

The Band
or
Stranger Than Fiction
A Mockumentary
(draft 3)
by Noons

songs by Reilly/Oddy

(Cut to: A Medium shot of Mark Reilly's face being interviewed. He doesn't speak directly to the camera but to the interviewer who is unseen and unheard off-camera.)

MARK: Rock N Roll is dead. You hear it all the time. In newspapers. On the internet. Over the radio. Across the great expanse that is this universe. There's nothing new. Nothing fresh. Nothing that jolts people to life; pulls them out of their boring lives and hits them, from the tips of their heads, all the way through their bodies, down to their—

NICK: Loins.

(Camera pulls out revealing Nick Oddy seated next to Reilly.)

MARK: —toes, and shoots out—Their what?

NICK: Their loins. Their core. The thing inside them—

MARK: I was going to say their toes—

NICK: —that makes them—their toes?

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: Why would we want to reach people's toes?

MARK: Well not literally. I meant their whole body gets moved—

NICK: Toes?

MARK: Yeah. Why?

NICK: It's just, feet (ugh) You know?

MARK: Un hun.

NICK: Makes us sound like some sort of twisted musical podiatrists.

MARK: No, I don't think so.

NICK: No?

MARK: No.

(Beat: they look at each other.)

MARK: So I guess in a metaphysical sense, what Rock really needs is a good old fashioned—

NICK: Kick in the balls.

MARK: —jolt of electricity. Something new and fresh—

NICK: An enema.

MARK: —that says, hey! This music is important. This music is fresh and alive—

NICK: Enemistic.

MARK: —and come with us as we together, we together can change the world.

NICK: Yeah...And get some pussy.

MARK: Well sure.

Cut to

(Nick walking along the sidewalk of a windy city street. He stops at a pole and tapes up one of the signs (yellow pieces of paper) he carries with him. It reads:

DRUMMER NEEDED ASAP!

- for project to change the course of music and the world, etc...

Nick turns his head left and sees a friend, Brendan, a big fellow in a sweater and cargo pants walking past.)

NICK: Hey, man. How are you?

BRENDAN: Oh, hey. How's it going?

NICK: Did you get a chance to—

BRENDAN: Yeah, actually, I've got it with me.

(Brendan pulls a cheap CD out of his left cargo pants pocket.)

BRENDAN: It's really some good stuff. Really, uh, melodic, and cool. It's cool.

NICK: Great. Great. Thanks.

BRENDAN: Yeah. Here you go. (he hands the CD to Nick)

NICK: Oh, no, man. You can keep that. That's for you. A gift.

BRENDAN: Oh, yeah. That's really nice of you, but I know how expensive it is to make these things. The packaging.

NICK: Oh, no, really, it's no problem at all—

BRENDAN: You should keep it and give it to somebody important.

NICK: No, no, no. You're important. You're B Dawg. The big B Dawg.

BRENDAN: No. I don't know. That's flattering. Really. Uh. I'm just, uh, I'm trying to simplify my life.

NICK: Good idea. Good idea. Henry David. Emerson.

BRENDAN: Right. Right.

NICK: Simplify. Life at the old, uh, pond.

BRENDAN: Yeah. And, uh, I have so much stuff. So much clutter—

NICK: Yeah, yeah.

BRENDAN: And stuff—

NICK: Sure.

BRENDAN: Just stuff everywhere. So I really can't take on anymore.

NICK: Right.

BRENDAN: I'm trying to lose stuff.

NICK: Un hun.

BRENDAN: So, here. Here you go. Really. Good, good stuff on there.

(Brendan hands Nick the CD.)

NICK: Well, it's just a demo.

BRENDAN: Right.

NICK: Four tracks.

BRENDAN: Sure.

NICK: A teaser. A taster. A little sampling.

BRENDAN: Un hun.

NICK: Just a trifle, really.

BRENDAN: Yeah, yeah. Well, listen, you should hold on to it. And, (checks watch) oh boy, I got to run.

NICK: Okay, okay.

BRENDAN: All right. Later.

(Brendan pulls a pair of drumsticks out of his right cargo pants pocket and holds them as he walks away.)

NICK: Yeah. See ya...

(Nick purses his lips, nods his head up and down a few times in blank thought as he stares off in Brendan's direction and hugs the yellow papers close to his chest that read DRUMMER NEEDED ASAP!)

(The camera pulls away from Nick, leaving him standing by himself in the middle of the sidewalk.)

Cut to

(A Kitchen and Living Room of an apartment. Mark and Nick are getting all their gear: amps, guitars, bass, cables, cords, pedals, etc. together and hauling it all downstairs to a Jeep where they load everything up until the Jeep is totally full except for the two front seats.)

Cut to

(Nick drives three blocks and parks in front of a bar. They get out of the Jeep, lock the Jeep, and walk inside the bar.)

Cut to

(Inside the bar. Mark and Nick walk through the bar and into a back room that has a small stage, tables, and a bar. They approach the bar, the bartender slides them a clipboard, they sign their band name (Stranger Than Fiction) up for the 10:20 time slot, then they stand in the center of the empty room and look around, speechless and unsure what to do next.)

MARK: Should we get something to eat?

NICK: Yeah.

Cut to

(Looking in on a McDonald's from outside we see Mark and Nick seated at a front table eating cheeseburgers and fries. The camera pans left to the parked Jeep still full of gear.)

Cut to

(Back at the bar. The place is alive with energy: the front bar is packed with people. The rear room is about three-quarters full. A small peppy band plays, led by a young man on stratocaster named Johnny Bravo. They finish up a cover of Tangled Up In Blue and leave the stage to a good round of applause. An MC takes the microphone onstage and after some initial chit-chat announces: Stranger Than Fiction. Mark and Nick walk onstage, each toting an acoustic guitar, acting like they have just walked onstage at Wembley Stadium. They plug in quickly, their entire set-up process taking about four seconds. They stand there, look to each other, and...begin an original song. Once they are about to start singing we:)

Cut to

(Outside the front of the bar, people mill about smoking, a bouncer checks ID's, patrons enter and exit. Camera pans left to reveal the Jeep parked at the curb still full of gear.)

Cut to

(Mark and Nick end their first song. A few bits of applause. Patrons rise from their tables and head for the bar to get a drink; others make for the bathrooms; some stare ahead, drunk and bored.)

Cut to

(Mark and Nick end another song. The MC walks onstage and acts as if their session is over. Mark calls the MC to his side and shows him his stopwatch that keeps time. The stopwatch reads 16:24.)

MARK: We've still got three minutes.

(The MC sighs deeply, obviously annoyed by Stranger Than Fiction. Then he exits the stage, Mark counts off, and they begin another song.)

Cut to

(Back at the Apartment. Late at night. Mark and Nick seated on opposite sides of the couch, smoking, exhausted, they stare ahead with blank faces at a video tape from the Beatles Anthology playing on the television set.)

Fade out.

Fade in.

(Interview: Mark and Nick outside on a sunny day, standing in front of a brick wall, donning dark sunglasses, smoking cigarettes.)

NICK: The weird thing is, you see, we're both Americans but we were raised in England. Which is why when we perform we slip into old habits.

