.

Dulcey Mae and Kirby shake hands again.

PENNY
 Name sounds familiar...Dulcey Mae
 Weatherall! You were in town last
 week at the Longhorn Cafe.

Dulcey Mae nods as she puts ice into the three glasses.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Now if we could get more people to buy your records.

KIRBY

First of all, we gotta stop those squeaky-clean frauds from coverin' them.

Dulcey Mae nods while Penny's mouth flies open.

DULCEY MAE

That's why Ah'm here.

Penny grabs three bottles of pop from the refrigerator, sets them on the counter, and goes to the silverware drawer to produce a bottle opener.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Yeah. Gino Bonino took mah "Ah Wonder Where Your Lovin' Went" and--

Penny pries the caps from the bottles as Dulcey Mae talks.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

--took it to Number Eight on the national charts.

(grabs a bottle of pop)

And took the country out of it.

As Penny and Kirby go after the other pop bottles, the former gives the latter a look of pity.

PENNY

Now, Kirby...don't you think Frankie Avalon's really cute?

KIRBY

How do ya feel 'bout Sam Cooke?

Kirby pours pop into her glass when a KNOCK on the front door O.S. takes place.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

How many soda bottles ya got left, Penny?

Dulcey Mae puts her pop bottle on the counter to answer the door...but stops in her tracks when Penny, who leaves the kitchen, answers instead.

Dulcey Mae peeks inside the refrigerator.

DULCEY MAE

Three.

KIRBY

(shouting toward Penny)
Hope ya don't have to go to the
store!

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As the KNOCKS multiply and grow LOUDER, Penny runs toward the front door, opens it, and finds...EIGHT PEOPLE standing in front of her.

All eight wear not-so-heavy coats, seven of the eight wear dresses (and one of the dresses is actually a food server's uniform), and one of the standees carries a briefcase.

Penny's pleasantly surprised.

PENNY

Please...sit down, everybody. Find
a seat.

COLLEEN FITZPATRICK (21, bashful; Chicago accent) saunters over to one lounge chair and MARTHA FANUCCHI (18, a worrier from Los Angeles) goes to the other lounge chair.

Before Colleen can put her feet on the ottoman in front of her, JOHNNIELOUISE HILL (23, Black, determined, witty; North Carolina twang), in the food server's uniform, grabs the ottoman...and sits on it.

Kirby and Dulcey Mae peek through the kitchen door, then look at each other.

KIRBY

Think they'll like tea?

Back in the living room, EVE REICH (19, reserved; Chicago brogue) and the husband-and-wife team of HANK LEE (24, Black, content to sit on the sidelines; New York accent) and SYLVIA THOMPSON (21, Black, industrious, unpretentious; New York native) sit at the sofa.

FLORENCE PEAKS (21, Black, uninhibited, has a tall hairdo; Denver native) and briefcase-toting JEANNIE ARCHAMBAULT (20, White, worldly; New York tongue) look at each other and around the room. They move behind the lounge chairs and stay on their feet.

Eve offers Sylvia a handshake.

EVE
I saw you on TV, Syl...Miss
Thompkins.

SYLVIA
Which show?

EVE
"The Big Beat," of course.

Hank and Sylvia shake Eve's hands...simultaneously.

Penny sits on the floor in an attempt to become the bullseye
in a semicircle.

It's now quiet...but for the O.S. SOUNDS in the kitchen.

MARTHA
(to Penny)
You don't have a piano in here.

PENNY
I never wanted to learn how to
play.

Penny shrugs as she flashes a smile.

PENNY (CONT'D)
But I've got a guitar, an autoharp,
a banjo, a mandolin, a zither, and
a bass fiddle.

Hank and Johnnielouise chuckle.

FLORENCE
(to Penny)
Not to be disrespectful, but...if
we're gonna start a music-
publishing company, couldn't we at
least meet...

Kirby enters the living room with a tray of glasses (and a
pitcher of tea atop the tray) and Dulcey Mae follows
her...with the three opened pop bottles and three unopened
pop bottles (preferably in a carrier).

DULCEY MAE
Y'all take your pick: Tay or pop.

FLORENCE
In the music district?

Kirby, Penny, and Dulcey Mae grab the three opened bottles of pop while Eve, Hank, Sylvia, Florence, Jeannie, Johnnielouise, Colleen, and Martha choose between tea and soft drinks.

KIRBY

Well, you know why ya here. That girl in the toll hairdo told ya.
(pointing to Florence)
Lotta singers out there and a lotta groups...and they need professional songs.

Some of the aspirants nod.

PENNY

Kirby's right. But there aren't enough people around to write 'em decent songs.

Penny takes a swig of pop.

PENNY (CONT'D)

"I love you so/I'll never let you go" gets old real fast.

Jeannie puts down her glass of iced tea (or pop) and reaches into her briefcase...to pull out a 45-RPM record.

JEANNIE

(to Penny)
Miss...do you have a hi-fi
(holds up record)
I can play this on?

Penny gets up and moves toward Jeannie.

PENNY

Sure. Over in the corner.

Jeannie moves over to a corner of the living room, finds the hi-fi unit, and puts the record in position to play.

Once the record spins, Jeannie's own SINGING VOICE comes out of the loudspeaker.

RECORD (V.O.)

*I've got something I want to tell
you,/About a person I know so well:
You./I had a dream 'bout me with
you, and/We were walking and
holding hands.*

Jeannie's "My Dream about You" sounds too tame to be rock and roll, yet one step removed from pure pop music.

But no one else in the room looks interested in the record.

KIRBY

So, everybody...why don't we introduce ourselves?

They find a KNOCK on the front door.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

My name's Kirby--

HANK

I know you, Kirby. You're that chick workin' with the Ninety Eights. And you used to work with Juanita Miller.

While Kirby's mouth flies open, Penny opens the front door, and ROSE KLEINSCHMITT (20, brassy; New York native) bursts through it...while she smokes a rather huge cigar.

Florence runs toward Rose as if it's Old Home Week.

FLORENCE

If it isn't Countess Jones!

ROSE

Ya don't have to call me that anymore.

Rose and Florence hug...but the latter looks disappointed.

ROSE (CONT'D)

You can call me by my real name now...Rosemarie Deanna Kleinschmitt...Rose for short.

Sylvia and Hank turn around to look at Florence and Rose, who break their embrace.

SYLVIA

You two know each other?

FLORENCE

Rose gigged with us at the Subway Club in Brooklyn last year.

HANK
 (to Florence)
 How come I didn't know about it?
 Nobody hipped me!

Rose removes her stylish coat and reveals a ritzy dress in the process, then searches for a place to sit.

Penny joins Jeannie by the hi-fi as "My Dream about You"
 CONTINUES.

Rose shares the ottoman with Johnnielouise, who covers her own nose.

JOHNNIELOUISE
 Is there an ashtray in the house?

Kirby bolts for the kitchen...and comes back into the living room with a bowl.

KIRBY
 (hands the bowl to Rose)
 Here...try this.

Rose takes the bowl and flicks cigar ashes into it.

ROSE
 (to Hank)
 Florence had a little band called
 the Four Buttercups.

Some within earshot of Rose giggle.

ROSE (CONT'D)
 For a while, they were the Five Buttercups, but Florence's sister started her own band and the piano player in the Buttercups got pregnant. That split 'em up.

HANK
 Florence, you shoulda came to me. I coulda kept ya together.

SYLVIA
 Hank...don't cry over spilled whiskey.

Jeannie's record is now OVER.

PENNY
 (to Jeannie)
 I can't wait to hear what you've
 written since then.

JEANNIE
 This...is it.

While Jeannie takes her record off the turntable of the hi-fi, Kirby moves over to Hank, Sylvia, and Eve.

KIRBY
 So, Sylvia...when ya gonna get on
 "American Bandstand?"

SYLVIA
 Soon as Hank apologizes to the two
 teenagers who gave my first record
 a thirty five.

Eve and Kirby do doubletakes.

HANK
 I mailed the kids a dead fish.

KIRBY
 If they had sense, they'd've ate
 it.

Eve's doubletake looks even stronger than before.

Colleen looks around the room. She stands up.

COLLEEN
 Look, everybody! This won't work!
 This place needs a piano!

The whole room quiets down...if only for a few seconds.

MARTHA
 Or six. Or twelve.

EVE
 (pointing to Colleen)
 She's right.

Some of the would-be songwriters applaud.

EVE (CONT'D)
 How conducive can a residential
 neighborhood like this be to
 writing rock-and-roll songs?

Now Kirby does a doubletake.

KIRBY
Why don't we introduce ourselves?
 (to Eve)
 You first.

Eve points to herself in embarrassment.

EXT. AMALGAMATED RECORD STORE - DAY

Yesterday's rain has given way to a sunny facade.

INT. AMALGAMATED SALESFLOOR - DAY

Penny's at the counter, where she rings up some purchases for the CUSTOMER across the counter from her.

KIRBY
 (to Penny)
 Eve can't make a statement like
 that! Ya don't know when or where
 that creative bug's gonna strike!
 Ya never know!

The customer hands Penny the money (and gets change back if possible), stares at Kirby, and, purchases in hand, leaves the store.

KIRBY (CONT'D)
 I once wrote a song in the ladies'
 room in a subway in--

PENNY
 I've gotta admit, Kirby, it does
 get kinda quiet in my neighborhood.

Penny grabs an unopened box of 45s from off the floor.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 And we need to be closer to the
 action.

Penny sets the box on the counter, grabs a pair of scissors, and opens the box ever-so-gently at the top with the scissors.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 All the major labels here in town
 are here in Manhattan, not Queens.
 (inspects a record)
 It's about time Betty Johnson's new
 single came in.

Kirby reacts with a listless nod.

KIRBY
Yeah. I remember "Little Blue Man."

PENNY
That was really a cute record!
(looks at label on record)
This one's "You Can't Get to Heaven
on Roller Skates."

Kirby groans.

EXT. AMALGAMATED RECORD STORE - DAY

It's lunch hour; Penny and Kirby (now in their coats) leave the store as the sun continues to shine.

KIRBY
I don't know about this, Penny.

PENNY
Well, if we could afford to rent a building, we could rent a building. But we can't.

KIRBY
So...we gonna go to a bank and ask 'em to loan us the money to buy a building for our music-publishing company.

PENNY
Right!

EXT. LIBERTY NATIONAL BANK BUILDING - DAY

This is one of the more imposing structures in the financial district of Manhattan.

INT. LIBERTY NATIONAL BANK SECOND FLOOR OFFICE - DAY

This office is equally imposing, with its high ceiling; dark, morbid-looking paneling; and large desk.

Behind that desk: ARTHUR JUDSON (60s), Liberty National's senior loan officer. He examines Penny and Kirby from his high-backed seat.

Kirby and Penny sit in swivel chairs.

KIRBY

Sir...we're trying to establish a music-publishing company here in th' city.

Penny nods at Kirby, then at Arthur.

PENNY

We've noted the success Don Kirshner and Al Nevins have started to have with Aldon Music--

ARTHUR

You mean that rock-and-roll outfit?

KIRBY

We wanted to give them help in tryin' to get all the unrecorded, undiscovered singers and groups some decent material, and--

ARTHUR

Don't let the door hit both of you on your way out!

A surprised Kirby and a miffed Penny slowly rise.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. OFFICE AT FIRST INDUSTRIAL BANK - DAY

With Penny and Kirby (both seated) waiting and watching, A LOAN OFFICER reads the twosome's loan application...only to laugh at it.

INT. OFFICE AT PENNY SAVINGS BANK - DAY

THE LOAN OFFICER on duty here reads Penny's and Kirby's application...and tears the application into little pieces.

INT. OFFICE AT BANK OF THE UNION - DAY

This bank's LOAN OFFICER sees Kirby and Penny enter the office...but won't let them go further.

INT. OFFICE AT LEXINGTON NATIONAL BANK - DAY

At this bank, Kirby's and Penny's application is made into a ball...and tossed into a wastebasket by the institution's SENIOR LOAN OFFICER.

INT. LOBBY AT TAMMANY BANK - DAY

THE LOAN OFFICER at this bank reads the application all the way through...only to respond with a negative reaction.

END MONTAGE

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The area around the abode again teems with cars.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Penny, Kirby, Dulcey Mae, Martha, Hank, Sylvia, Eve, Florence, Johnnielouise, Colleen, Jeannie, and Rose all sit (some directly on the floor).

All but Penny engage in AD LIBBED conversation, and the chief emotion is worry.

PENNY

Don't worry...we'll find us a permanent place to work.

JOHNNIELOUISE

Make shore it's got a lot of cheers.

The writers seated on the floor cheer.

KIRBY

First, we gotta split ya up into teams.

(getting up from her seat)

In fact, six pairs. We already got two pairs figured out.

Martha and Colleen look surprised; Florence looks worried.

A second later, Martha joins the Worried Club.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Hank and Sylvia been songwriting partners for seven years and partners in holy matrimony for about a year and a half.

Sylvia receives looks of awe from Hank and most of the other budding writers.

Martha doesn't look awed, though.

MARTHA

Kirby...what's the other team?

KIRBY

Me and Penny, of course.

Penny leaves the room as Martha and Jeannie look surprised.

DULCEY MAE

(to Jeannie and Martha)

You gotta admit...it's they baby.

EVE

That's right, Jeannie. Why wouldn't Kirby and Penny be partners?

Jeannie shrugs.

Penny returns to the living room with a baseball cap that has eight slips of paper in it.

PENNY

Okay, everybody, listen up. This is how we're...Hank, Sylvia, and Kirby, you don't have to listen.

Eve, Johnnielouise, Colleen, Dulcey Mae, Martha, Rose, Florence, and Jeannie get attentive.

PENNY (CONT'D)

In this baseball cap are eight slips of paper. Each slip's got a name on it. The name on the slip is gonna be the name of the person you'll be working with. Any questions?

ROSE

What happens if I draw my own name?

JOHNNIELOUISE

Wail, Rose, we'll just take your ego down a taste or two.

Some good laughter ensues from most of the gang.

KIRBY

(to Rose)

Just pull out another slip of paper.

Rose nods.

COLLEEN

Penny, what if my partner and I
don't get along with each other?