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: The accents.

MARK: No idea why.

NICK: No. None.

MARK: It's just something that happens.

NICK: Unconscious.

MARK: Yeah, that's true. It's kind of, uh...Unconscious-ly.

NICK: Yeah. Right.

MARK: 'Cause you said unconscious, which implies that we're unconscious.

NICK: Right...Right...

MARK: You see what I'm saying.

NICK: Yeah. No, we don't pass out.

MARK: Sometimes our audience passes out.

NICK: Girls mostly.

MARK: Yeah. And guys.

NICK: Right. But we prefer girls.

MARK: Totally...

NICK: We play in some hot places.

MARK: Yeah, we do.

Jump Cut to

(Camera zooms in on Nick's face as Mark says he has to go see something and flicks his cigarette.)

MARK: I've got to go see something.

NICK: What's that?

(Mark exits off-camera.)

NICK: Oh. Okay. (Close up) Influences. Sure, we have influences. Everyone has influences. Anyone who says they don't have influences, well, they're just lying or they're too stupid to recognize the influence and the influence the influence has upon them. Which I can sort of understand because sometimes the influences become such a part of your subconscious (he looks off in the direction Mark left for a quick second) that it's hard to tell if that lick was a Beatles-inspired lick; or if that chord progression came from a Hootie and the Blowfish song; or if maybe our use of a glockenspiel on a track was somehow influenced by me being half-German...It's tough. Influences are tough. (he takes a pensive drag and looks onward)

Cut to

(The Camera approaches Reilly who is busy leaning over a fence writing in a small notebook.)

MARK: Oh, hey. Just doing some work while you talked to Nick. Thought I could get some time to myself. Do you like haiku poetry? I'm a haiku man myself. This current cycle I'm working on concerns the plight of the school lunch program at Ruffing Middle School. I recently found out that because Issue 31 didn't pass they're going to cut back on school lunch funding. So I'm choosing to fight back. I figure, I send them a haiku a day for the next—well, as long as it takes, really, and they'll have to give in. Here: (he reads from his notebook) A child cries out/For a bologna sandwich/Does anyone hear?... (he closes the notebook, looks off into the distance, thinks a moment) For the kids.

(Ext. Establishing shot: A TGI Fridays.)

Cut to

(Int. Mark and Nick seated on the same side of a booth. A good-looking Young Man sits across from them. He is dressed in dark blue work clothes and drinks a beer. He is Mike Petrocelli.)

MARK: (takes a sip of Coke through a straw then speaks) So, do you have a resume?

PETRO: What?

MARK: A resume?

NICK: A C.V.?

PETRO: Uh...No. Not really—

MARK: You know what, that's okay. It doesn't matter.

NICK: Not critical. Not vital.

MARK: It's fine.

NICK: By no means a reflection on you.

MARK: No. Of course not.

NICK: Not good or bad.

MARK: No. Of course not.

NICK: In no way influences our decision making process—

MARK: No. Of course not.

NICK: —one way or the other.

MARK: Right.

NICK: Absolutely.

MARK: So...Tell us about yourself.

PETRO: Well...I play the drums.

(Beat of silent, pensive head nods from Mark and Nick, taking in his words.)

NICK: Yeah...

MARK: Right...

(Petro looks complacently back at them, takes a drag off a smoke.)

NICK: Good.

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: That's what we're looking for.

MARK: Right...

PETRO: (exhales smoke) I've played for twelve years, since I was thirteen.

MARK: Un hun.

NICK: Yeah...

PETRO: And, I work at the Jiffy Lube down on Huntington.

NICK: Sure.

MARK: Yeah...

(Beat. Petro smokes casually.)

MARK: And, uh (taps his yellow notepad with a pen) Why'd you leave your last band?

PETRO: Artistic differences.

NICK: Really?

MARK: What sort of, uh, artistic differences?

PETRO: They wanted to be rockstars, and I'm more interested in the music.

MARK: Sure, sure...

NICK: Sure, sure...

PETRO: I just want to play good hard rock, drink some beers, and see what happens.

NICK: Right...

MARK: Totally. It's all about the music.

NICK: Right, the music.

MARK: That's what we're all about. The music.

NICK: First and foremost. The music.

PETRO: What kind of stuff do you guys play?

(Quick cut to Mark and Nick playing an acoustic ballad from the Open Mic gig for a few seconds.

Cut back to Mark and Nick's faces as they snap out of thought.)

MARK: Hard driving rock and roll.

NICK: Slash, melodic undercurrents, melodically.

MARK: Blissful, yet emotionally jarring lyrics.

NICK: With an edge.

MARK: Yeah, an edge.

PETRO: An edge is good.

MARK: Yeah, an edge.

NICK: An edge.

PETRO: Not too much of an edge.

MARK: No. Just a small edge.

NICK: A smedge, really.

PETRO: Cool, cool.

MARK: Yeah...

NICK: Right...

MARK: Could you just give us a minute to have a quick chat, discuss the applicants—

PETRO: Sure. I gotta piss anyway.

NICK: Cool, man.

(Petro exits the booth and heads for the bathroom. Mark and Nick watch him and wait until they are certain he is far enough away that he can't hear them. Even then, they speak softly to each other, like spies.)

MARK: What do you think?

NICK: He's played thirteen years.

MARK: Yeah, yeah.

NICK: Maybe we should give him a shot.

MARK: Yeah. At least see if there's any chemistry.

NICK: Yeah. Totally.

MARK: Right...

(Beat: they think.)

NICK: 'Cause no one else answered our ad.

Mark: That's true.

Cut to

(Mark and Nick walk into the bathroom. Of the five urinals Petro pees at the one dead center.)

MARK: Hey.

PETRO: (looks over his shoulder) Hey.

(Mark and Nick each go to the two outer urinals so that they stand on opposite sides of Petro and have one urinal between them apiece. Petro's head can possible move back and forth as Mark and Nick speak to him, but not too much.)

MARK: So, we thought maybe we should get together and jam.

NICK: See what happens.

MARK: No pressure.

NICK: No. None.

MARK: Just maybe play some covers, drink some beers.

NICK: Real organic.

MARK: See if anything materializes.

NICK: Gels.

MARK: Real easy.

NICK: Yeah.

(Petro zips up and speaks as he walks away from the urinals.)

PETRO: Sure. Sounds like fun.

NICK: Cool, cool.

MARK: Great. That's great.

(The Bathroom door closes after Petro. Mark and Nick look at each other.)

MARK: Did you hear any water?

NICK: What do you mean?

MARK: Like the sink?

NICK: No. Did you?

MARK: No.

NICK: Hun.

(They zip up at the same time.)

Cut to

(Int. The Apartment. The Living Room. Sunny daytime. Mark sits among their equipment. He messes around with a drum machine as he speaks.)

MARK: It's cool 'cause now that we have a drummer we can really get to work laying down some tracks, and doing it properly, without a drum machine, 'cause no matter how you slice it it always sounds tacky. (he taps the drum machine pads a few times and the sounds of drumbeats come out of a small speaker) See. It doesn't sound like a real set of drums. It sounds fake. Really fake. In fact, we can probably get rid of this now...

(Mark disconnects the drum machine and walks across the room to the windows. He opens a window and is about to chuck the drum machine when—)

NICK: Oi! What are you doing?

(Nick speaks from across the room, having just entered the living room.)

MARK: I figured we have a drummer now. Out with the old. In with the—

NICK: Don't just throw it out the window. Don't be a jackass.

MARK: No, I'm not. It's a rebirth, a restarting—

NICK: Yeah, yeah, that's fine, but let's wait 'til after we've played with him once.

MARK: Yeah, that's true.

NICK: Then we can all go up on the roof, pour some lighter fluid over the drum machine and set it ablaze like a ceremonial first fire. Right?

MARK: Yeah, that's a good idea. Better idea.

NICK: Of course it is.

MARK: Right. Or we could just keep it?

NICK: Yeah, why not?

MARK: I don't know.

NICK: Okay.

(Beat: they stand in silence thinking.)

NICK: You want to order a pizza?

MARK: Yeah, I could eat some.

Cut to

(Mark and Nick seated on the couch, eating pizza, watching a video tape from the Beatles Anthology as the sun sets through the living room windows.)

Fade out.

Fade in.

(We hear the sound of feedback and it continues over the next scene: Mark and Nick load up the Jeep with gear: amps, guitars, bass, pedals, etc. They get in the Jeep. Nick drives three blocks to a warehouse-type building. They unload the Jeep and carry all the gear up a set of stairs.)

Cut to

(Inside the rehearsal space. It is a white-walled room with hardwood floors in a warehouse. All plugged in and ready to go: Petro sits behind his drum kit. His snare drum reads: The Socks!

They are immersed in their pre-song routine. They get ready, warm up, chit chat. Then Mark says: Ready? Ready? Nick responds: Yeah. Petro stretches. Mark counts off, as Petro over-dramatically hits his drumsticks together above his head in time.

They kick into a song but are a little off—false start—they begin again and play a cover of (Insert Song), something really angry and big, like Mark and Nick are trying to show off their chops to Petro.)

Cut to

(Interview. Nick's face: medium shot. Their first rehearsal cover song plays in the background while Nick talks.)

NICK: The first time you play with someone it's a total mystery. The only thing I can equate it—I can compare it to is like the first time you make love to someone.

Cut to

(Slow motion: shot of Mark's concerned face as they play their first song together: a terrifying first moments.)

NICK: (Cont.)(Voiceover) You start out slow because it's new ground. You're both timid.

(Slow motion: shot of Nick's worrisome face as they play together. He observes his fellow players, following them.)

NICK: (Cont.) (V.O.) Then things pick up. You learn what the other person likes: do they want to be on top?

(Slow motion: shot of Mark nodding up and down seriously to Nick a few times, seemingly in response to a question asked without words.)

NICK: (Cont.) (V.O.) Do they like it doggy? Is fellacio a part of the equation, or is it just going to be a handjob? Uh...

(Slow motion: shot of Petro drumming along following the Boys' lead; then back to Nick's face during the interview, music still underneath.)

NICK: (Cont.) And soon, if your lucky, things are cooking and you forget about where you are and who you are, and maybe who she is if you've been drinking,

(Shot of the three musicians playing together. As Nick speaks we shift from Slow Motion to Full Speed, actual time.)

NICK: (Cont.) (V.O.) and the music just takes over. You feel the music and see where your partner or partners in this case 'cause there's three of us, where they want to go. And then by the end, hopefully, you reach that orgasm of sound and the juices flow...

(Petro is drumming furiously; Mark smacks his bass and sings; Nick goes crazy on his electric guitar. The song climaxes and then ends on a big note.)

NICK: (Cont.) (His face) It's very sexual. Except usually after playing together no one is crying... Yeah...

Cut to

(Back in rehearsal room immediately after they finished their first song together. Petro and Nick immediately light smokes; Mark bums a butt off Nick and they all smoke in silence for a few seconds catching their breaths.)

Petro: yeah, yeah Mark: good, good Nick: cool...

Cut to

(Medium shot of Mark's face in an interview.)

MARK: It was such a relief when we played together. After that first song, just to know that, yeah, this guy can play. And not only can he play,

(Shot of Petro wailing on the drums in sweaty slow motion.)

MARK: (Cont.) (V.O.) but he looks really cool when he's playing. (Back to Mark's face in the interview) Which is something that really, you know, can't hurt.

Cut to

(Petro pulls off his sweaty T shirt and sits back down at his drum kit bare-chested. Mark is impressed.)

PETRO: What's next?

MARK: Uh...what's that?

NICK: (cover song)? Or you want to try (cover song)?

MARK: Doesn't matter. Whatever. All.

NICK: Do you know (cover song)?

(Petro plays a drum beat.)

NICK: Yeah. Yeah. There you go.

(They begin playing another cover song. The song plays in the background as we Cut to: Mark and Nick being interviewed, seated next to each other.)

MARK: I think that everything we've been doing up until this point has been kind of pointing towards something, and what that something was we really didn't know. But now—

NICK: Yeah, yeah.

MARK: Right?

NICK: I know where you're going.

MARK: It just seems it's all kind of coming together in a way we've been envisioning for years.

NICK: Yeah.

MARK: It's exciting.

NICK: Yeah, we needed a drummer.

MARK: Yeah we did.

NICK: Yeah, totally.

MARK: That was the missing link.

NICK: Yeah, now we're complete.

MARK: A trinity.

NICK: A triumvirate.

MARK: A trifecta.

NICK: A brotherhood. Le pact de—

MARK: All for one—

NICK: And one for all.

MARK: Yeah...

Cut to

(Back in the rehearsal space. They have finished another cover song.)

NICK: Cool.

PETRO: Yeah.

MARK: Feels good?

PETRO: Yeah, feels great.

MARK: Cool, cool. Should we try a, uh, original?

PETRO: Sure.

MARK: Yeah?

PETRO: Yeah.

NICK: (original song)?

MARK: What about—I was thinking (a different original song)?

NICK: Yeah. Let's do that.

MARK: Cool.

(Mark walks over to his backpack and pulls out some sheets of paper. He walks over and hands some to Petro.)

MARK: Here you go.

PETRO: What's this?

MARK: The music.

PETRO: Sheet music?

MARK: Yeah. It's easier.

NICK: Maybe he doesn't need—

PETRO: Yeah. Why don't we just, you guys play and I'll jump in.

MARK: (a little peeved) Okay—Well...Sure. Fine.

NICK: Ready? (original song).

MARK: Yeah. One second. Okay.

NICK: A one, a two, one, two, three, four...

(Mark and Nick start playing, a really long intro that false starts three times, confusing Petro because the intro repeats itself over and over. Finally, the fourth time Mark and Nick meet eyes and start the song. Petro slowly joins in drumming. As Mark and Nick approach the microphones to start singing the song's first words, the second they take their final breaths of air before they begin singing, we:)

Cut to

(Either a park bench or the rehearsal space. Mark and Nick, tired and sweaty, sit on chairs and drink from water bottles with all the gear (including Petro's drum kit) around them.)