Penny strokes her own chin.

PENNY

I hope it doesn't have to come down
to that, Colleen. But if it does,
let me and Kirby know.

Colleen shrugs.

KIRBY

(to Colleen)

Tell ya what: Why don'tcha pick
first?

Colleen gets up, moves toward Penny, and, eyes closed, digs
into the latter's baseball cap to pull out a slip. When
Colleen finds one, she opens her eyes.

COLLEEN

Dulcey Mae...I think I'm your
partner. I've never worked with a
country singer before.

DULCEY MAE

Wail...it's a pleasure to work with
a rehearsal pianist.

Colleen takes the slip with her and returns to her seat; Eve
gets up to let her fingers wander inside Penny's cap.

EVE

(pulls out slip of paper)

Martha, I think we'll make an
intriguing partnership.

Martha slowly nods...with that "I'm in over my head" look.

With Eve seated again, Jeannie strides over to Penny and the
latter's cap, pulls out a slip of paper, and:

JEANNIE

Rose.

Rose looks so ecstatic she runs up to Jeannie and hugs her.
Martha does a doubletake...and Penny applauds.

ROSE

Just think, Jeannie: Me...a
lawyer's daughter...working with
you...a judge's daughter.

JEANNIE

Remember: If this liaison doesn't
work, I'm holding you in contempt
of Tin Pan Alley.

Rose and Jeannie return, arm in arm, to their seats.

KIRBY

Well, that leaves Johnnie and
Florence. Ain't no need in you
gettin' up.

Johnnielouise shrugs Kirby off and goes to the baseball cap
anyway.

Eyes closed, Johnnielouise picks a slip of paper, then opens
her eyes to look at her new partner.

JOHNNIELOUISE

Florence...Ah shore hope you can
play the pianner, 'cause Ah cain't.

FLORENCE

If you want, Johnnie, I'll teach
you how. Just like my father taught
me.

SYLVIA

(with a sigh of relief)
Finally...we can write.

Eve gets up as if the victim of an electric shock.

EVE

And I've got just the place for
it...and it's closer to the music
district than this house.

Eve gains wild applause from the rest of the gang.

EXT. JOURNALISM BUILDING AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

STUDENTS walk inside, out of, or around this four-story, pre-
World War 1 building to the tune of a nippy atmosphere.

INT. JOURNALISM BUILDING BASEMENT CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Colleen, Dulcey Mae, Eve, Florence, Hank, Johnnielouise, Jeannie, Kirby, Martha, Penny, Rose, and Sylvia walk inside this good-sized classroom in a building housing Columbia's Music Department.

MARTHA

At least this room's got a piano.

Martha eyeballs the piano in question: An upright from the 1870-1929 period.

Dulcey Mae, Johnnielouise, and Penny put down their guitar cases and help the other writers rearrange the desks. What results is a setup in which the desks are grouped in twos so that each twosome can have some semblance of privacy.

Once the remodeling ends, Martha walks over to the piano while the others take seats at desks.

Once Martha takes a seat at that old upright, most of the other songwriters attempt to kick ideas around.

Martha plays a few notes...and stops when a worried look crosses her face.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Any of you want to go first?

HANK

You go ahead, Martha. Me and Sylvia's still thinking.

Sylvia gives Hank a strange look.

EXT. CONSOLIDATED BANK OF QUEENS BUILDING - DAY

A fairly modern building, this one's one of the tallest in Queens.

INT. CONSOLIDATED BANK FIRST FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

Kirby and Penny sit across from A YOUNG LOAN OFFICER, who's behind one of several desks parked in the lobby.

This loan officer reads the twosome's application...and nods all the way through the perusal.

Penny and Kirby watch with bated breath.

The officer is done with the application...and shakes his head "no."

INT. JOURNALISM BUILDING BASEMENT CLASSROOM - NIGHT

With the room arranged the same way as the night before (paired-up desks), the six duos struggle to write songs.

JOHNNIELOUISE

(to Florence)

How 'bout this one: "Clean Up Your Room." Kinda like "Yakety Yak."

Florence nods.

JOHNNIELOUISE (CONT'D)

This here kid's mama tails him:
"This place is a mess...a haven for
pests...takes mo' than a broom...to
clean up this room..."

Florence nods again as she writes Johnnielouise's words down.

FLORENCE

Johnnielouise...if I'd kept my room
like that, my mom would've cut my
hands off.

Johnnielouise perks up and scribbles Florence's remark on her own sheet of paper.

Eve and Martha find inspiration in the newspaper (today's edition of "The New York Times") they read.

MARTHA

Well, Mansfield wants Berlin united
by direct talks with the East and
West Germans--

Eve writes something down.

EVE

Let's call this one "We Need to
Talk."

As Martha nods, A CROWD OF STUDENTS, books in hands, arrives to turn the room into a study hall.

Penny shrugs as she watches the students reclaim the room for academia...and Kirby throws her own pencil down.

INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kirby sits at her own piano, where she scribbles out some blues riffs. Just as she seems to see her way through in the music, Kirby gives up...and drafts another ad.

Kirby's ad starts out: "WE'RE DESPERATE!! WE NEED FINANCING FOR A MUSIC PUBLISHING COMPANY...NOW!"

Kirby mutters to herself as she writes.

KIRBY
Need...a...building...close...to...
the...music...district...

She doesn't look satisfied with the ad. So Kirby wads her ad into a ball and aims the ad toward a wastebasket.

Kirby returns to her blues riffs.

INT. LOBBY AT SAVINGS BANK OF HARLEM - DAY

In a lobby with a layout similar to that of Consolidated Bank of Queens, a desk separates Kirby and Penny from yet another LOAN OFFICER (a man in his 50s).

This officer reads the application to the end, then grabs a red pencil...and writes in big letters on the application.

Kirby receives the application from the loan officer, reads the officer's remark, and rises in a huff.

PENNY
Kirby, don't.

KIRBY
MISTER, WHADDYA MEAN WRITING SONGS
IS A MAN'S JOB?

Kirby charges toward the loan officer, but Penny grabs her and escorts her toward the front door. (Kirby doesn't go out without a fight, though.)

INT. JOURNALISM BUILDING BASEMENT CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Jeannie and Rose sit at the piano, where they work on a breakthrough song...well, to them.

JEANNIE
(singing and playing)
*You're three years younger than
me,/But boy, I just don't see/Why--*

Kirby walks up to Rose and Jeannie, then pats each young woman on the shoulder.

KIRBY
Rubbish.

Jeannie stops the music, gets up, and joins Rose in staring Kirby down.

EXT. FIVE BOROUGHS BANK - DAY

This is a glassy, not-so-tall structure in Queens.

INT. FIVE BOROUGHS BANK FIRST FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

Today's fair weather doesn't hurt this lobby's reputation as a bright, inviting space.

In the middle of the lobby, Penny and Kirby sit across from RICHARD CULLEN (late 20s), a junior loan officer.

RICHARD

Looks like you two are onto something. They've been trying to beat this music down for four years now, but it doesn't look like they can.

Kirby and Penny smile.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Looks like we've got a deal.

Penny and Kirby hug one another...while SEVERAL CUSTOMERS shoot the twosome dirty looks.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

If either one of you is married and can get your husbands to sign.

Kirby and Penny break their hug and shoot mortified glances at Richard. Kirby gets up from her chair and seethes...and Penny herself gets up to console Kirby.

INT. AMALGAMATED SALESFLOOR - DAY

Penny (she's at the counter) applies price stickers to a new shipment of record albums when Norman arrives at the counter.

Norman's got a paper bag in one hand and two full paper cups of pop (in a carrier) in his other hand.

NORMAN

Gotcha lunch, Miss Stavros.

PENNY

I'm flattered...thanks.

Norman puts the lunch items on the counter and grabs a sandwich out of the sack.

He unwraps the sandwich and takes a bite.

NORMAN

Boy, they sure know how to get
corned beef on rye right.

(grabbing a cup of pop)

You still tryin' to get
that...music-publishing company
started?

Kirby enters the store.

PENNY

Couldn't get the money.

Penny applies one last sticker to one last record album.

NORMAN

Maybe you'll stick to managin' a
rekkid store now.

(pushes sack toward Penny)

Eat.

PENNY

We tried every bank in New York.

(grabs sandwich from bag)

All five boroughs.

Penny unwraps her own sandwich, but doesn't eat it yet.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Nobody wanted to take a chance on
us.

As Penny takes her first bite, Kirby reaches the counter.

NORMAN

Look, Miss Stavros: Writing's a
man's job.

KIRBY

Hey, Norman, ya remember "Speedoo?"
Written by Esther Navarro. And that
song Ricky Nelson did..."Poor
Little Fool!" That was written by
Sharon Sheeley!

Kirby charges toward Norman, who's too busy eating to care.
But Penny, who continues to eat, enjoys Kirby's speech.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

'Member that song Sinatra did when we all was little? A woman named Ruth Lowe wrote "I'll Never Smile Again!"

Penny sets her sandwich on the counter to applaud.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

And there's this Charlie Singleton! He's got a partner named Rose Marie McCoy!

Before Norman can take another bite, Kirby grabs his sandwich-holding arm.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Ya 'member "Hurts Me to My Hot," by Faye Adams? They wrote that! And "Blue Light Boogie" was written by--

NORMAN

Hey, lady, I just sell rekkids. I don't look at no labels.

Penny stares at Norman between bites.

PENNY

Nor...Mr. Krigsten...Kirby...look.

Kirby lets go of Norman.

PENNY (CONT'D)

If we can't get a building here in Manhattan for a music-publishing company, then we'll set up shop at my house.

Norman smirks at Penny.

KIRBY

I didn't see no foursomes or fivesomes standin' 'round on street corners in Queens singing.

PENNY

And there's gonna be a piano in every room.

NORMAN

Even the can?

PENNY

Except the kitchen and the
bathroom.

Kirby and Norman break out in laughter that grows louder.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Kirby...if we don't do this, it's
bye bye Coast to Coast Music
Publishing Company.

Norman's and Kirby's laughter comes to an abrupt end.

EXT. MEYER PIANO COMPANY - DAY

This store's on 55th Street, on the other side of Broadway;
the front is highlighted by an awning that features a
keyboard motif.

INT. MEYER PIANO COMPANY SALESFLOOR - DAY

Meyer Piano Company is almost wall-to-wall pianos: 1870-1929
uprights line three of the walls; a few used grands, a few
used spinets, and a lot of 1870-1929 uprights crowd the
middle of the salesfloor.

The place barely has room for a desk; clerk IRVING MEYER
(60s) sits at it when Eve, Kirby, and Penny arrive inside the
store.

IRVING

Can I help ya?

PENNY

Yeah. We're trying to start a music-
publishing firm, and we need...six
pianos.

Irving looks suspicious.

KIRBY

Could be more piannahs you've sold
in one day than you've sold in the
last thirty days.

A totally-stunned Irving can't react.

Eve goes right to a 1900-09 upright piano while Kirby locates
one from the 1890-99 period.

Still standing, Kirby tests out some keys on the 1890s
upright. Penny joins her...but doesn't touch the keys.

Eve's upright features many white keys that lack their ivories. Nevertheless, she sits down and coaxes some classical music out of the old warhorse.

Irving walks over to Eve.

IRVING

Hey, lady, why don'tcha try that good grand over by th' window?

EVE

The office is too small for that piano.

Eve continues to play.

IRVING

Ya takin' music in school?

EVE

No. I'm a physics major at Columbia.

Irving breaks out in fierce laughter that makes Kirby stop what she's doing...but doesn't deter Eve from playing.

EVE (CONT'D)

That's how my Uncle Mark reacted when I told him I was going to major in physics at Columbia...and then he nearly choked trying to explain why I ought to stay home and attend college.

IRVING

Where's home?

EVE

Chicago. Until this year, my father was a professor at the University of Chicago. Now he's a professor at Columbia.

Irving nods.

EVE (CONT'D)

Technically, I'm a student at Barnard...but I'm allowed to major in physics using Columbia's classes.

Eve ends her piece with a bang...and triggers applause from Kirby and Penny.

EVE (CONT'D)
We'll take this one.

Irving just shakes his head.

KIRBY
(to Irving)
Eve's folks got her the best
teacher in Chicago.

Eve turns to Kirby once the applause stops.

EVE
Let's see what you can do.

Kirby takes a seat at that 1890-99 upright and plays some boogie-woogie.

After twenty-four bars, Kirby gazes at Penny.

KIRBY
Penny...too bad ya don't play the
piannah. Ya missing out on all the
fun.

Penny leans on the piano Kirby plays.

PENNY
I'm not missing out on anything.

Kirby quits playing, gets up, grabs her purse, takes out a tube of lipstick, and moves over to the piano on the left of the 1890s upright.

This upright was built in the 1880s. With the lipstick, Kirby marks the 1880-89 upright's first four G keys with a "1," the first four C keys with a "2," and the first four D keys with a "3."

Irving watches Kirby mark up that piano; he does a slow burn.

IRVING
You're gonna buy that piannah,
lady!

A smile rapidly reaches Kirby's face.

KIRBY
At least you cold me a lady.
(to Penny)
Let me show ya this so that ya
don't feel left out.

Penny joins Kirby at the 1880s upright.

With her left pinky and her left thumb on the first two G keys (and her right pinky and right thumb on the next two G keys), Kirby shows Penny how to chord "Rag Mop."

IRVING

Lady, ya look like ya milkin' a cow!

EVE

But, sir, playing the piano requires a different mechanism than milking a cow.

Kirby runs through "Rag Mop's" first twenty-four bars in this fashion. But when she goes for Number Twenty Five:

PENNY

I think I've got it, Kirby.

Kirby moves back to the 1890s piano and gestures Penny into taking a seat at the 1880s one.

KIRBY

Ya ready?

Kirby gets her answer when Penny chords away on "Rag Mop," sticking with the number's G-C-D chording.

After twenty-four bars of Penny's chording, Kirby fills in with the melody...boogie style.

IRVING

You girls are crazy!

When Kirby finishes the twenty-fourth bar of her boogie-woogie treatment of "Rag Mop," Eve finds a fourth upright; this one, painted white and built in the 1910s, stands across the aisle from the ones Kirby and Penny play.