MARK: It felt really good to play with a drummer.

NICK: Yeah it did.

MARK: It was long overdue and felt like this is the new, right direction that we're heading.

NICK: Stay the course.

MARK: Yeah, yeah, right. It was—

NICK: And it felt good that he felt good about it.

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: That he thinks we've got something.

MARK: Talent.

NICK: Yeah, well, and he wants to be a part of it, and that's cool.

MARK: Yeah. And we're actually, if you can believe it, the plan is to rehearse all this week and then play a gig on Saturday night—

NICK: That's right, Saturday night.

MARK: At the Squealing Pig, which is kind of a, uh...

NICK: Lower middle class—

MARK: Kind of lower lower middle class—

NICK: Kind of joint—

MARK: Bar, with a, should have a good crowd.

NICK: 'Cause it's a Saturday night.

MARK: Right. And they charge a cover, which is ten dollars—

NICK: Five dollars.

MARK: I thought it was ten.

NICK: No, it's five.

MARK: A cover of five dollars, that will be split three ways 'cause there's three bands playing.

NICK: We're the third.

MARK: Right.

NICK: We've got to do something about that snare.

MARK: Yeah we do. But five bucks split three ways, that's like a dollar sixty-six apiece.

NICK: Per customer.

MARK: Right. Or sixty-seven depending on how you round.

NICK: Sure.

MARK: And we decided amongst ourselves, as a group, that we'd split that fifty fifty. Down the middle. Because Petro plays the drums, which is basically half our band.

NICK: True.

MARK: 'Cause bass and guitar are pretty much the same thing.

NICK: Yeah.

MARK: Drums are an entirely different beast.

NICK: Plus he found the place.

MARK: Right, he found the place so it's only fair. And regardless, the money doesn't matter, we're still making...(thinks) Eighty-three, say eighty-four cents collectively.

NICK: Between the two of us.

MARK: Right.

NICK: Which is basically forty-two cents apiece per customer, for each person that comes in, to hear us play.

MARK: Right. So—

NICK: It was either that or he wasn't going to play with us.

MARK: True.

NICK: We need a drummer.

(Beat: they think.)

NICK: You figure, what, maybe two hundred people, three hundred people in there?

MARK: Oh, sure; easy, I'm sure.

NICK: That's...(thinks)

MARK: Uh...(thinks) You doing two hundred or three hundred?

NICK: I was going to do three.

MARK: Okay. I'll do two...(thinks) Two hundred would be like, eighty-four dollars.

NICK: Apiece.

MARK: Right.

NICK: Three hundred would be...

MARK: One twenty-six.

NICK: Apiece.

MARK: Right.

NICK: That's not bad.

MARK: No...How much did the Beatles used to make back at the Cavern?

NICK: I don't know.

MARK: Not a hundred twenty-six dollars.

NICK: No. They probably did.

MARK: Apiece?

NICK: No. Not apiece.

(They smile contentedly.)

Cut to

(Ext. Establishing shot: The Squealing Pig.)

Cut to

(Int. Stranger Than Fiction plays a song on a small stage in the corner of the room. The Camera pans across the room: empty dance area, maybe fifteen people at the bar, twenty or more seated at tables. It is a decidedly small crowd by any standard.)

Cut to

(Stranger Than Fiction finishes up their last song. They say "thank you very much" and quickly exit the stage to a small chorus of applause, most of it pretty girls aimed at Petro.)

Cut to

(Ext. In front of the Squealing Pig. Mark and Nick load all their gear into the Jeep. Petro glides up with a girl wrapped under each arm, a blond and a brunette. He is happy, a little tipsy.)

PETRO: Hey, man. That wasn't bad.

MARK: Yeah, it went okay for a first gig.

NICK: Small crowd.

PETRO: Yeah. Speaking of which. Here you go. Your end.

(Petro hands Mark a small wad of bills, lots of singles.)

MARK: (after quickly counting it) Nineteen dollars?

NICK: That's it?

PETRO: Yeah. Sorry.

MARK: There were like two hundred people in there.

PETRO: Yeah. But they all left before we went on.

NICK: I thought it was a three way split.

PETRO: Yeah...Uh, no. I got to go. I'll talk to you guys tomorrow. Call me. Late morning. (Girl kisses his neck) Early afternoon.

(Petro turns and walks away with the two girls giggling. Mark and Nick look weary, sweaty, and discouraged with the entire world as they watch Petro walk away.)

Cut to

(McDonald's wrappers, cups, and empty french fry sleds spread out on a coffee table. Camera pulls up to reveal Mark and Nick on the couch, half-awake, watching a video tape from the Beatles Anthology in the dimly lit late night room.)

Fade out.

Fade in.

(A tea kettle whistles. Outside is a perfect blue sky. Sunlight floods the apartment.)
(Mark, in pink kimono and glasses, reads the newspaper at the kitchen table as he drinks his tea and eats a bagel. Nick stumbles into the kitchen, pours himself a mug of tea, then pours himself a bowl of Cocoa Puffs.)

MARK: (V.O.) Some bands might have gotten discouraged after a night like last night. Thought about packing it in. What we realize is that this is a long process. It takes time. And hard work.

(Wide shot of the kitchen table with both of them; Then quick cut to a medium shot of Mark continuing the morning interview. No longer a voice over.)

MARK: You think Bon Jovi became the biggest band in the world overnight? You think Metallica—they toiled for years. The Stones, Zeppelin, U2, Pink Floyd, The Beatles...took years of hard work to get to where they are. It's not easy. If it was, everybody'd do it.

NICK: (through mouthful) True.

(Camera pulls out to a wider shot so both Mark and Nick are in it. Mark talks passionately; Nick slurps his cereal.)

MARK: Last night was just the beginning. The starter's pistol fired and hey, you know, so maybe we were a little slow getting out of the blocks, this isn't a hundred meter dash. No. It's a marathon. A triathlon. A decathlon.

NICK: The Ironman.

MARK: Yeah. It takes time to become the best band in the world. It's not for the feint of heart.

(Mark looks at Nick slurping down his cereal.)

Cut to

(Mark walking fast along an early morning sidewalk. The Camera follows alongside him, trying to keep up with his brisk pace.)

MARK: (hurried, flustered) Trevor St. Clair? How'd you hear about that? Nick, right? Yeah. That was a long time ago. It's no big deal. It's just...You know...That was my stage name. (He disappears down the subway stairs; the Camera stays above ground.) (O.C.) There's nothing more to tell.

Cut to

(Mark in a cubicle typing away on a computer keyboard doing data entry work. He wears a shirt and tie. A coffee mug rests on the desktop. The sound of fast typing: click click click click, clicking away.)

NICK: (V.O.) Yeah, Mark works down in the financial district. Doing data entry.

(Mark stretches out his fingers. Cut to: Nick in the apartment. Medium shot. The sound of click click clicking away continues underneath Nick's interview.)

NICK: (Cont.) It's tough. I couldn't do it. You sit in that little cubicle, staring at that little computer screen, eight hours a day typing away.

(Camera pulls out from the medium shot to a wider shot revealing Nick standing over an ironing board ironing one of Mark's white dress shirts.)

NICK: (Cont.) I worry about him sometimes. That if the band, if for some inexplicable—unseen reason, and I can't think of one, we don't become the biggest band in the world,

(Shot of Mark typing away straight at the camera with a dazed, weary, sad look on his face.)

NICK: (Cont.) (V.O.) he could really lose it. (back to Nick ironing) The band's his whole life. I'm okay, but I worry about him.

(During his soliloquy Nick has forgotten about the iron, leaving it on a shirt for far too long.)

NICK: Shit.

(He pulls the iron off the shirt and holds up Mark's dress shirt with a burnt brown iron imprint across the front. Sheepishly, he looks around the apartment to no one in particular.)

Cut to

(A vacuum cleaner going over carpet. Pan up to Mark vacuuming. He turns the vacuum off, changes the bag as he talks.)

MARK: Yeah. I worry about Nick.

Cut to

(Nick in a white outfit standing over a hot grill at a Fire & Ice type restaurant where they cook in front of you. Steam blasts him in the face as he chops up some greens and chicken.)

MARK: (Cont.) (V.O.) He spends ten hours a day standing over a hot grill cooking up shrimps and chicken for ungrateful businessfolk. It's brutal. I couldn't do it. (back to Mark changing the bag as he speaks) The band is all he's got. It's his whole reason for getting up in the morning. And if for some reason, I have no idea why (he knocks on wood) we were not to become the biggest band in the world,

(Shot of Nick looking tired over the hot grill, he wipes sweat from his discouraged brow.)

MARK: (Cont.) (V.O.) I worry what that might do to his fragile psyche. (back to Mark, having replaced the vacuum bag) The band's his whole life. I'm okay, but I worry about him sometimes.

(Mark kicks the vacuum back on and returns to vacuuming the apartment.)

Cut to

(Montage: a Stranger Than Fiction original song plays under all of this Montage that shows the passage of Time:

Real time and Slow motion shots of Mark, Nick, and Petro rehearsing diligently.

Shots of them gigging.

At Jiffy Lube: a woman drops off her car, talks to Petro.

More rehearsal shots.

Railroad Tracks interview: show silent clip of them talking with train going by behind.

Money passes hands from Petro to Mark (all singles counted out).

Mark and Nick move heavy gear; Petro flirts with a girl.

More exhausting rehearsal; more gigging.

Mark and Nick on the couch watching Beatles Anthology.

At Jiffy Lube: same woman making out with Petro in a back room.

Mark typing away in his cubicle.

Nick cooking over a hot grill.

Petro opening a car door for a girl to get inside.

More rehearsing; more gigging.

The Montage ends with Mark and Nick seated at a table at a bar half-drunk, exhausted, sitting quietly as Petro, seated between them, makes out with a girl sitting on his lap.)

Cut to

(Ext. A beautiful sunny day in the park. Mark and Nick, in sunglasses and smoking, sit on a park bench feeding the ducks.)

MARK: We've been doing a lot of gigging and really haven't had time to really focus on the next proper album. We actually did a, just filmed a piece for television.

NICK: The telly.

MARK: Yeah. It was the local PBS station, WBZN.

NICK: Yeah.

MARK: We tried to mix it up. Keep things fresh.

Cut to

(Footage from the PBS gig: it is low quality, boring footage of Mark, Nick, and Petro playing in a stale room and to spice it up all three wear bright orange prison jumpsuits. It looks strange and makes no sense.)

NICK: (V.O.) Totally. It's important to keep people guessing about what you might do next.

MARK: (V.O.) It'll be on Saturday night, I guess actually Sunday morning—

NICK: (V.O.) Yeah.

MARK: (V.O.) All month long at four AM. So, if you're up, check it out.

NICK: (V.O.) Or tape it.

MARK: (V.O.) Right. Or tape it and then—

NICK: (V.O.) Watch it later.

MARK: (V.O.) Sure.

NICK: (V.O.) Or anytime you want.

MARK: (V.O.) Exactly. (Back to seeing Mark and Nick) So we've been busy and I'm excited to get back in the studio and lay down some of the new songs we've been working on.

NICK: Yeah. I'd really like to bring in some strings on this album and maybe a clarinet or a bassoon, for (original song).

MARK: Yeah, that'd be good.

NICK: Yeah... We don't really know any classical musicians, though.

Cut to

(The Apartment. The Living Room. The sound of Mark singing in the distance. The Camera tracks through the apartment. We see Nick seated at the computer, huge headphones on, his eyes closed, nodding along passionately. We follow a cable along the floor and track to the Bathroom where we see Mark, huge headphones on, seated on the toilet singing into a mic set up in front of him. He sounds ridiculous because we don't hear the music, only his voice.

Cut to

Petro playing the drums in the Living Room. Nick, in huge headphones, at the computer, nods up and down.

Cut to

Nick and Mark playing bizarre "found" instruments in the kitchen (pots, pans, cheese grater, etc.)

Cut to

(Mark and Nick seated at the computer. Interview. Nick types; Mark fiddles with an acoustic guitar.)

MARK: We started out wanting to make this album centered around a man, a common man, who dies, is cryogenically frozen, and he's frozen for years and years, until one day, years later, he's thawed out and comes back to life, good as new. Or is he? Because I'm sure in some government lab somewhere there's a man who's been cryogenically frozen, rejuvenated, and he is now out there walking the streets with you and me. Right now. No joke. Quite a mind fuck, eh?

NICK: This is our web site.

(Close-up: www.strangerthanfiction2.com)

NICK: There's a two tagged on at the end because some band in Canada has our same name and instead of getting our lawyers involved, we thought—

MARK: Just give it a two.

NICK: Yeah. Why not. Live and let live.

MARK: Right.

NICK: Let's see here. Eleven hits. So far.

MARK: What time is it?

NICK: It's only nine o' clock. Early yet.

MARK: Six AM on the West Coast.

NICK: That's true.

MARK: And we've only had the site up and running now for what...fifteen...sixteen...

NICK: Eighteen months, yeah.

MARK: Right. Plus we don't really have any music up on it yet.

NICK: Yeah, that should kick start it.

Cut to

(Shot of Nick's face: his eyes are closed, he wears huge headphones. Suddenly classical music erupts (maybe Stravinsky) and the Camera pulls out revealing Nick conducting to the music. His hands move faster and faster as the music picks up, like a pair of spastic birds gone wild. The music builds and builds. Then there is a more relaxed, light bit and, finally, the music crescendos and then the piece ends. Nick, breathing heavily and sweating, sits down in a chair, pulls off the headphones, and lights a smoke. The Camera pans across the room to Nick's audience which is a bunch of stuffed animals set up on the couches and chairs in the living room. Nick thinks and smokes.)

Cut to

(Scene: Mark and Nick seated at the computer. We pick them up mid-conversation.)

NICK: The name?

MARK: Yeah, well—

NICK: Our name?

MARK: Really, uh, we chose Stranger Than Fiction—

NICK: Or it chose us.

MARK: Right. Basically because fiction is not real. It's made up. Oftentimes, you know, our music is really beyond anything that anyone could make up.