Eve sits down and joins in on the tune.

She finds that this piano sounds quite tinny...so Eve plays "Rag Mop" in ragtime.

It all doesn't look real to Irving as he watches Eve, Kirby, and Penny play.

Penny, Kirby, and Eve have a grand time at their uprights.

The three pianists take "Rag Mop" for a rollicking seventy-two-bar ride before they end the song with a bang.

EVE

Four down and two to go.

Eve, Penny, and Kirby get up and hug each other in jubilation.

IRVING

Where ya want these?

PENNY

31-15 47th Avenue in Queens.

IRVING

Ya realize the boys're gonna get triple pay for movin' these!

Penny and Eve nod.

KIRBY

Don't worry, Mister. We'll help.

Irving, Eve, and Penny stare in surprise at Kirby.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

A moving van (or an eighteen-wheeler) is parked outside the house; the back of the vehicle is open and a ramp sticks out of the back of the truck.

Penny directs traffic from the sidewalk.

The traffic in question consists, in part, of Kirby and Eve helping TONY (a mover in his 20s) transport the 1880s upright onto the sidewalk and into the house.

Hank, Sylvia, and LUTO (a mover in his 30s) slide a black upright from the 1870s out of the moving van/eighteen-wheeler, onto the ramp, and onto the sidewalk.

LUTO

So...you're Sylvia Thompkins, huh?

SYLVIA

Want me to sing you a few bars of "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better?"

LUTO

Nah. You're too famous to be helpin' me move an ol' piano.

Penny continues to gesture Eve, Hank, Kirby, Luto, Sylvia, and Tony into the house.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eve, Kirby, Tony, Hank, Luto, and Sylvia finally get those two pianos inside Penny's house. At once, Eve, Hank, and Sylvia recline on their respective uprights.

KIRBY

Eve...let's move this piannah
against the wall.

Eve stares at Kirby in disbelief.

Penny joins Hank, Sylvia, and Luto at their piano.

PENNY

Uh...let's put that piano upstairs
in the near bedroom.

Hank and Sylvia stare at Luto, then at Penny, then at Luto once more.

LUTO

That girl's crazy.

TONY

You can say that again, Luto.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small amount of rain pelts New York City.

INT. PENNY'S FIRST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sylvia (she's playing) and Hank (he's not) sit at that black 1870-79 upright...an even tinnier-sounding piano than the white one from the 1910-19 period.

Sylvia's Gospel-tinged melodies seem to grow into a song.

SYLVIA

(still playing)
How you doing with the words?

HANK

Keep playin'. I'll come up with
something.

Hank reaches on top of the piano to grab a small notebook, then takes a pen out of his shirt pocket.

Sylvia continues to play...but stops when she gets that look of inspiration.

SYLVIA

That's it!

Sylvia grabs a music notebook from on top of the piano, opens the notebook, grabs a pencil, and writes down those Gospel-yoked melodies.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Let me know when you've got something, Hank.

Hank at last writes words down. As he writes, he looks excited...and his enthusiasm builds until he stops and shows Sylvia his latest set of lyrics.

HANK

Wrap ya lips around this something.

SYLVIA

(singing and playing)

You knock me out./You make me shout./You're what this love--

Unbeknownst to Hank and Sylvia, Kirby strides into the first bedroom and watches Sylvia play and sing.

KIRBY

That's rubbish.

Sylvia shrugs (and Hank pats her on the shoulder) as Kirby walks away.

INT. PENNY'S SECOND BEDROOM - NIGHT

Colleen and Dulcey Mae sit at this bedroom's 1890s upright, but don't press a key.

COLLEEN

Would you like to go back to the guitar?

DULCEY MAE

Why, that ain't it a tall, Colleen. Just that this reminds me of the pianner we had in the music room back in grade school back in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Colleen nods.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

'Cept someone painted letters on the middle white keys.

COLLEEN

I guess there's more than one place
to develop a green thumb.

Dulcey Mae laughs.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

We've finally got a piano all to
ourselves...but now we can't think
of anything to write.

(shrugging)

Not one single sound. Now that's
tragic.

Dulcey Mae plays eight bars of boogie-woogie piano that turn
out to be the intro to "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy."

At the end of those eight bars, Dulcey Mae adds vocals:

DULCEY MAE

*Have you ever passed the corner/Of
Fourth and Grand,/Where a little
ball of rhythm/Has a shoe shine
stand?/People gather 'round
and/They clap their hands./He's a
great big bundle of joy.*

COLLEEN

I know that one!

Colleen joins in on piano.

DULCEY MAE

*He pops a boogie-woogie rag:/The
Chattanooga shoe shine boy./He
charges you a nickel/Just to shine
one shoe. He makes the/Oldest kind
of leather/Look like new.*

Colleen keeps the beat with her feet.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

*You feel as though you wanna
dance/When he gets through./He's a
great big bundle of joy.*

COLLEEN, DULCEY MAE

*He pops a boogie-woogie rag:/The
Chattanooga shoe shine boy./It's a
wonder that the rag don't tear/The
way he makes it pop./You ought to
see him fan the air/With his--*

DULCEY MAE
*--hoppity hippity hippity hoppity
 hoppity hippity hip.*

Dulcey Mae and Colleen have the time of their young lives.

COLLEEN, DULCEY MAE
*He opens up a business when
 the/Clock strikes nine./He likes to
 get 'em early/When they're feelin'
 fine./Everybody gets a/Little rise
 'n' shine/With a great big bundle
 of joy.*

COLLEEN
He pops a boogie-woogie rag:/The--

DULCEY MAE
Chattanooga shoe shine boy.

Colleen and Dulcey Mae pound away for the next eight bars when the former's expression changes.

It's enough to make Colleen quit playing.

Dulcey Mae still bangs the keys, though.

COLLEEN
*Dulcey Mae...shouldn't we be trying
 to come up with our own material?*

DULCEY MAE
*Not 'til Ah can git over mah
 composer's block...can you git me
 some words?*

COLLEEN
*Not 'til I can get over my
 composer's mile.*

Colleen shrugs and goes back to turning Dulcey Mae's solo into a duet.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kirby leans against the 1880s upright while Penny stands next to it with her guitar in her hands.

PENNY
 (takes seat at piano)
 Kirby, that tune coming from the
 near bedroom didn't sound like
 rubbish to me.

KIRBY

Well, when they're gone, I'll find
their song and put it in the
rubbish.

Penny shakes her head "no."

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

It's rather spacious and barely-lived-in-yet-comfortable.

The three uprights in here are spaced far enough apart to
provide some semblance of privacy to their users. (The key
word is "Some!")

Eve and Martha sit at the 1910s upright.

Martha beats out a series of rock-and-roll riffs...but
they're just experiments.

MARTHA

I can't believe I'm trying to play
rock and roll on this thing!

Eve, meanwhile, works on lyrics that are as unconnected as
Martha's riffs.

EVE

It may not be a piano Horowitz
would want to use, but it's at
least a start...and weren't you the
first person to complain about this
house not even having a piano?

MARTHA

It's a tin can!

Martha switches her music to ragtime...or some Wild West
saloon music.

EVE

You and I need to take a trip to my
home town, Chicago...and the first
place we're going when we get there
will be the Chess studios.

Martha stops playing.

EVE (CONT'D)

Some of the biggest hits in rhythm
and blues and rock and roll
featured an old piano that'll scare
you.

MARTHA

Eve...how did you get away with listening to rock and roll in a house with a college professor for a father?

EVE

I bought an earphone for my shortwave radio. And I listened to WJJD in bed.

Martha nods in understanding.

EVE (CONT'D)

But after 1955, I'd hide the records I'd buy and put them someplace in my locker at school.

MARTHA

You still had room for your books, didn't you?

EVE

Are you kidding? I took my books home!

Eve finishes writing lyrics.

EVE (CONT'D)

I was just thinking about all that tonight as I was writing, and I thought it would make a good song.

Eve flashes a grin.

EVE (CONT'D)

The song publishers used to tell me:

(attempts New York accent)

"Miss Reich, ya gotta write fuh th' kids. They're the ones that's buyin' rekkids these days."

Martha and Eve lean back.

EVE (CONT'D)

(back in her normal voice)

See what you think of this:

(reading her notes)

"Rockin' in bed with the radio at night, tryin' my best to keep out of sight of my parents--"

MARTHA

That's what I tried to do when I listened to KGFJ back home in Los Angeles.

Eve perks up.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

But I tried to hide it during the day.

Eve's face registers confusion.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Good thing I had a little pocket radio. Until my parents got hold of it and threw it away.

A bewildered Eve points to Martha.

Jeannie and Rose ably coax music out of the 1900s upright (the one with all those terrible-looking keys).

In Rose's and Jeannie's case, their original music is a matter of Broadway meeting "American Bandstand."

Johnnielouise (who holds her guitar) and Florence (her hands rest on the keys) sit at a upright player piano from the 1920s (it's painted baby blue).

JOHNNIELOUISE

Florence, maybe we oughta ask Jeannie and Rose if we can borrow the melody they playin'.

As Johnnielouise gets up to get out of the way, Florence lifts the music rack off the piano...

FLORENCE

The way I see it, they owe us.

...and, as a result, exposes the piano's player mechanism.

Florence crouches underneath the keyboard and pulls out the player piano pedals, then pumps the pedals to see if the upright's mechanically playable.

JOHNNIELOUISE

If Ah'd a-knownn you were gonna do this, Ah'd a-tried to find you a pianner roll.

Florence shakes her head "no."

FLORENCE
 Be right back.
 (getting up)
 Gonna need a knife.

JOHNNIELOUISE
 You gonna keel Penny and Kirby?

Florence shakes her head "no" again as she leaves.

FLORENCE
 Gonna yank out some innards. A
 piano roll won't work in there
 anymore, anyway.

Johnnielouise looks confounded as she watches Florence leave
 the basement.

JOHNNIELOUISE
 Innards?

Jeannie and Rose end their playing with a bang. When they're
 through, the two young women shake hands.

Rose checks her fingernails.

ROSE
 Jeannie...before we come here
 tomorrow, we've GOT to clip our
 nails.

Jeannie checks her own fingernails...and smirks.

Eve turns the pages in her notebook until she finds some
 lyrics she'd like to share with her partner.

EVE
 I've got the words to "We Need to
 Talk" done.

MARTHA
 I thought you worked faster than
 that.

EVE
 Main thing is that it's
 done...Martha, have you got the
 music for this one?

MARTHA
 I finished it the night you threw
 out the title!

EVE

Great! Here's what you do: Give me
a twelve-bar intro.

Martha beats out a bluesy twelve-bar intro not unlike the
melody in Fabian's "Turn Me Loose."

At the end of the twelve bars, Martha nods Eve into
readiness.

EVE (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Listen here, baby, we need to
talk./It's bound to help you, so
don't you dare walk./If we're to
marry, then let's clear the air,
so/Show me you love me. Show me you
care.*

Martha looks pleased.

EVE (CONT'D)

(spoken rapidly)

Background singers can fill in the
gaps.

(singing again)

*Don't say you love me, then see
Mary--*

Eve's and Martha's music stops: Jeannie's singing overpowers
any of the other basement teams' efforts.

JEANNIE

*We've known each other/Ever since
we were six years old./At eight,
you carved our initials/On a
neighborhood telephone pole.*

Eve closes her notebook and Martha puts her sheet music away;
the twosome leave their piano behind.

Rose and Jeannie play a waltz tempo that provides quite an
enchanted accompaniment to Jeannie's singing.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

*At nine, we shared our soda,/And I
rode you on my bike./So now you
know what you've done to me/Is the
worst moment of my life.*

JEANNIE, ROSE
*How could you do this to me?/Why'd
 you leave me behind?/What did I do
 to you?/How could you make me cry?*

Johnnielouise and Florence grunt as they set their newly-dismantled player piano mechanism on the floor.

JEANNIE, ROSE (CONT'D)
How could you make me cry?

JEANNIE
*When we were thirteen,/You took me
 to see "High Noon."/And then, right
 after--*

Rose and Jeannie find themselves surrounded by Eve, Martha, Florence, and Johnnielouise.

Result: The music's over.

MARTHA
 (to Jeannie)
 Too bad you don't sing bass.

JEANNIE
 I'm sorry, but--

EVE
 Martha, it's biologically
 impossible for a woman to sing
 bass.

JOHNNIELOUISE
 Ah wouldn't say that. Mah Aint
 Sadie back in Kannapolis, North
 Carolina, she sings bass.
 (trying to sing bass)
They really rockin' in Boston--

Florence nudges Johnnielouise into silence.

MARTHA
 Look, this just won't work! We've
 got no...we can't concentrate!

All eyes in the room turn to Martha.

ROSE
 Now I know what my papa, God rest
 his soul, woulda done--

Several heads nod...some in anticipation, some in agreement.

ROSE (CONT'D)
 Eve...Martha...why don'tcha go
 upstairs and see the management?

Martha and Eve nod.

EVE
 Penny did say that if we have any
 problems in getting along, we
 should let her or Kirby know.

The reminder sends chills up Jeannie's spine.

JEANNIE
 And to think Rose and I had a song
 in the works!

FLORENCE
 (to Rose)
 Why don't all six of us go upstairs
 and see Kirby and Penny?

Eve, Johnnielouise, Martha, and Rose nod in agreement;
 Johnnielouise turns to Jeannie.

JOHNNIELOUISE
 Would you rather climb up a
 flagpole greased in motor oil?

Jeannie shrugs as she gets up from the piano. She, Rose,
 Martha, Johnnielouise, Florence, and Eve trudge up the
 stairs.

JEANNIE
 Rose...we had a real melody in the
 works!

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT STAIRS - NIGHT

Penny and Kirby gallop down the stairs and meet Florence,
 Eve, Johnnielouise, Rose, Martha, and Jeannie halfway.

JEANNIE
 (to Kirby)
 Please don't use that word again!

Penny makes a conciliatory gesture.

PENNY
 How are you coming along?

MARTHA

It's easier to watch "The Huntley-Brinkley Report" and "Douglas Edwards with the News" at the same time.

FLORENCE

In short, Penny: If the six of us are gonna write down here, some walls are gonna have to go up.