NICK: True.

MARK: It's true to life. Honest.

NICK: But we still make it up.

MARK: At the end of the day we do "make it up". I like to think we dream it up.

NICK: Sure.

MARK: But do we really make it up? Or is it just the truth within us that comes out as fiction but is really truth?

(Beat: they both sit and ponder this mystery. Nick snaps out of it first.)

NICK: It's noise really.

MARK: Yeah, at the end of the day it's all noise.

NICK: That's all it is, noise.

MARK: Noise.

Cut to

(The middle of the Living Room. A sunny afternoon. Medium shot of Mark and Nick with acoustic guitars.)

MARK: This is the acoustic version of a song we're in the process of putting together for the album.

NICK: We'd give you the electric version but our landlady told us if one more light fixture falls—

MARK: 'Cause we're on the fifth floor.

NICK: —Right. She'll prosecute. So. This is the acoustic version of a song we call—

MARK: Tentatively titled.

NICK: Yeah, tentatively: (original song). Ready?

MARK: Yeah. (original song). Acoustic version.

(They start to play this ridiculously overblown acoustic song. As they begin, after the acoustic intro, once they start singing the Camera pulls out revealing the two of them seated high up on wooden stools in the middle of their living room. The song is a ridiculous rip off of a Bon Jovi-type song, and they play it dead straight. Passionately. The whole scene is stolen shot for shot from the Bon Jovi acoustic performance at the 1989 MTV music awards show.)

After the song, Cut to

(Three more strange recording methods: maybe Petro on bongos; Mark playing empty beer bottles with his mouth; Nick running his guitar through a blender while playing on his back in the bathtub.

Then nighttime: a shot of Nick standing in the center of the living room with his electric guitar on. There are cables and pedals and microphones running all around him all over the room to other rooms. It is a total mess. Nick wears headphones. He plugs in his guitar and turns all dials all the way up. Shots of different power outlets around the apartment, each one over-filled with plugs. Nick looks determined and a little bit frightened. Mark sits across the room wearing huge headphones and in front of a computer. He looks all business, ready to do this.)

NICK: This is it, right?

MARK: Last guitar solo. That's all we need.

NICK: Okay.

(Nick breathes in and out a few times, preparing himself to play a guitar solo. He looks at Mark; Mark looks back at him. Nick nods; Mark nods. Nick wipes sweat from his brow, places his left hand over the frets, raises the guitar pick high up in the air, and lets fly with the first chord—the lights flicker briefly and then the whole room goes dark. From high above their apartment building we see the lights to their fifth floor apartment go out. Then the rest of their building blacks out. Then one by one, like a domino effect, each building around them blacks out. Then finally, their entire grid is out: completely dark. Back in the dark apartment, moonlight streams in through the living room windows. We see Nick's silhouette and hear him whisper to himself:)

NICK: Shit.

Cut to

(Ext. Establishing shot: Denny's.)

(Int. A booth at Denny's. Mark and Nick sit on the same side of a booth.)

MARK: Well, the album's almost done.

NICK: Yeah.

MARK: It's coming along well.

NICK: Just a few more overdubs and I think one vocal.

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: And then a name.

MARK: True...We've been considering a few. There's (possible album title).

NICK: (another possible album title).

MARK: Yeah. That's a good one.

NICK: (another possible album title).

MARK: (another possible album title).

NICK: Maybe (another possible album title)?

MARK: Rascist maybe. Could be construed.

NICK: True.

MARK: (yet another possible album title).

NICK: That's not bad.

(The Waitress walks over and gives them their check.)

MARK: Thank you.

NICK: Thanks a lot.

MARK: What is it?

NICK: Twenty-two fifty.

MARK: Okay...(pulls out his wallet)

NICK: (pulls out his wallet)

MARK: Here's a ten.

NICK: Okay. Uh, Mike, do you have a few bucks?

(Camera pans to the other side of the booth revealing Petro and a Girl making out.)

Cut to

(An alarm clock beeps. The digital clock reads, 8:52. Nick's hand smacks the snooze button. He falls back in bed then suddenly realizes he has to get up and jumps out of bed really fast, stands next to the bed a moment, then walks out of the room. He stumbles past Mark's room. The Camera sees Nick groggily look in on Mark's room as he walks past. Then we see Nick's P.O.V. as he passes: Mark sits up in bed, with a peaceful look on his face. All around him are posters: Make Love, Not War. Bed In for Peace, etc (they should support whatever Mark's cause is) Seated next to him in bed is a small, dazed Japanese

Woman. The Camera passes the doorway and follows the wall. Shot of Nick's socks stopping in the hall. Shot of Nick's confused face, trying to figure out if he's dreaming. Nick leans back and looks in Mark's room again. He sees the same scene.)

MARK: Hey, man, good morning.

NICK: Good morning.

(A beat of silence: Mark appears peaceful, the Japanese Girl remains dazed, Nick nods his head and thinks.)

NICK: Uh...Don't you have work today?

MARK: How can I be expected to worry about something as trivial as "work" when there's children out there who don't have a proper lunch to eat at their very own school.

NICK: Uh hun...The lunch thing...Right...

MARK: Yindy and I will stay in this bed as long as it takes until the fat cats in our government wake up and realize that this decimation and desecration of a child's right to eat a good, healthy lunch must not go by, will not go by, without someone taking a stand.

NICK: Uh hun. Right. Just make sure you call in.

(Nick exits down the hallway. Mark sits up full of energy and anger but with no one to speak to. He turns left and looks at the catatonic Yindy. We hear Nick turn on the shower and step inside: he lets out a huge yawn. We see on Mark's face that his cause is slowly seeping away from him. He looks to his nightstand. The clock reads: 8:58. He picks up the phone and dials. He looks at Yindy.)

MARK: Yeah. Missy. It's Mark. You're probably just getting in. I'm going to be a little late today, missed my alarm. So...just wanted to let you know. See you soon.

(Dejected, Mark looks at Yindy who stares off at nothing in particular.)

Cut to

(A windy, cold autumn morning. Blue sky; big cumulus clouds lumber by. Mark and Nick, in jackets, but no hat, gloves, or scarves walk up a sidewalk.)

MARK: Man, it's freezing up here.

NICK: No shit. Hey, Nando, what is this?

(A Young Man, bundled in a down jacket, scarf, winter hat, thick corduroys, boots, with gloves that have the fingers cut out, follows behind them. Two 35mm cameras slung over each shoulder, along with a camera bag. He appears ready to cover a war in Bosnia. He takes a shot of Mark and Nick.)

NANDO: Don't worry. It'll be great. Trust me, baby.

(Petro's car pulls up to the curb. He jumps out in jeans and a T shirt, oblivious to the cold. Mark and Nick, walking up a set of stone stairs to what appears the top of a turret or castle, stop and look down dumbfounded.)

PETRO: Hey, guys.

(Petro lights a smoke fast, the wind not bothering him at all.)

NANDO: Good. Everybody's here.

Cut to

(Turning the corner of the top of the stone fortress. Mark and Nick are blown around. The entire city appears before them: it is a breathtaking view.)

PETRO: Nice view.

NANDO: Yeah, it's not bad, eh?

(Mark and Nick huddle together shivering.)

NICK: Can we do this?

NANDO: Right. Why don't you three just get together.

(Mark stands center; Nick left; Petro right. Through the camera's lens the city skyline is barely visible behind them. Nando takes a few shots: snap, snap.)

NANDO: Let's move you guys around. Mark, over there. Nick, you stand there. Petro, yeah, sit center.

(Mark stands shivering facing out of frame right. Nick stands looking straight ahead. And Petro sits on the ledge and looks at Nick. Nando takes more shots: snap, snap, snap.)

NANDO: Good. Now. Let's put Mark, sit up there. Yeah, and Nick you too. Good. Now Mike you stand in the center. Good. Take a step downstage. Nice.

(Mark and Nick sit up on the ledge shivering, on each side of Petro who stands center looking straight at the camera. Nando takes more shots: snap, snap, snap, snap.)

NANDO: Now Nick, you turn around. Stay seated. Yeah. Face the city. Good. Mark, you too. And Mike, big smile.

(Mark and Nick remain seated on the ledge shivering on opposite sides of Petro. But now they face the city so we see only their backs. Petro stands center, hands in his jean pockets, smiling. Nando snaps away: snap, snap, snap, snap, snap. Snap! We hold on this shot.)

Fade out to white.

Fade in to white.

(The Camera starts out on the bottom of a white bathtub and pulls up to reveal Mark seated in the tub taking a hot bubble bath, relaxing.)

MARK: Nando's a great photographer. He's very...imaginative. He showed us some shots he did of a wedding in infrared, which made everyone look pretty cool and red. Well, really red. Actually it made it look like a Satanic wedding, but it looked really cool. He probably should have told the bride and groom he was going to do it beforehand, though...But I'm happy. I think we got some good shots. Don't you, Nick?

(Camera pans right revealing Nick seated in the tub at the other end. He plays with a rubber ducky or something.)

NICK: Yeah.

Cut to

(Mark and Nick seated on the couch at night, half-awake, watching a video tape from the Beatles Anthology.)

Cut to

(Mark typing away at work. He sighs deeply and then returns to typing.)

Cut to

(Nick chopping up shrimp and shallots on a grill. He sighs deeply and then returns to chopping.)

Cut to

(Empty Sunday afternoon Living Room. The Doorbell rings.)

MARK: (off camera) Nick!

NICK: (off camera) Yeah! I got it.

(Nick runs out of the apartment and runs down the stairs. Mark walks into the living room in a robe with an acoustic guitar slung over his shoulder. He sits on the arm of the couch, strums a few chords, sings lines from a new song he's working on. Nick enters carrying a cardboard box.)

MARK: That it?

NICK: Yeah. I think so.

(They clear the coffee table and put the box down. They attempt to rip open the box but it is too well taped. Frantic, Nick picks up a lighter and, not thinking, moves the flame to the box.)

MARK: Whoah. Hold on.

(Mark has picked up a Swiss Army knife, opened a blade, and cuts the tape around the top of the box. They quickly open the box, pull out the bubble wrap, an invoice, and remove a new copy of their first LP:

(The Cover shows: (figure out later, but something bizarre.)

Name: Stranger Than Fiction across the front

MARK: Looks good.

NICK: Yeah.

(Mark flips the CD over and there is the shot of Petro smiling while Mark and Nick sit, their backs to the camera.)

NICK: That's a good shot.

MARK: Oh, yeah. He's an artist.

NICK: They spell the names right?

MARK: Let's see...

(Camera pans down the ten song titles:

1. (figure out later)
2. (etc.)
3. (etc.) to 10.

NICK: (song title) has an E.

MARK: Yeah it does. Well...

NICK: It changes the meaning.

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: It's not a big deal, I guess.

MARK: No. It's the music.

NICK: Totally. The music is what matters most—

MARK: Yeah. As long as our music is correctly recorded, for the aural listening—

NICK: They spelled your name wrong.

MARK: What?

Cut to

(A Huge stack of small padded yellow envelopes. Camera pulls out revealing Mark and Nick seated at the kitchen table stuffing their CD's and press kits into the envelopes. Nick does most of the manual work: Mark addresses them. We pick them up mid-conversation:)

MARK: I'm not saying that you're McCartney—

NICK: How could I be McCartney?

MARK: That's what I'm saying.

NICK: I don't play the bass, I don't sing high tenor, I'm not a vegan.

MARK: No, but being socially conscious—

NICK: So you think you're Lennon?

MARK: It stands to reason, logically—

NICK: Bullshit! That's total bullshit—

MARK: Well, hold on a second, no, no—

NICK: I'm not going to be McCartney—I'm sure as hell not going to be McCartney—
There's no fucking way I'm going to be McCartney. No. No way. There's no way.

MARK: You don't have to be McCartney.

NICK: No, then what? George?

MARK: Exactly.

NICK: I'm not going to be George. He's great and all, God rest his soul—

(They both make the sign of the cross at the same time.)

NICK: The man gave us Something and Tax Man—but no, if we're talking about The Beatles, and at that time, there was Lennon and there was McCartney, and there's two of us, so stands to reason. Log-ic-a-lly! That one of us is Lennon and the other McCartney.

MARK: Well, yeah. Totally.

NICK: I'm not going to be McCartney.

MARK: Well, I'm not going to be McCartney.

NICK: That's fine, but just so you know, there's not way in hell I'm being McCartney.

MARK: Well me neither.

NICK: I refuse. That's it. If I'm McCartney, count me out, I'm done. No way, no how.

(Small silent beat between them.)

MARK: What if you were Keith?

NICK: And you're Mick?

MARK: Yeah.

NICK: That's fine.

Cut to

(Inside the Rehearsal space: Mark, Nick, and Petro rehearsing a new song. The song goes well but it is obvious rather quickly that Nick is unhappy with what Petro is doing.)

NICK: Whoah, whoah, whoah! Hold on.

(They all stop playing.)

MARK: What's up?

NICK: What was that?

PETRO: What?

MARK: What?

NICK: Just play a fucking strong downbeat, okay? We don't need all that little fill flourish crap.

PETRO: What are you talking about?

NICK: You know what I'm talking about. All those little showy additions you keep adding. Just play a strong backbeat, that keeps time. Properly.

MARK: Nick—

NICK: And fuck all that masturbation shit you were doing. That's not what the song needs.

PETRO: I think it's exactly what the song needs.

NICK: Well what do you know. Just sit back down, play the fucking drums, and shut up. And my personal advice is: shut the fuck up.

PETRO: Hey, man. Fuck you! Go fuck yourself.

MARK: Guys, let's take it easy—

NICK: Fuck me? Fuck me?

PETRO: You don't like how I play, play the fucking song yourself. (Petro stands)

NICK: Maybe I will.

MARK: Let's just cool out, babies. Everyone be cool.

PETRO: (walking to the door) I don't need this fucking bullshit. I know how to play the fucking drums—I don't need you—Fuck you! telling me how to play the drums. I play the drums, asshole!