KIRBY

Ya realize how much it's gonna cost?

FLORENCE

Real walls.

MARTHA

'Cause if you don't do something about this, Eve and I will quit.

Kirby and Penny look stunned.

EXT. BROOKS HALL AT BARNARD COLLEGE - DAY

SOME STUDENTS in heavy coats walk inside this then fifty-two-year-old dorm on a day where the sun fights to come out.

INT. ELAINE'S AND MARTHA'S ROOM - DAY

Martha and roommate ELAINE DONNERSTEIN (18, cynical, New York brogue) live here...in this simply-furnished room that's been decorated with neutral colors. Both students sit at desks.

While Elaine skims through her textbook, Martha reads "The New York Times."

MARTHA

Well, Elaine, looks like Hawaii's gonna be a state now.

(turns a page)

Maybe this country should design a new flag...one you don't have to add stars to.

Elaine has herself a heck of a laugh.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Well, look: They'd just changed the back of the penny.

ELAINE
Speaking of penny...how's ya
songwriting?

MARTHA
It'd be easier to integrate the Ku
Klux Klan...but I think my partner
and I came up with one.

Martha puts her newspaper down, gets up, and goes to the
closet...to pull out an accordion.

As Martha puts the accordion on, Elaine groans.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
You didn't groan when Bill Haley's
piano player picked up an
accordion.

ELAINE
He has more talent than you do.

MARTHA
Back home in Los Angeles, all the
Italian girls in my neighborhood
play the accordion. Especially my
two sisters.

Elaine groans some more before Martha squeezes out a rock
beat (a la Bill Haley and His Comets) and...

ELAINE
This better be a hit.

...sings:

MARTHA
*The Eagle and the Bear can't get
along,/Ike's got static on--*

Elaine grabs a binder and her textbook(s). She hurries out of
the room.

ELAINE
(along the way)
Gotta go! Got an English test!

Surprised, Martha puts her accordion back in the closet.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

While the teams of Eve and Martha, Florence and Johnnielouise, and Jeannie and Rose try to write, Kirby measures the basement...with help from Penny.

Unlike the three basement duos, Kirby and Penny wear overalls.

KIRBY

Too bad ya don't have a ladder.

Penny shakes her head "no."

PENNY

But we can rent one.

Eve, Rose, Florence, Martha, Jeannie, and Johnnielouise engage in AD LIBBED conversation while Penny and Kirby take those measurements.

KIRBY

Penny, get on the other side of the room.

Penny nods as she walks to the other side of the basement. Kirby pulls out a tape measure. The latter woman pulls out the tape...but something's not right.

Penny nods as she pulls the tape as far as it can go. When the tape can't go any further, she takes out a pencil and marks a spot on the floor.

Kirby struts over to Penny's pencil mark and Penny goes to the wall.

The founders' act annoys the three basement teams.

JEANNIE

Kirby...we're trying to work.

KIRBY

So am I.

(zeroing in on Jeannie)

Do ya want walls or not?

Jeannie shrugs and goes back to helping Rose write.

EXT. EAST 140TH STREET APARTMENTS - DAY

Rain jolts the Big Apple.

INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kirby's on the phone.

KIRBY

Whaddya mean this ain't a serious
phone cole?

While she still talks into her phone, Kirby stares at her handwritten notes.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

We really do need some two-by-
fours, drywall, and some cork
board...I told ya we're building
walls in a friend's basement!...All
right, then, we'll just take our
business elsewhere!

Kirby slams the receiver down on the phone's cradle.

EXT. LUMBER YARD - DAY

Penny and Kirby wear different overalls than before (and are also in blouses and heavy coats). The two women stand near a loading dock, where they watch employees AL and CLIFF load drywall into a 1956 Ford pickup truck.

AL

You two ladies don't look like no
do-it-yourselfers.

PENNY

Maybe not, but we're gonna have to
be if we wanna soundproof my
basement. The other day, I covered
up the hole in my front door with
some wood putty.

While Cliff and Al look unimpressed, Kirby gestures Penny into helping her load two-by-fours.

CLIFF

(to Penny)

You gonna do a quiz show? With an
isolation booth?

PENNY

Nope. We're songwriters.

The two men laugh so hard they almost bust the piece of drywall they try to load onto the truck.

KIRBY

Look, you guys, a songwriter gets a penny every time a rekkid's sold. If a rekkid sells a million copies, that's ten thousand bucks for the writer.

Penny and Kirby load a two-by-four into the truck, then grab another two-by-four.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Get yourself an artist who can have four hits a year, write four million sellers, and--

PENNY

We can hire a contractor.

Kirby chuckles as she helps Penny load that two-by-four.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The same 1956 Ford truck now rests in front of Penny's house.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Still in overalls, Penny and Kirby nail (and glue) two-by-fours into place to create studs for the budding walls.

Johnnielouise and Florence walk inside the basement; they wear street clothes and tote sheet music and notebooks. In addition, Johnnielouise brings her guitar.

KIRBY

Johnnie and Florence, we could sure use ya help.

Johnnielouise chuckles while Florence's mouth drops.

JOHNNIELOUISE

Wait a minute. Mah specialty is waffles, not walls. Waitress by day...writer by night.

PENNY

I thought you two wanted to write in peace.

FLORENCE

Well, yes, but--

KIRBY

Ya shouldn't look so surprised.
 (points at Florence)
 When ya was in high school in
 Denver, ya played a tuba.

Florence drops her sheet music.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

And when ya didn't play a tuba, ya
 played a bass fiddle in the Four
 Buttercups. And--

JOHNNIELOUISE

Awraht, Kirby, we'll he'p you.

Johnnielouise grabs the prone sheet music while Florence
 grabs the hammer from Kirby.

INT. PENNY'S SECOND BEDROOM - NIGHT

Colleen and Dulcey Mae sit at their piano; both don't dare
 try to play due to the O.S. POUNDING.

A few seconds later, joy grips Dulcey Mae.

DULCEY MAE

Colleen...maybe we can use that
 there sound.

COLLEEN

The only hammer I'm worried about
 is inside this piano.

(strikes a key)

In fact, I'm worried about all
 eighty eight of these hammers.

DULCEY MAE

Don'tcha see? You're great with
 novelties...and your ma and pa run
 they own hardware stores in
 Chicago.

COLLEEN

Don't mention them.

Colleen plays the piano to the tune of the O.S. POUNDING OF
 NAILS.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

It's been almost four years...and they still haven't reconciled my leaving for the big city...and living all alone. But I love it.

DULCEY MAE

Ah think that's really neat...what you're playin'.

Colleen nods.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Just like your "You Were Late for Our First Date, So Ah Decided to Pick You Up."

Dulcey Mae grabs a pencil and a piece of paper.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Why don't we call this "We're Building a Life for Two?"

COLLEEN

Dulcey...can I get you a triangle?

DULCEY MAE

(writing words)

Which one...the kind you play or the kind you use to draw a straight line?

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Kirby, Penny, Florence, and Johnnielouise toil away at their attempt at construction work; Eve and a reluctant Martha now join them. (Eve and Martha lift a piece of drywall to studs.)

The walls-to-be notwithstanding, the basement now looks more like a mess in dire need of cleaning up.

MARTHA

Wait 'til my grandparents hear about this.

EVE

Hopefully, they won't pass out when you tell them.

Eve and Martha watch as Kirby nails the drywall onto the studs.

KIRBY

Eve, yours prob'ly woulda.

EVE

Are you kidding? They remodeled my great-grandparents' house with their own two hands.

MARTHA

Yeah. The great-grandparents' hands.

One cubicle remain to create; Penny and Florence handle the drywall while Johnnielouise (who uses a rented ladder) does the nailing.

Jeannie and Rose enter the basement; both women tote their notebooks...and Rose smokes a cigar.

PENNY

Rose and Jeannie...you get to put up corkboard.

Jeannie nods gravely while Rose does a doubletake.

JOHNNIELOUISE

(to Rose)

But first, you gotta git rid of El Steenko.

Rose and Jeannie drop their notebooks.

ROSE

Only if you'll find me an ashtray.

Jeannie finds an adhesive gun, then the corkboard. She glues the backs of the corkboard pieces before she applies each board to one of the walls.

PENNY

(to Rose)

Would you settle for a cereal bowl from the kitchen?

Rose sprints out of the basement in search of the kitchen.

Jeannie finds fun in the do-it-yourself experience.

JEANNIE

(to herself)

This is almost like building model cars.

Jeannie turns to Penny.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)
Are we expected to become Jehovah's
Witnesses now?

Penny chuckles.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The truck remains out there on a fair-to-gorgeous day.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Thanks to the addition of walls, Penny's basement has an additional three (albeit smallish) rooms.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - JEANNIE'S AND ROSE'S CUBICLE - DAY

The team of Penny and Kirby dozes in this room...the one with the piano with the rotten keys.

Kirby and Penny still wear their overalls.

The former wakes up at last.

KIRBY
(looking at her watch)
Damn it, it's seven in the morning!
Get up!

Kirby shakes Penny in an attempt to arouse her.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Penny finds (and grabs) a note on the coffee table.

PENNY
(reading the note)
"Dear Penny and Kirby: We'd love to stay and help you finish the basement, but some of us have jobs in the morning and the rest of us have to go to school."

Penny shrugs before she goes back to reading the note.

PENNY (CONT'D)
"Signed, Jeannie, Martha, Colleen, Johnnie, Rose, Hank, Florence, Eve, Sylvia, and Dulcey Mae. PS: Buy an ashtray. Signed, Rose."

Penny sticks the note in her pants pocket.

KIRBY
While ya at it, Penny, buy her a
fire extinguisher.

Penny chuckles.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - FLORENCE'S AND JOHNNIELOUISE'S
CUBICLE - DAY

Penny and Kirby stop inside the cubicle that features the
1920s player piano that doesn't play mechanically anymore.

Kirby almost trips on the mechanism, now in midfloor.

KIRBY
Penny...find another room.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - EVE'S AND MARTHA'S CUBICLE - DAY

A surprised Penny saunters into this cubicle, the one with
the white 1900s upright.

As soon as Penny's footsteps end, she hears KIRBY'S O.S.
PIANO PLAYING.

After several seconds, KIRBY STOPS PLAYING.

KIRBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
CAN YA HEAR ME FROM THERE?

PENNY
YEAH!

Penny leaves Eve's and Martha's cubicle...

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - FLORENCE'S AND JOHNNIELOUISE'S
CUBICLE - DAY

...and rejoins Kirby.

PENNY
I see your point. We need to keep
the truck...we need to put in some
doors.

Kirby's nod is the know-it-all kind.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - EVE'S AND MARTHA'S CUBICLE - DAY

Martha plays and Eve listens...but after a few seconds, the two switch places (with Martha switching in protest).

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Books and blank paper in hand, Florence finds the three cubicles boast doors now...and the doors have names on them.

The first door reads "FANUCCHI & REICH," the second reads "HILL & PEAKS," and the third reads "ARCHAMBAULT & KLEINSCHMITT."

Florence walks into the second cubicle...only to find Johnnielouise (who strums her guitar) in said room.

INT. "B" TRAIN - DAY

Seated toward the back of the subway, Rose and Jeannie listen to A ROCK-AND-ROLL STATION on the latter's transistor radio...and find dirty looks from the PASSENGERS around them.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS OF TOLENTINE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

In a search for inspiration, Colleen, Dulcey Mae, and Kirby hang around after school and wait for STUDENTS at this all-boys' institution to bust through the doors and into the streets.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - JEANNIE'S AND ROSE'S CUBICLE - NIGHT

Rose and Jeannie don't have as much success at writing as at filling their wastebasket with attempts at songs.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - FLORENCE'S AND JOHNNIELOUISE'S CUBICLE - NIGHT

Johnnielouise and Florence, though, celebrate having come up with a tune.

INT. PENNY'S FIRST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kirby walks in and denounces the song Sylvia and Hank sing (Sylvia's at the piano)...and Hank pelts Kirby with the contents of the room wastebasket.

INT. OFFICE AT CARNEGIE RECORD CORPORATION - DAY

Penny and Kirby can't seem to convince the company's PRESIDENT to take their demos.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CORNER OF EAST 14TH STREET AND BROADWAY - DAY

Preston, Leroy, Carlton, and Earl sing doo-wop (it's a slow, sad song) right here when Kirby meets them.

The five of them do what they can to avoid today's rain.

KIRBY

Ya still got it! Ya gonna get it if
ya don't get outa the rain.

Kirby escorts the foursome inside the building behind them.

INT. FIRST FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

Kirby digs into her purse and pulls out four business cards.

Each card says: "COAST TO COAST MUSIC PUBLISHING COMPANY."
Below that, in smaller letters: "31-15 47TH AVENUE, LONG
ISLAND CITY 1, N.Y."

Below the address: Penny's and Kirby's names as well as the
twosome's home and work phone numbers.

Kirby hands each singer a card.

CARLTON

(accepting Kirby's card)
Hey, baby, ya kiddin'. When'd ya
start this?

KIRBY

Me and Penny started this a month
ago...hip ya to it on the subway.

EXT. SUBWAY - DAY

Kirby, Earl, Carlton, Leroy, and Preston wait for the #7
train; Kirby looks impatient.

KIRBY

Instead of goin' to Bermuda, Wagner
shoulda stayed here and got 'em to
make the trains go faster.

PRESTON

Then who was runnin' the city?

Kirby shrugs.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Kirby and the singers walk into a sparsely-populated subway car...and receive stares from the seated PASSENGERS.

The five take seats themselves in the middle of the car.

LEROY

We're not going to Harlem, Kirby.

KIRBY

Right!

Kirby puts a hand on the shoulder of the nearest doo-wopper to her.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Got some people I want ya to meet.
And some songs.

The singers look pleasantly surprised.

EARL

I told ya this chick's keepin' us
goin'.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The rain refuses to let up.

INT. PENNY'S FIRST BEDROOM - DAY

Sylvia and Hank sit at their piano...but don't make music.

HANK

How 'bout "Seven-Alarm Love?"

SYLVIA

Sounds like something Dulcey Mae
would write.

Sylvia tries an upper-register tremolo on the piano.

HANK

Didn't ya hear about that seven-
alarm fire in the loft district? It
was on the radio! Took two hundred
and fifty firemen--

SYLVIA

I've been up here trying to come up
with some melodies, Hank. You took
the radio with you.

They now hear FOOTSTEPS from outside the room.

HANK

Ya know, honey, that would make a good...

Hank and Sylvia turn around when the door opens O.S. And the result makes Sylvia stop playing.

HANK (CONT'D)

I hope it's not Kirby tellin' us we're writing rubbish.

Carlton, Earl, Kirby, Leroy, and Preston walk into the bedroom and seat themselves on the bed...until Leroy's mouth flies open.

LEROY

Sylvia Thompkins! Why ain't you making a record?

All seven occupants of the first bedroom now stand up.

SYLVIA

I will in about ten days.

KIRBY

Guys...meet Sylvia's manager and husband, Hank Lee. They write all her hits.

HANK

I write the words and she puts 'em to music.

SYLVIA

And now Hank and I are trying to write for other artists, too.

Kirby's singing group's got that collective hopeful look.

KIRBY

Hank and Sylvia...meet the Doo-Woppers.

Leroy, Preston, Earl, and Carlton offer Kirby doubletakes.

CARLTON

That's funny. We ain't never had no name before.

KIRBY

Yeah, I got 'em off of a street corner.

Kirby gestures the Doo-Woppers into sitting back down.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Preston's the first tenor, Leroy's the second tenor, Carlton's the baritone, and Earl sings bass.

Preston, Leroy, Carlton, and Earl shake hands with Sylvia and Hank.

PRESTON

Sylvia, we cain't say we got all ya rekkids. Sorry.

EARL

Only one we got between us is "I Wanna Spend the Rest of My Life with You."

HANK

Guys, we might have something for ya.

Hank reaches into the wastebasket (and grimaces)...and pulls out a ball of sheet music.

He straightens the sheet music and hands it to Earl...who looks surprised.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Although the rain has stopped, the vehicles near the house have paid an extremely wet price.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - JEANNIE'S AND ROSE'S CUBICLE - NIGHT

Jeannie watches as Rose (cigar and all) makes like George Gershwin, if only in appearance. The latter woman, pencil in hand, sits at the piano and scribbles some music onto the piece of paper in front of her.

At last...an ashtray sits atop the old upright.

JEANNIE

Rose...how can you stand those things?

ROSE

Well, because my papa did...he used to fill the house with that aroma...

Jeannie frowns.

ROSE (CONT'D)

And when he passed away five months ago, Mama wouldn't clean out his closet. He left a whole box of these...well, it was half empty when he died.

Jeannie walks over to the door and opens it.

ROSE (CONT'D)

One day, when Mama wasn't home, I sneaked one of my papa's cigars.

Kirby, Penny, and the Doo-Woppers walk through the open door.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I had to buy a new purse just to get this cigar in--

PENNY

Sylvia and Hank invited us to one of Sylvia's recording sessions! April sixth at eight in the evening! We brought some singers, too!

Rose and Jeannie turn to Penny, Kirby, and the singers.

KIRBY

We're all sittin' in, so bring ya music!

Jeannie grabs the wastebasket and shows its contents to Kirby and Penny.

Rose eyeballs Earl, Carlton, Preston, and Leroy, one by one, before she turns to Penny and Kirby.

ROSE

Who are those guys?

EXT. 1700 BROADWAY - NIGHT

This is a skyscraper that looks more like a granite slab with neat little holes.

INT. THIRTIETH FLOOR RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

This is the home of Sylvia's label, Philharmonic Records.

Sylvia herself (playing a grand piano) wails "You Knock Me Out" (which, right now, nears the end)...with Philharmonic's HOUSE BAND (an aggregation of middle-age men just glad to get union scale) playing behind her.

SYLVIA

*Don't ever leave,/'Cause if you do
flee,/I'll never date,/You can
believe./Without a doubt--*

Hank, recording engineer BILL SANTORINI (30s), Preston, Carlton, Leroy, Earl, Penny, Kirby, Eve, and Martha watch from the control booth.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*Your love is tops./You make me
shout./You knock me out.*

Outside the booth and among the musical hardware: Jeannie, Rose, Johnnielouise, Florence, Colleen, and Dulcey Mae.

Sylvia's guests watch her and the house band cut through the next eight bars (strictly instrumental).

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*Without a doubt,/Your love is
tops./You make me shout./You knock
me ouuuuuut!*

"You Knock Me Out" ends in two notes, Little Richard style.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Bill, I wanna try something new.

BILL

Huh, Sylvia?

SYLVIA

Like a different house band. We've gotta get some life into this.

The house band AD LIBS its disapproval.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Florence, we're gonna try you on bass. Johnnielouise, sit in on guitar. Hank...come outa there and blow your horn...can any of you others play drums?

DULCEY MAE

Ah do.

Hank comes out of the booth and goes into the studio, where he picks up a trumpet. Florence and Johnnielouise test out the house band's acoustic bass and electric guitar, respectively.

SYLVIA

Let's get the Doo-Woppers to sing backup. Colleen...why don't you sit in on this one?

A surprised Colleen grabs a trombone as Dulcey Mae sits down at the house band's drum set...and the company's house band grudgingly moves aside.

EVE

Sylvia...I've been learning to play tenor sax.

SYLVIA

Oh...kay.

Eve and the Doo-Woppers leave the control booth and join Sylvia and Co. in the studio. Earl, Carlton, Preston, and Leroy huddle around one microphone, while Eve grabs the house band's tenor saxophone.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Take all the time you need to tune up.

But Sylvia's handpicked combo makes short work of tuning up...triggering looks of embarrassment from the house band.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Let's try that one that Hank and I wrote the other day that we jammed on.

General agreement reigns among Sylvia's band and backup singers.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

One...two...three...four...

Sylvia, Florence, Johnnielouise, Dulcey Mae, Hank, Colleen, and Eve launch into a torrid, snaking, rocking beat that's almost Latin in feel.

After twelve bars, the Doo-Woppers weigh in with twelve more bars...in this case, of complex, AD LIBBED doo-wop lines.

Sylvia sings:

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
*Too bad there's just/Twenty-four
 hours in/A little day./That's just
 not a/Lot of time to/Make a day
 okay.*

"Don't Stop It" definitely has plenty of life.

The record company's house band looks even more embarrassed...and Bill looks pleasantly surprised.

Sylvia, her handpicked band, and the Doo-Woppers effectively rock on.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EIGHT PEOPLE (four men and four women) camp outside the front door. All wear light jackets as well as street clothes...a sure sign that spring's taken over at last in New York City.

Three of the men, KARL HOEFT (50s), VITO CANGELOSI (60s), and REX RAWSON (50s), look angry.

So do all four of the women: NOREEN RAWSON (40s), HELEN PERGAMENT (50s), MARY FRANCES HOEFT (50s), and MARIA TERESA CANGELOSI (50s).

All eight watch Penny pull into the driveway; as soon as she gets out of her Plymouth, Karl, Maria Teresa, and Vito run toward her.

VITO
 Lady, we've been watchin' you these
 last few weeks.

MARIA TERESA
 Yeah! Just whaddya think ya doin'?

PENNY
 Well, a friend of mine and I are
 running a music-publishing--

KARL
 Look, girlie, we're tired of you
 and ya buddies tryin' to break the
 sound barrier.

Penny strides toward the front door; Karl, Vito, and Maria Teresa follow her...but the other five people huddle closer in an effort to block the door.

PENNY

I'd like to get inside my own house.

NOREEN

It's not ya house! You's just rentin' it!

While Noreen covers the door knob, Mary Frances and GEORGE PERGAMENT (50s; the only calm one in the older bunch) place hands on Penny's shoulders.

GEORGE

Miss Stavros...this is a residential neighborhood. If you want to invade Tin Pan Alley, you need to go to Man--

PENNY

We couldn't get the money for a building in Manhattan! They don't make loans to wo--

MARY FRANCES

If you're gonna keep bringing that...that riff-raff over here, MAYBE YOU DON'T NEED TO LIVE HERE!

Penny tries to shake loose from Mary Frances and George.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

New York City still feels soggy from this morning's rain.

Penny, who wears a baseball glove and casual clothes, strolls on the grass and stares into space.

Behind her, PEOPLE OF VARIOUS AGES play catch...some with baseballs, others with footballs.

As Penny leaves the park, Kirby notices her...and walks toward her.

KIRBY

Where's ya cheerleader's enthusiasm?

PENNY

Shantz allows a single to Minoso and then gives Colavito a free pass. And then Stengel puts in a relief pitcher who gives up a three-run homer. We were one out away!

KIRBY

You didn't look like that when Spahn two-hit the Yanks in the Series last year. And what's this "we" stuff?

Kirby and Penny head out of Central Park together.

PENNY

I came out here in '53 to go to college. Couldn't stand the smog back home...it already claimed my aunt.

Penny slams her fist into her glove.

PENNY (CONT'D)

LA had no major league baseball team back then. Now they've got one...and it used to live here! Wouldn't you know it?

Kirby doesn't look convinced.

PENNY (CONT'D)

When I was in my teens, I used to catch the trolley to go see the Angels play at Wrigley Field--

KIRBY

I thought you said it was in Chicago.

PENNY

Los Angeles has a Wrigley Field, too. At 42nd and Avalon--

KIRBY

Penny, you ain't been wearing no "it's-only-a-game" look on ya face.

Penny reluctantly nods.

INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Penny, Kirby, Johnnielouise, Florence, Dulcey Mae, Colleen, Sylvia, Hank, Rose, Jeannie, Martha, and Eve have managed to squeeze into the Stavros kitchen. (Everybody drinks pop and/or eats.)

PENNY

The record companies don't like what we're doing.

PENNY (CONT'D)

My boss at the record store doesn't like what we're doing. And the neighbors want to kick--

DULCEY MAE

Penny, what about that sangle by the Doo-Woppers?

PENNY

The kids on "American Bandstand" didn't even wanna rate it.

(taking a swig of pop)

We need to call a meeting...next Saturday night.

Hank's mouth hangs open, Johnnielouise lets out a laugh, and eight other faces show surprise.

Kirby's face shows a wide smile.

SYLVIA

I'm at Roseland that night. Remember?

PENNY

We'll all be there to cheer you on.

Sylvia and Hank breathe sighs of welcome relief.

KIRBY

Meanwhile, all twelve of us got eight days to figure out how to get the industry on our side. Let's write!

The six duos leave the kitchen; some of the writers act as if they're leaving the locker room at Yankee Stadium instead.

Along the way, Martha turns to Penny.

MARTHA

Maybe you should be in Indianapolis tonight fighting Floyd Patterson.

Penny just grins.

EXT. ROSELAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

The area around 52nd Street west of Broadway is ablaze with activity: PEOPLE (especially those under the age of 21) either make their way to the ballroom or walk around it on this most comfortable night to be outside.

INT. ROSELAND DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Except for Penny's and Kirby's group of songwriters, the Roseland CROWD tonight is a teenaged crowd. The dress code: Whatever the spectators would wear to school or to work (in Johnnielouise's case, her food server's uniform).

And yes, some of the teens dance to the music!

INT. ROSELAND BANDSTAND - NIGHT

Sylvia (piano and vocals) and the Philharmonic Records house band provide the music. (The house band's members wear suits and neckties; Sylvia's in a gown.)

The crowd hears the show's finale...a driving, pulsating pledge called "I Wanna Spend the Rest of My Life with You."

SYLVIA

*I just don't want nobody else./No
one can do what you do./Toot the
horns and ring the bells, 'cause/I
wanna spend the rest of my life
with you.*

Between each of Sylvia's lines, piano and tenor sax fill the gaps.

Starting with the second verse and throughout most of the song's remainder:

CARLTON, EARL, LEROY, PRESTON

(singing backup)

OOOOH!

Sylvia, as an instrumentalist, still outperforms the Philharmonic house band...although, this time, the backing musicians feverishly try to close the gap.

SYLVIA

*You came to me just right in
time,/When I didn't know what to
do./I won't forget you, that's for
sure./I wanna spend the rest of my
life with you.*

The crowd's made up equally of Blacks and Whites.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*I wanna spend the rest of my life
with you./You know all of the right
words to say./You know how to pick
me up when I'm down./When I'm with
you, everything's okay.*

Fewer couples dance now.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*When no one else would stand by
me,/You'd plead my case, make me
proud./Sound the alarm; let sirens
ring:/I wanna spell your name out
clear and loud.*

Now nobody's dancing.

The audience gazes at Sylvia while she delivers the message.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*Don't wanna be with Chuck or
Sam;/Sidney's great, but he just
won't do./Don't even wanna get with
Ike./I wanna spend the rest of my
life with you.*

Some of the spectators applaud at the end of the verse.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*I wanna spend the rest of my life
with you./You know all of the right
things to say./You know how to pick
me up when I'm down./When I'm with
you, everything's okay.*

Sylvia takes over the instrumental break (sixteen bars long).

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*You're not just my lover. You're my
friend./I hope we never say we're
through./I like the way you fit so
close, and/I wanna spend the rest
of my life with you.*

Some teens move closer to the bandstand.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*Ray, Bo, and Fats are not for
me./Even Little Richard pales next
to you./Sorry, Adam Clayton Powell,
but/Don't wanna spend the rest of
my life with you.*

Most of Sylvia's colleagues (and some of the other spectators) get a kick out of the last verse.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*I wanna spend the rest of my life
with you./You know all of the right
things to say./You know how to pick
me up when I'm down./When I'm with
you, everything's okay.*

Sylvia and the band go at it for another sixteen instrumental bars before the vocal picks up again.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

*I wanna spend the rest of my life
with you.*

Two notes later, the song ends...and some wild, friendly applause takes over; Penny, Kirby, and Hank lead the way.

INT. ROSELAND HALLWAY - NIGHT

Only ten people line up outside the dressing-room door: Colleen, Dulcey Mae, Eve, Florence, Jeannie, Johnnielouise, Kirby, Martha, Penny, and Rose.

They find it difficult to move past police officer JAMES LENKAITIS (40s), who looks some kind of disgusted.

JAMES

Look here, you girls can't see
Sylvia. Can't you see the door's
closed?