MARK: Everybody just cool out. Babies, be cool. Just be cool.

NICK: Apparently not, or you wouldn't have such trouble with such a simple thing as keeping time!

(Petro slams the door after himself.)

NICK: FUCK!!

MARK: Everybody just cool out. Be cool.

(Nick storms out and slams the door, leaving Mark alone in the room.)

MARK: Just cool out...Babies?...

Cut to

(Mark and Nick seated in chairs in front of a table. Flashes go off all around them as if four dozen paparazzi fight for their photograph. They squint as the flashes keep popping for a long while. Their voices speak over this scene.)

MARK: (V.O.) We sent them all out, yeah. And now it's just a waiting game. Waiting for the record company to call us.

NICK: (V.O.) Tense.

MARK: (V.O.) Yeah, it is tense.

NICK: (V.O.) Very tense.

MARK: (V.O.) Well, it's out of our hands.

NICK: (V.O.) That's true.

MARK: (V.O.) Plus, it's kind of unfair because we know somebody in the industry.

NICK: (V.O.) Yeah we do.

MARK: (V.O.) My Mom's cousin's stepsister's daughter works in R and D at Columbia.

NICK: (V.O.) That's research and development.

MARK: (V.O.) Right. New bands.

NICK: (V.O.) Scouting.

(The flashes stop. Mark and Nick wipe and open and close their eyes a few times to regain the ability to see.)

MARK: (V.O.) Right. So we sent her a copy with a little note saying, you know, finally here is a proper album that shows what we can do.

NICK: (V.O.) Right.

(Mark and Nick stand, walk around the table, and we see that they have set up rows of lights, flashes, and strobes on stands to recreate a photo shoot. There are no actual photographers.)

MARK: (V.O.) Yeah, totally. Any new hits?

NICK: (V.O.) Uh, no, but it's still early on the West Coast.

(Mark and Nick seated at the computer. Interview continues, now in the present.)

MARK: True. My only wish, and I know, we've been blessed so far so I shouldn't complain, is that uh—and the whole album sounds good and that's what matters—

NICK: The Mork thing.

MARK: Yeah. It's no big deal but on the album notes where it says Stranger Than Fiction are Nick Oddy—should it be Is?

NICK: No, I don't think so.

MARK: Okay. It says Stranger Than Fiction are Nick Oddy, Mike Petrocelli, and Mork Reilly.

NICK: That wasn't a bad show.

MARK: No. Of course not. Robin Williams.

NICK: Very funny.

MARK: Oh, yeah. No question, he's funny. It's just the—my name—the principle of the thing—

NICK: Nanoo Nanoo

MARK: Yeah, funny. I'm just saying, the respect...

Cut to

(Stranger Than Fiction on a small stage playing a gig for a small audience. They are really into it; the audience is not. We pick them up midway through a song. During the bridge Mark and Nick back off and let Petro play a big drum solo. Nick lackadaisically plays, not masking his displeasure well, but Petro doesn't notice because his eyes are closed as he bangs on the drums. Mark tries to be the peacekeeper by acting like everything's fine. This scene is intercut with an interview of them eating at a McDonald's.)

MARK: (V.O.) Most succumb to groupies, drugs, and squabbling over money. We're not like that.

NICK: (V.O.) Sure, we'll need a tour bus at some point.

MARK: (V.O.) With a jacuzzi.

NICK: (V.O.) For your back.

MARK: (V.O.) Right.

(The drum solo ends, Petro opens his eyes. Nick gives him a look that says, "hey, good job," and Nick lets all his anger seep away, happy to be playing up onstage as he takes over the song with his guitar playing. Mark looks at Nick, they approach the mics and start singing again. Their song keeps playing as we cut back to the interview:)

NICK: Yeah. But these are things that are part of the grind. A part of the business. We're not going to go out and start buying, you know, fleets of Bentleys and diamond encrusted swimming pools.

MARK: No.

NICK: That said. We'll definitely need our own studio.

MARK: It goes without saying.

NICK: Totally soundproof.

MARK: Yeah, absolutely.

NICK: 'Cause our bathroom really isn't cutting it anymore.

(Stranger Than Fiction walks offstage to a spattering of applause at yet another gig. The boys are sweaty, tired, and in need of getting laid (except Petro).)

Cut to

(Mark and Nick seated on the couch late at night watching a video tape from the Beatles Anthology.)

Fade Out.

Fade In.

(Mark and Nick seated in their rehearsal space. It is totally empty of all gear except for them seated on chairs, and their acoustic guitars balanced on their knees. They look different from all earlier scenes: maybe longer hair, or beards or mustaches.)

MARK: So it's been uh, six months. But...these things take time.

NICK: Yeah, they do.

MARK: We only sent out four hundred seventy-eight packets and you got to figure, this was standard mail, which is slow.

NICK: Takes time.

MARK: No Fed Ex. Not yet, at least. Which is fine.

NICK: Yeah, it's fine.

MARK: But we've just been gigging, building up a following.

NICK: An audience.

MARK: Right...But we've kind of had a shake up in the band.

NICK: Petro's left.

MARK: Yeah. Petro has decided to move on. Nothing hostile. No big fallout or big fight.

NICK: No.

MARK: He's actually, he signed a modeling contract. Apparently an agency saw the back of our CD, called him up,

NICK: And the rest is history.

MARK: Yeah. As they say. So, good for him.

NICK: Yeah, definitely.

MARK: But it's good to have a shake up every once in a while. And anyway he was only the drummer.

NICK: True.

MARK: Not really the, uh, brains behind the operation.

NICK: Not the talent.

MARK: No, no. And that's fine for him. Of course not. I mean the Beatles, look at them. They lost Pete Best and look at what happened to them.

NICK: They got Ringo.

MARK: That's right. They got Ringo.

NICK: And that was the beginning of everything.

MARK: It sure was. It sure was...So, this is actually a good thing. We'll get somebody new.

NICK: Less attractive.

MARK: Yeah, that would help. With the ladies.

NICK: Yeah.

MARK: Yeah...And we'll keep gigging. Keep getting out there.

NICK: Keep on keeping on.

MARK: Right. Like a bird that flew.

NICK: Right.

Cut to

(Mark and Nick seated on stools up onstage at an Open Mic playing an original song on their acoustic guitars. The crowd reacts the same way they did at the beginning of the film: indifference, anger, disbelief.) (Music (their music) underscores all of this.)

Cut to

(Nick out on the sidewalk at the same pole from the beginning of the film taping up Drummer Wanted signs.)

Cut to

(Mark typing away at work with the same sad look on his face. He sighs.)

Cut to

(Nick chopping away under a steaming grill with a sad look on his face. He sighs.)

Cut to

(Mark and Nick, one final time, seated on the couch half-awake late at night watching a video tape from the Beatles Anthology. Music cuts out abruptly. Drowsy, Nick turns to Mark:)

NICK: We should make a video.

MARK: That's true.

(Blackout. We hear Petro count off: two, three, four: Music kicks back in abruptly as we hear original songs from their album while we watch shots of Mark and Nick jamming on acoustic guitars at a Subway station while the Credits Role.)

THE END