KIRBY

She invited us back here after the
show.

JAMES

Yeah, and Khrushchev ain't bald.

KIRBY

Look, Officer, she works with--

The door opens from inside, and Hank sticks his head out.

HANK

Let 'em in, Officer!

James nods at Hank, then at the ten writers outside the door. On that second nod, the ten women stampede their way inside.

INT. ROSELAND DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

With as many writers seated in the cubicle as possible, the six teams of tunesmiths hold a closed-door conference.

KIRBY

Since nobody's takin' our songs
seriously...

Hank and Sylvia frown.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Outside of Sylvia's and Hank's...we
gonna have to do 'em ourselves.

Rose cheers...Jeannie's, Martha's, Florence's, and Colleen's mouths drop...Dulcey Mae shrugs...Eve nods knowingly.

Johnnielouise dances in jubilation.

In fact, Johnnielouise tries to dance around the room...but realizes it's impossible with eleven other people in that tiny space.

So she stops.

JOHNNIELOUISE

That's what Ah tried to do at the
Apoller last year.

Penny catches the surprised expressions of Martha, Florence, Dulcey Mae, and Colleen.

DULCEY MAE

They'd skin me alive at th'
'Poller.

COLLEEN

Penny...Kirby...aren't we trying to
write for other people, not
ourselves?

Several writers AD LIB their agreement with Colleen.

PENNY

I can't believe you
guys...especially you, Colleen!
Didn't you fill in for Dick Leibert
at the Radio City Music Hall organ
your first four years here in town?

COLLEEN

He'll kill me if I go through with this.

PENNY

Rose, you played in clubs all over Brooklyn for four years!

ROSE

Yeah, but they aren't gonna wanna hear "How Could You Do This to Me."

PENNY

Jeannie, when you weren't cleaning hotel rooms, you sang and played the piano!

Jeannie dodges her way over to Penny. She puts a hand on Penny's shoulder.

JEANNIE

(singing)

How could you do this to us?

A smattering of laughter ripples through the room.

PENNY

Florence was in a combo from 1950 until '58...and Martha and her sisters got to appear on "Ted Mack and the Original Amateur--"

MARTHA

Don't mention that. When an irate neighbor found out we didn't win, he burned a carton of Old Golds on my Aunt Gina's front lawn.

EVE

Yeah. The same way the Klan burns crosses.

Johnnielouise's, Martha's, and Kirby's nods are heavy ones.

FLORENCE

(to Martha)

Did they arrest him?

MARTHA

No...in fact, when the police found out we didn't win, they confiscated our instruments.

KIRBY

Martha, we gotta do something. We gotta get the labels to notice us.

ROSE

Why don't we picket Columbia one day, RCA Victor another--

PENNY

Why don't we give "The Jingle Belles Revue" a chance?

Johnnielouise, Sylvia, Eve, and Hank cheer.

PENNY (CONT'D)

It worked for Carrie Jacobs Bond!

HANK

What label's that chick with?

Hank gets disbelieving stares from Eve and Sylvia.

EXT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT THEATER - DAY

It's noon...and the hustle and bustle increases even more, especially around 43rd and Broadway, the block on which the New York Paramount is located.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT OFFICE - DAY

PAUL ROSENTHAL (40s, hyper) presides over a cluttered office: Not only do papers clutter his desk...the walls feature photos of family, movie stars, and recording artists.

Paul sits at his desk and hears a KNOCK on the door.

PAUL

Come in. It's open.

Penny opens the door and enters the office. Today, she wears street clothes, a baseball cap, and...a baseball glove.

PENNY

Penny Stavros, Coast to Coast Music Publishing Company. I called you yesterday.

Paul looks lost.

PENNY (CONT'D)

New company out of Queens.

Paul quickly stands up and shakes hands with Penny.

PAUL

Yeah...you're that crazy lady that wants to put on a show here.

Penny frowns as Paul gestures her into a seat on the other side of his desk.

PENNY

If you'd been around fifty years ago, you would've called
(sitting down)
Carrie Jacobs Bond crazy for putting on a show.

Penny's frown becomes a grin.

PENNY (CONT'D)

When she was just starting out, she couldn't get--

PAUL

Did she do silent movies?
(sitting back down)
And what's with the glove?

PENNY

She wrote "I Love You Truly." And I'm gonna see the Yankees play the Senators after we're done here.

PAUL

Right!
(fiddling with his papers)
Now how long's this...this "Jingle Belles Revue" gonna last?

PENNY

Two hours.

Paul checks a desk calendar.

PENNY (CONT'D)

We had to do something to get record-industry leaders to notice us, and we thought singing our songs--

PAUL

Sunday, June seventh. Seven thirty PM. Sharp. Make sure you've got a thousand screaming teens in the seats.

Penny gets up and shakes Paul's hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)
One less and you cough up five
hundred bucks.

Penny nods.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK ZOO - DAY

Mimeographed sheets by her side, Eve secures one of those sheets to a tree.

She's hanging an ad for "The Jingle Belles Revue."

INT. LOBBY IN BROOKS HALL AT BARNARD COLLEGE - DAY

While a skeptical Elaine watches, Martha puts a copy of the same ad on the bulletin board.

ELAINE
Ya wasting ya time hanging that ad
up.

MARTHA
That's what you think, Elaine.

ELAINE
School's gonna be out by then!

Martha gestures Elaine into silence.

INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kirby's on the sofa.

KIRBY
(into phone)
That's right... "The Jingle Belles
Revue's" gonna be Sunday, June
seventh, seven thirty... Noo Yock
Paramount Theater... Whaddya mean
you ain't gonna put no ads on the
radio?

Kirby, still on the phone, abruptly stands up.

KIRBY (CONT'D)
I SUPPOSE YOU'D TELL ALKA-SELTZER
NOT TO FIZZ!

Kirby slams the phone down.

INT. AMALGAMATED SALESFLOOR - DAY

Penny saunters over to the bulletin board to attach a copy of the ad; Norman's in hot pursuit.

PENNY

Don't worry, Mr. Krigsten. I'll call that distributor about getting hold of Chuck Berry's new release. Just wanted to put this up on the board first.

Norman walks over to the bulletin board.

NORMAN

Don't worry 'bout no support, Miss Stavros. I'm goin' to ya show.

A smile takes over on Penny's face; she shakes Norman's hand.

PENNY

Thanks a million.

NORMAN

I can always use a good laugh.

Penny jerks Norman's hand away.

EXT. RADIO STATION WTF - NIGHT

WTF takes up the first several floors of a shorter music district skyscraper than 1700 Broadway.

INT. WTF STUDIO A - NIGHT

Disk jockey SMILIN' GENE COLEMAN (20s) sits across the desk from his interviewee, Dulcey Mae.

SMILIN' GENE

I've heard of some rock-and-roll singers switching over to country, but not the other way around.

Dulcey Mae gives Smilin' Gene a correcting look.

SMILIN' GENE (CONT'D)

Not after Elvis, that is...what made you make the switch?

DULCEY MAE

Wail, in mid-1958, Ah went to Nashville and cut a record called "Ah Wonder Where Your Lovin' Went." It went up to twenty five on the country charts and ninety two on the pop charts.

SMILIN' GENE

Yeah...based on the Pepsodent ad on TV.

DULCEY MAE

Wail, Lever Brothers did git they money, so that's nothin' to git in a lather 'bout. But you 'member Gino Bonino's version made the Top Tin a few months later.

SMILIN' GENE

Number Eight.

DULCEY MAE

Right! Ah was in Baltimo'e when Ah found this out, and Ah was on tour with some other C&W artists.

Dulcey Mae takes a sip of water.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Anyway, the whole thang didn't sit wail with me, so Ah tole 'em Ah'd finish the tour when it ended in January.

SMILIN' GENE

Yeah, you were at the Longhorn Cafe.

DULCEY MAE

And when the tour ended, Ah stayed right here in New Yoke and decided that if mah songs weren't gonna sail with me sangin' 'em, why, Ah'd write 'em...

Smilin' Gene slowly nods as he takes in Dulcey Mae's explanation.

INT. STUDIO B AT RADIO STATION WRAB - NIGHT

Sylvia gives the explanation.

SYLVIA
 ...for other artists. And it
 sounded like a good idea.

PULLING BACK reveals Hank and a disc jockey named MELVIN MITCHELL (30s, Black). Both men listen enthusiastically as Sylvia talks on.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
 The Bobbettes came to us one day
 last year...they hadn't had a smash
 since "Mr. Lee." Well, they told us
 they wanted to do my biggest hit up
 to that time, "Anything You Can--"

HANK, MELVIN, SYLVIA
 (finishing the song title)
 "Do, I Can Do Better."

This radio station is in what once was a small Harlem store.
 (It's possible for Hank, Sylvia, and Melvin to see TRAFFIC
 wincing down the street.)

The three break into laughter.

HANK
 They version sank without a trace,
 but it gave me and Sylvia some good
 ideas.

SYLVIA
 So, when we weren't in the studio
 to cut some sides or on tour, Hank
 and I hit the publishers to see if
 we could sell the songs we'd
 started to write for other singers.
 They didn't like those.

MELVIN
 So three months back, you hooked up
 with this new publishing company.

HANK
 Coast to Coast. We're over in
 Queens. A local producer-writer-
 manager and a record-store clerk
 started it.

SYLVIA
 And next month, we're gonna present
 our first annual "Jingle Belles--"

MELVIN

How'd you end up in Queens?

HANK

Well, Melvin, the founders couldn't find the money to get a building on this side of the Hudson.

Melvin's mouth drops.

SYLVIA

Anyway, the record-store clerk lives in Queens and we operate...

INT. WTF STUDIO A - NIGHT

Dulcey Mae talks about Coast to Coast Music Publishing Company.

DULCEY MAE

...outa Penny's house on 47th Avenue in Queens. Ah love it...but Ah wish we coulda been closer to the action.

SMILIN' GENE

Speaking of action, tell our WTF listeners about "The Jingle Belles Revue."

DULCEY MAE

Why, it's Sunday, June seventh, 1959, at the New Yoke Paramount Theater at 43rd and Broadway. Show starts at seven thirty, right after...

INT. STUDIO B AT RADIO STATION WRAB - NIGHT

Sylvia finally gets her chance to talk up the upcoming revue.

SYLVIA

...the picture.

HANK

Countess Jones'll be there, along with Dulcey Mae; Florence Peaks, who played bass in the Four Buttercups--

MELVIN

They coulda made it big if their piano player hadn't become a mother.

HANK

Couldn't reach the keys in her condition.

Sylvia and Melvin nod.

HANK (CONT'D)

Johnnie Hill, a singer who'd tried to break in via the Apollo, is gonna be there...she writes with Florence. And, of course, Sylvia Thompkins is gonna be there.

SYLVIA

Tickets are a dollar in advance and a dollar and a half the night of the show.

Hank and Melvin shake their heads "yes."

HANK

So all you WRAB listeners...tell the gang about "The Jingle Belles Revue," 'cause we wanna see you rockin' at the Noo Yock Paramount!

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

This eatery's in Kirby's neighborhood...and is in what once was another store.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Every seat in the place is filled with PEOPLE this midday.

Johnnielouise is on duty today, with a pot of coffee in hand as she walks across the room...only to spot Florence, whose college textbooks rest on the table she shares with THREE MEN (one young, the others middle-aged) she doesn't know.

JOHNNIELOUISE

Florence Peaks! What in the world brangs you out here?

FLORENCE

Take a look.

A ream of paper sits on the floor next to Florence's seat; Florence lifts the ream, opens it, and pulls out a mimeographed copy of the ad for "The Jingle Belles Revue."

Florence hands the copy to Johnnielouise, who gleefully accepts.

JOHNNIELOUISE

Ah'll go hang it on the winder!

Johnnielouise sets the pot down on the table to go to the window to hang the ad.

Florence gives each of the men at her table a copy of the same ad.

FLORENCE

That waitress and I write songs together.

The three men give Florence looks of disbelief.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ON BROADWAY - DAY

This one's a medium-size building in the theater district.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Colleen's at a grand piano, where she beats out some of her self-written music. Around the piano: A DOZEN DANCERS (all in their tights), who enjoy the rock-and-roll beat put down by their rehearsal pianist.

From a nearby office comes the studio's dance instructor, a woman named JOAN (40s). She totes a copy of the "Jingle Belles Revue" ad.

JOAN

That's enough of that, Miss Fitzpatrick!

Colleen reluctantly stops the music while the dancers register AD LIBBED protests over Joan's decree.

EXT. SUBWAY - DAY

With copies of the "Jingle Belles Revue" ad in tow, Jeannie and Rose spread the message of their upcoming soiree.

Jeannie reaches into her purse for...a can of spray paint.

Result: A dirty look from Rose.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The SOUND of music predominates on this muggy, somewhat-cloudy night.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Furniture is shoved to one side of the room as the writers use the opposite side (piano and all) for a bandstand.

Eve's on tenor sax, Dulcey Mae's on drums, Colleen's on piano, Hank's on alto sax, Johnnielouise is on electric guitar, and Florence is on acoustic bass...and they back Penny, who sings and plays acoustic guitar.

PENNY

*I get up in the morning/And I brush
my teeth./I put my clothes on, then
I/Eat a roll so sweet.*

Penny and Co. wrap up "Thinking 'bout You."

Sylvia, Jeannie, Kirby, Martha, and Rose serve as the audience and the jury. (It's a discerning, critical jury.)

PENNY (CONT'D)

*I get aboard the subway/To the job
I do,/And while I'm riding, baby,/I
think about you./You know I think
about you.*

DULCEY MAE, JOHNNIELOUISE

(singing backup)

Thank about you!

PENNY

You know I think about you.

COLLEEN, FLORENCE

(singing backup, too)

Think about you!

PENNY

*You know I'm thinking 'bout you/And
all the good, good things you do.*

Penny, Eve, Florence, Colleen, Johnnielouise, Dulcey Mae, and Hank play their way out of the song in four bars.

Jeannie, Kirby, Martha, Rose, and Sylvia offer a good round of applause.

Colleen's grateful, Penny's delighted, Johnnielouise is surprised, and Florence is worried.

EVE

Penny...maybe you need to go electric on that one.

Penny slowly nods.

DULCEY MAE

Why don't we all try mah "Banjo Rock?"

Nine of the remaining inhabitants groan (exceptions: Colleen and Penny).

Dulcey Mae leaves the drum set and grabs a banjo.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Someone wanna fill in for me on drums?

Three or four fingers point to Eve...who shakes her head "no."

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Dulcey Mae becomes a teacher: She shows Johnnielouise some drum pointers.

Johnnielouise shows what she can do on those skins. (The whole thing blows Dulcey Mae's mind.)

EXT. CORNER OF 55TH AND BROADWAY - DAY

Kirby rehearses the Doo-Woppers...while a crowd of PEOPLE assembles around the singers and their mentor.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

Rose shows Jeannie how to play the trumpet while Kirby and Eve receive saxophone pointers from Hank.

Plus: Colleen brushes up on her trombone playing.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS - DAY

At the front entrance, Eve (reel-to-reel tape recorder in one hand, microphone in the other) interviews SEVERAL STUDENTS...to find out what they want in life and why.

The point: Possible subjects for songs.

INT. PENNY'S BASEMENT - EVE'S AND MARTHA'S CUBICLE - NIGHT

Eve and her partner then try to put this information into the words of a song. (It's rough going.)

INT. AMALGAMATED RECORD STORE LOUNGE - DAY

Penny reads the sports section of the "Times." She notices the American League standings show the Yankees in...last place!

Penny scribbles the sentence "I'M LAST WITH YOU" on some notebook paper.

INT. MEYER PIANO COMPANY SALESFLOOR - DAY

With all twelve writers playing instruments (Eve, Colleen, Sylvia, Kirby, and Jeannie play piano), Carlton, Earl, Leroy, and Preston rehearse.

Earl, in fact, leans on the pump organ Martha tests out.

END MONTAGE

EXT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT THEATER - NIGHT

It's Sunday night, and the area around the theater teems with PEOPLE...many of them in their teens.

On the marquee, it's "WOMAN OBSESSED" in big block letters, the names "SUSAN HAYWARD" and "STEPHEN BOYD" in smaller letters below the movie title, and below the names of the movie's stars..."JINGLE BELLES REVUE."

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOBBY - NIGHT

Penny and Kirby, in gowns that don't match, look outside the front window.

PENNY

I hope Martha and Rose didn't get caught in the traffic.

KIRBY

They'd've been better off takin' the subway.

Paul strides from the lower level into the lobby. He doesn't look pleased.

PAUL
 You two ladies got five hundred
 bucks?

KIRBY
 Well...how about four-hundred
 ninety-five dollars and fifty
 cents?

PAUL
 Well, you got five minutes to come
 up with one more person...or else
 find another four dollars and fifty
 cents.

Paul moves toward Penny.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 YOU PROMISED ME A THOUSAND PEOPLE
 OR FIVE HUNDRED BUCKS!

Penny tries to gesture Paul into some semblance of calm.

EXT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT THEATER - NIGHT

Nobody heads inside the theater at the moment, although the
 hustle and bustle around it continues.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Norman (in a suit and necktie) watches the MOVIE as it comes
 to an end. In sudden inspiration, he turns to JOEY MCELFRISH
 (17), who sits in back of him.

NORMAN
 If this rock 'n' roll show's
 anywhere as good as this picture,
 I'll buy me some tan shoes with
 pink shoelaces.

Joey looks puzzled.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
 One of my employees is in--

JOEY
 Do you mind?

Norman, in a frown, turns around.

EXT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT THEATER - NIGHT

In front of the theater, a taxi comes to a screeching halt; a second or two later, a second taxi pulls to a stop right behind it...and causes a collision.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOBBY - NIGHT

Penny looks out the window; she breathes relief when she finds Martha (in a gown and carrying a full accordion case) and Elaine (in her street duds) running from the first cab into the theater.

Running from the second cab to the theater: Rose (in a flashy gown) and her mother, JACKIE KLEINSCHMITT (late 40s), who wears a three-piece suit that includes a skirt.

Rose also totes a trumpet case.

EXT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT THEATER - NIGHT

THE TWO CAB DRIVERS get out of their vehicles and discuss the collision.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOBBY - NIGHT

Elaine, Jackie, Martha, and Rose head for the lower level.

ELAINE

(to Jackie)

I've got a bet going with Martha that she can't come up with a hit by the end of the year.

JACKIE

WHAT?

MARTHA

I intend to win, too.

(glancing behind her)

Hey, Penny! You're in this, too!

Rose opens the door for Elaine, Jackie, and Martha...as well as a sprinting Penny.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Rose and Martha escort Jackie and Elaine, respectively, to seats next to Norman...who chafes in his chair.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

At last, "Woman Obsessed" ENDS, the screen disappears to reveal a stage, and...the band blares out a jumpin', rockin' instrumental.

Penny and Johnnielouise play electric guitars, Florence plays acoustic bass, Sylvia's at a grand piano, Dulcey Mae's on drums, Jeannie's on trumpet, Hank's on alto sax, Eve's on tenor sax, Kirby's on baritone sax, and Colleen's on trombone.

In this setup, the horn players and the guitarists are erect rather than seated.

Martha and Rose sprint onstage from behind the stage; the former goes to a 1900-29 upright piano...and the latter brandishes her trumpet. When both join in, Kirby moves to center stage and pretends to direct the band.

Hank's in a suit and necktie; his colleagues wear gowns that don't match.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Most of the CROWD, especially Paul, is stunned to see All Those Women (and Just One Man) playing those instruments.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

After thirty-six bars, Penny's the first to get a solo...and she makes the most of her twelve bars before Sylvia takes over for twelve of her own.

Eve shows her rapid progress as a tenor saxophonist by kicking into a screeching, twelve-bar affair.

At the end of Eve's solo, Kirby thins the music down to bass, drums, the two guitars, and the two pianos.

Kirby steps up to a 1950s-style microphone at center stage.

KIRBY
(into the mike)
Ladies and gentlemen...hipsters and
oldsters...welcome to the first
annual "Jingle Belles Revue!"

Kirby's salutation receives mild O.S. APPLAUSE.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Let's get the show on the road and bring out four newcomers to the rock-and-roll scene...the Doo-Woppers!

Kirby leads the band into a final twelve rockin' bars as Preston, Carlton, Leroy, and Earl (in matching red suits and black neckties) sprint onstage and Kirby rejoins the horn section.

Carlton, Leroy, and Earl camp at the center-stage mike and Preston goes to another microphone as the applause heats up.

It's "You Knock Me Out," in which Kirby and her fellow writers-bandmembers give the Doo-Woppers an intro that delineates the Gospel-influenced sound better than the Philharmonic Records rhythm crew's version ever could.

PRESTON

(singing into his mike)
You knock me out./You make me shout./You're what this love/Is all about.

Carlton, Earl, and Leroy punctuate each of Preston's lines with an AD LIBBED line of their own.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You make me jump,/Make my heart pump./You threw my worries/In the city dump./Without a doubt,/Your love is tops./You make me shout./You knock me out.

While the Doo-Woppers groove their way into the second verse, they show off their choreography.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

It's an action that triggers applause in Elaine...and mortified looks by Norman and Jackie.

ELAINE

(to Jackie and Norman)
These guys got rekkids out?

NORMAN

(pointing at stage)
So that was that strange box that, uh, baritone sax player left at the store the other day?

Joey taps Norman on the shoulder.

JOEY
Do you mind?

Joey joins in the applause and the growing pandemonium.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

Kirby's next; she and her baritone sax glide through "Kirby's Blues," an instrumental that religiously follows the time-tested twelve-bar blues form.

Kirby finishes her solo and turns the honors over to Johnnielouise and her guitar.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

The band's now a six-person aggregation (down to Colleen on upright piano, Dulcey Mae on drums, Eve on tenor, Florence on bass fiddle, Hank on trumpet, and Johnnielouise on guitar).

After a four-bar intro (an intentionally discordant one at that), Eve and her tenor sax prance over to an electric organ (maybe a Hammond B-3), where she and her bandmates put over a futuristic midtempo paeon called "Atomic Love."

Eve sets her sax next to the organ, then takes a seat at the console.

EVE
 (sings and plays organ)
*You and I together/Will outshine
 the stars above,/'Cause you and I
 have something/That no one can ever
 speak of./I don't know where you
 got it,/But I'm glad you gave it to
 me./Yessiree--*

ALL BUT EVE AND HANK
Yessiree!

EVE
Yessiree--

ALL BUT EVE AND HANK
Yessiree!

EVE
You and me--

ALL BUT EVE AND HANK
You and me!

EVE

You and me--

ALL BUT EVE AND HANK

You and me!

EVE

You and me, we've got a great thing, / A thing they call "Atomic Love."

SAME SCENE - STILL LATER

Penny (singing and playing electric guitar) joins Eve (who sticks with tenor sax), Colleen, Florence, Hank, Dulcey Mae, and Johnnielouise in a haunting, plaintive, Ricky Nelson-like number, "I'm Last with You."

They're about to finish this one.

PENNY

You care about your '40 Ford, / But not a thing about me. / What did you think 'bout when you carved / Our initials on a tree? / I'm last with you. Too bad / I'm last with you. Boo hoo! / I'm last with you. That's nuts! / I'm last with you.

ALL BUT EVE AND HANK

I'm last with you. / I'm last with you.

Eve and Hank toot their saxes right after the final "I'M LAST WITH YOU."

Some pretty strong applause follows.

When it's done, Penny addresses the crowd.

PENNY

(still into the mike)
You're gonna like our next performer. For the last five years, she's been tearing up Brooklyn juke joints...when she's not writing songs with us.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Norman watches Penny describe the next act and tries to hide a snicker.

Around him, some of those already seated applaud.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

The applause continues strong.

PENNY

Doesn't matter if it's the horn or
the 88s...she can really boss 'em
around.

(gesturing)

Ladies and gentlemen...Countess
Jones!

To the tune of O.S. APPLAUSE, Rose sprints onstage and goes toward the upright while Colleen leaves it and grabs her trombone. Also: Penny leaves the stage.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Norman and Elaine join in the applause...but Jackie's in openmouthed shock.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

Rose launches into "Countess' Boogie," a chunky, driving variation on the standard twelve-bar blues form.

Dulcey Mae, Eve, Florence, Hank, and Johnnielouise, as well as Colleen, back Rose on this one, too.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Jackie comes to...sort of.

JACKIE

That's my daughter up there! Her
name isn't Count--

ELAINE

That's just a stage name, Mrs.
Kleinschmitt.

Jackie gets up and heads for the exits...but Norman grabs her arm.

NORMAN

Lady...would you have gone to see
"Some Like It Hot" if two of its
stars had used their real names:
Bernard Schwartz and Norma Jean
Baker?

Jackie wrestles herself out of Norman's grip...and returns to her seat.

While Jackie calms down (or tries to, at least), the rest of the audience takes a strong liking to "Countess' Boogie."

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

Rose's departure leaves the music up to Johnnielouise (who doubles as the singer), Hank, Florence, Eve, Dulcey Mae, and Colleen (she's on grand piano). What's more, Johnnielouise wears a neckworn harmonica holder...and it's got a mouth harp on it, all right.

It's "Apples and Oranges," a rocking novelty with the same basic beat as the Silhouettes' "Get a Job."

JOHNNIELOUISE

You like to watch "Gunsmoke."/Ah like "The Real McCoys."/You like to go to hangouts/And drank with the boys./Ah'd rather see a movie/And cuddle you close--

Some of Johnnielouise's bandmates try to stifle their own chuckles.

JOHNNIELOUISE (CONT'D)

Then take you out to dinner-/Like eatin' at Joe's./You're like pizza. Ah'm caviar./Don't know if this'll ever go far./We're like apples and oranges,/A horse and a car.

At the instrumental break, Johnnielouise rips into a twelve-bar guitar solo; in it, she even tries some Chuck Berry-like duck walks.

She stops at center mike and blows her harmonica for twelve more bars while strumming her guitar.

Result: The applause of a roaring crowd.

SAME SCENE - MINUTES LATER

Hank switches to tenor sax to deliver "Strollin' with My Baby," an instrumental that's a tad faster than, say, the Diamonds' "The Stroll" or Chuck Willis' "C.C. Rider."

In this one, Eve plays grand piano while Colleen plays electric organ. (Both women come up with percussive riffs.)

SAME SCENE - STILL LATER

Eve's still on grand piano, Rose is on trumpet, and Hank stays on tenor sax...as Colleen delivers a twelve-bar trombone solo.

It's a bouncy novelty called "I'm a Thinking Man's Woman (with a Kissing Man's Love)." In it, Colleen moves to center mike once her trombone solo ends.

COLLEEN

(singing into mike)

I've got a great big heart/And a great big mind./I'll give you friendly satisfaction,/Make you feel so fine./What this country needs/Is some lovin' like mine./Brother.../You never had it so fine./Yes, I'm a thinking man's woman--

It's Call-and-Response Time, with the horns providing "responses" to Colleen's vocal "calls."

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

With a kissing man's love./I may not give away no coupons,/But I'm all you ever dreamed of./My hugging is outstanding,/And my squeezing is mild./You know you'll get a lot to like,/And you won't have to walk a mile.

SAME SCENE - MOMENTS LATER

The rhythm crew's down to Johnnie Louise (guitar), Florence (bass), Dulcey Mae (drums), and Eve (grand piano) as Martha (singing and playing accordion) weighs in with the song she tried out on Elaine earlier.

MARTHA

The Eagle and the Bear can't get along,/Ike's got static on his radio,/The Yankees and the Rebels are at it again,/And June Cleaver burned the roast.

It's "June Cleaver Burned the Roast," that ricky-ticky, Bill Haley-influenced rocker.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Elaine's confounded.

Seated in the first row of the lower level: TWENTY RECORD-COMPANY EXECUTIVES (some in their 20s, many in their 30s). All wear suits...and all but one leader is male.

Most of them look nervous over Martha's song.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

The song in question continues strong.

MARTHA

Dulles is dead because he wouldn't rest,/Sauerkraut and bratwurst are trying to mate,/We're fighting hard to put a rocket in space./Donna Stone's daughter can't find a date!

Martha takes her accordion through a torrid sixteen-bar solo...in which one of the execs gets up and leaves. (Some other potentates protest the departure, though.)

SAME SCENE - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

In "Forgive Me, My Love," an axeless Jeannie stands at the mike at center stage while the other eleven songwriters deliver a strong beat...to a dramatic (almost operatic) effort.

JEANNIE

(singing)

When you got up and walked away,/I thought my life would wither and die./You never, ever said a word./It was the first time I saw you cry.

Jeannie grasps the mike stand.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to hurt your feelings./I didn't mean to make you cry./Now I know just how gentle you are,/And I know just how hard you try./I'll trust you for the rest of my life.

With one hand holding the mike stand, Jeannie caresses the mike itself with her other hand.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Won't be a turkey, just a dove./Let's give our love another chance./Please forgive me, my love.

Jeannie lets go of the mike, abandons center stage, and strolls over to the electric organ, where, for sixteen bars, she plays a solo not too far removed from a funeral dirge.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Eleven of the twelve writers now stand onstage (Florence is the exception).

Kirby's at the center mike while Colleen ever-so-carefully stands the acoustic bass up.

KIRBY

(addressing the crowd)

A lotta you might remember this next rocker from when she first came to town from her old stomping grounds, Denver, Colorado, in '55.

Some mild O.S. APPLAUSE kicks in.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

She started a band over there cold the Four Buttercups.

The crowd fires up more O.S. APPLAUSE.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Well, last year, they had to split up 'cause they piannah player had a baby. They split up after eight years together...but their leader ain't lost the faith, and she's gonna rock for ya RIGHT NOW!

Florence (seated at one of the two consoles of the theater pipe organ then in use at the New York Paramount) rises out of the orchestra pit and delivers, by herself, the first twelve bars...

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Doin' "Giddy," ladies and gentlemen, give it up for Florence Peaks!

...of a bouncy instrumental (sort of a "Happy Organ" before it actually happened).

On the thirteenth bar, Penny, Johnnielouise (guitars), Colleen (bass), Martha, and Sylvia (the latter two on grand and upright, respectively) join Florence.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

As soon as the fans figure out what's going on, they applaud.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

On the twenty-fifth bar, "Giddy" heats up: Dulcey Mae (drums), Jeannie (trumpet), Eve (tenor sax), Hank (alto sax), Kirby (baritone sax), and Rose (trombone) enter the song.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Some of the record-company executives look confused about the song, though.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT STAGE - NIGHT

The moguls face more head scratching: Dulcey Mae stands at the center mike...with a banjo in her hands.

Backing her up: Penny (guitar), Florence (bass), Colleen on upright, and...Johnnielouise on drums.

The intro to the song in question is country through and through (Dulcey Mae picks away for the first four bars)...until the other musicians kick in with a strong 2/4 (or 4/4) beat.

DULCEY MAE

(singing, too)

Gather 'round, everybody./Listen to what Ah have to say./Make a break with the crowd now./Here's what we doin' today:/Throw away all your guitars--

It's "Banjo Rock," in which Penny changes from guitar to banjo right after Dulcey Mae's "GUITARS."

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Don't ever try one ag'in./Git yo'se'f a banjo/And you won't know where you been./Everybody do the Banjo Rock./Everybody do the Banjo Rock./Everybody do the Banjo Rock.

Colleen's piano playing grows percussive here.

DULCEY MAE (CONT'D)

Everybody do the Banjo Rock./Everybody do the Banjo Rock,/And you'll love it fo' the rest of your life.

Now Dulcey Mae and Penny turn the song's first instrumental passage into a banjoists' duel.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

THE NINETY EIGHTS (five young men in suits and bow ties) prance around at center stage as they finish "Knock-Kneed Woman," a number not unlike something by the Coasters or the Cadillacs.

NINETY EIGHTS

(singing)

I love my knock-kneed woman./I love my knock-kneed woman./You can have your Peggy Sue/And your Queen of the Hop./I'll take my knock-kneed woman./You know she'll always be on top.

O.S. RHYTHMIC HANDCLAPPING from the audience helps boot the song along.

NINETY EIGHTS (CONT'D)

I love my knock-kneed woman./I love my knock-kneed woman./I love my knock-kneed woman./I love my knock-kneed woman...

As the full band blows behind them, the Ninety Eights continue to sing "*I LOVE MY KNOCK-KNEED WOMAN*" on their way off the stage...to the tune of thunderous O.S. APPLAUSE.

Penny moves to that mike at center stage.

PENNY

(into the mike)

All right, rock-and-roll fans, it's the last of the ninth...and our heavy hitter's up!

O.S. GROANS from some of the fans result.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Batting a thousand...with hits like "I Had a Dream about You," "Nobody Else but You," "I Made a Mistake," "I Wanna Spend the Rest of My Life with You," "Making a Wish..."

The crowd's groaning grows LOUDER...

PENNY (CONT'D)

"Won't You Listen..."

...and LOUDER.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do
 Better," "Hey Hank," "I'm Not a
 Hard-Headed Woman," and--

The O.S. groans become CHEERS.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 --"Shakin' the Place," and her new
 one, it's Sylvia Thompkins!

Tremendous O.S. APPLAUSE ensues as Sylvia returns onstage (in
 a different gown); as the other eleven writers-musicians pump
 away, she makes it to the grand piano.

When the applause dies down:

SYLVIA
 This is my new one.
 (to her bandmates)
 Hit it!

Sylvia, Jeannie, Hank, Penny, Rose, Kirby, Colleen, Martha,
 Eve, Johnnielouise, Dulcey Mae, and Florence (on the
 instruments with which they opened the revue) come up with a
 Gospelish rocker called "Say the Word and I'll Be There."

After the introductory thirty-two bars, Sylvia sings.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
Say the word and I'll be there.

JOHNNIELOUISE, PENNY
 (singing backup)
Say the word! Say the word!

SYLVIA
Say the word and I'll be there.

DULCEY MAE, FLORENCE
 (singing backup as well)
Say the word! Say the word!

SYLVIA
*Say the word and I'll be there/To
 satisfy your every care./Say the
 word and I'll be there.*

JOHNNIELOUISE, PENNY
Say the word! Say the word!

The predominantly teenaged crowd (led by Joey and Elaine) wastes no time in adding handclaps.

INT. NEW YORK PARAMOUNT BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

"The Jingle Belles Revue" is over, and the team of songwriters-performers gets together with the team of record-company chiefs.

It's a festive atmosphere.

ONE EXECUTIVE walks over to Martha, who holds her accordion.

EXECUTIVE #1

Like, Martha...what a Fanucchi!

MARTHA

I wish my roommate from college were back here to hear you say that.

EXECUTIVE #1

You're the Mort Sahl of black dots.

Martha and Executive #1 shake hands.

Penny signs a contract on the back of A SECOND EXECUTIVE.

A THIRD EXEC hugs Sylvia...until Hank walks by them, tapping the third exec on the shoulder.

The third executive and Hank embrace!

A FOURTH CHIEF talks with Dulcey Mae, Florence, and Johnnielouise.

EXECUTIVE #4

I can understand a harmonica in a rock-and-roll song...but you sure the kids are gonna dig a banjo...or even a pipe organ?

DULCEY MAE

Wail, they's a banjo in "The Battle of Nyalins," by Johnny Horton.

JOHNNIELOUISE

And the kids are diggin' that, sir.

Executive #4 looks dumbfounded.

FLORENCE

And ever since I came to town to attend Brooklyn College, I've wanted to try all the Mighty Wurlitzers in town.

Florence puts a hand on the shoulder of Executive #4.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I was a kid when I first tried the one at the Denver Paramount...

Leroy, Earl, Carlton, and Preston jubilate with a FIFTH POTENTATE.

A SIXTH LEADER converses with Colleen and Eve.

EXECUTIVE #6

Colleen, that was really clever...you building a song around jingles from cigarette commercials.

COLLEEN

Thanks...and the thing is: I don't even smoke!

EVE

Sir, wait 'til you hear Colleen's next song.

Executive #6 nods.

EVE (CONT'D)

It's built around slogans from detergent commercials.

COLLEEN

That's gonna be a challenge: I've got a daytime job...so I'm not at home to watch soap operas.

Jeannie and Rose gab with A SEVENTH EXECUTIVE.

EXECUTIVE #7

(to Rose)

I hear your idol is George Gershwin.

Rose nods.

JEANNIE

Right down to smoking cigars.

EXECUTIVE #7

If that's the case, Rose, how'd you get a stage name like Countess Jones?

ROSE

Well, there was the time Count Basie came to the Subway Club...and I actually got to jam with him...

Rose watches a pair of mouths fly open.

While the Ninety Eights talk AD LIBBED shop with AN EIGHTH CEO, Kirby talks with A NINTH MOGUL (the only woman among the record-company chiefs).

EXECUTIVE #9

Do you actually get your talent from off street corners?

KIRBY

Yeah...and outa alleys and subways and restrooms. 'Member Juanita Miller? She used to work in a sewer before she got her break.

Executive #9 frowns.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Eve's 1958 DeSoto, Kirby's 1949 Hudson, and Penny's 1955 Plymouth pull into the driveway or alongside the house.

Each car's got four writers and at least one Doo-Wopper in it. As all sixteen leave the three cars, they find...that the exterior of Penny's house is festooned with graffiti.

They're not very flattering graffiti, either.

PENNY

Florence, Johnnie, Eve, and Martha, take 31-11. Kirby, Hank, Sylvia, and Colleen...go to 31-19.

ROSE

Are we gonna have to beat some people up?

PENNY

Dulcey, Rose, Jeannie, and I are going across the street.

KIRBY
 Preston, Leroy, Carlton,
 Earl...take any house you damn well
 choose.

The five men and eleven women scatter to their assigned houses.

EXT. GEORGE'S AND HELEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

With Eve, Florence, and Johnnielouise behind her, an angry Martha beats on the front door.

EVE
 Martha...let me handle it.

As the front door opens, Eve and Martha trade places. Result: Eve stares at George and Helen.

EVE (CONT'D)
 We'd like to talk.

EXT. KARL'S AND MARY FRANCES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Kirby rings the doorbell; Hank, Sylvia, and Colleen stand in back of her.

When the front door opens, Karl and Mary Frances stare at Kirby. Mary Frances slams the door in Kirby's face.

Kirby knocks on the door this time. When it opens, Karl stares at Kirby and her three colleagues.

KARL
 Yes?

KIRBY
 We're the riff-raff ya wife warned
 the neighbors about.

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jeannie, Penny, Rose, and Dulcey Mae lead Rex and Noreen across 47th Avenue to Penny's house; Preston, Leroy, Earl, and Carlton escort Vito and Maria Teresa over to Penny's.

As Penny reaches for her house keys, Eve, Florence, Johnnielouise, Martha, Helen, and George head for the abode.

PENNY
 (to Rex)
 I understand you're a sign painter.

Rex nods.

FLORENCE
Penny...don't give him any ideas.

INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Penny gestures the other twenty-three people into seats wherever possible. Around her, the air's hostile.

MARIA TERESA
(to Penny)
Three months ago, we went down to City Hole and protested higher assessment rates.

PENNY
I know.

REX
And you're not helping!

Kirby, Hank, Colleen, Sylvia, Mary Frances, and Karl stand.

PENNY
Kirby and I had no choice. We had to set up shop at home.

Some of the older couples scoff.

KIRBY
Penny ain't lyin'! We contacted every bank in town...and they turned us DOWN! EVERY BANK!

Kirby walks around.

KIRBY (CONT'D)
They said: "You aren't married!" "We don't like the idea of you startin' this music-publishing firm!" Et cetera!

PENNY
We really wanted a building in Manhattan, but we couldn't afford it.

VITO
Girls...I'm tryin' to see ya point. But...

Kirby stops in her tracks.

VITO (CONT'D)

But...

EVE

We're not hoodlums.

(walks over to Vito)

We're just trying to fill a need
singers have for decent
songs...something beyond "I love
you so/I'll never let you go."

Eve rests her hands on Vito's shoulders.

EVE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. We'll get better.

Maria Teresa stares Eve down...so Eve lets go of Vito and
keeps her hands to herself.

KARL

I wish you would...I wish you would
write waltzes!

Some titters...some groans...some stares.

MARY FRANCES

And I wish you would move OUTA
HERE, MISS STAVROS!

PENNY

I'm not moving.

Penny's colleagues cheer.

PENNY (CONT'D)

And I know you neighbors sprayed
graffiti all over my house.

(pointing to Rex)

You had to!

The older couples offer mock indignation...some of it AD
LIBBED.

MARTHA

You don't look like the type to
hire juvenile delinquents to paint
graffiti on a neighbor's house.

HELEN

(to Martha)

No, but I'll tell ya, Missy: I'm
the type to call--

KIRBY
 WAIT A MINUTE! JUST WAIT A MINUTE!!

Silence grips Penny's house...for a few seconds.

KIRBY (CONT'D)
 Why don't you folks that don't
 wanna hear us at night help us
 soundproof the house...like a fancy
 recording studio on Broadway?

The eight middle-aged people react with a variety of
 emotions...most of them negative.

MARIA TERESA
 I'm not a contractor!

JEANNIE
 Ma'am, I can help you. I like to
 build model cars...and I helped
 work on the basement...we can help
 you.

SYLVIA
 (to Maria Teresa)
 What do you say?
 (to Rex)
 How about you?

George slowly nods; he turns to Penny, who extends her hand
 to him.

HELEN
 George...what're you doing?

JOHNNIELOUISE
 (to Helen)
 Would you like somebody to spray
 graffiti all over the place you
 work at?

Helen shrugs as she joins Penny and George; the three shake
 hands before Kirby makes it a quartet.

The rest of the older men and older women crowd around Kirby
 and Penny to (AD LIB style) offer their services.

REX
 What do you want us to do?

PENNY

First, we've...all of us...gotta
get that writing off the front of
my house.

Penny receives a dirty look from Noreen.

PENNY (CONT'D)

That I'm renting.

Noreen and Penny share an honest laugh as the other ten
writers gather around Kirby, Penny, and the latter's
neighbors in peace.

FREEZE FRAME

FADE OUT.

THE END