

MEMORANDUM

DATE	
TO	WRITER
FROM	STUDIO
SUBJECT	UNTITLED PROJECT

This is a wonderfully crafted modern-day musical/love-story of Anji, an Indian high school girl, and Jose, a Latino high school boy, set in the dance-club scene of Queens, New York. It draws from films like 8 MILE, WEST SIDE STORY, ROMEO & JULIET, SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER, DIRTY DANCING and even a little bit of MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING (as it pokes fun at tradition and ritual in an affable way).

Moving forward, we need to consider the following changes:

- Address the inconsistencies of this “tweener”
- Flesh out the dance-club world competitiveness
- Broaden (or at least explain) the Indian and Latino elements that are too “insider”

ADDRESS THE INCONSISTENCIES OF THIS “TWEENER”

Hollywood vs. Bollywood

Indian music and storytelling is unique enough that it doesn’t generally appeal to US audiences. At the same time, Indian audiences will be skeptic of an American-made Bollywood film. With the other half of the story belonging to the Latino struggle in Queens, there is little for broad American audiences to latch on to.

- *Jose needs to be more American.* Instead of being from Mexico, Jose’s mother should be American so Queens really is the only home he has ever known. His father’s threats of moving back “home to Mexico” really will put Jose’s happiness in jeopardy because he’s never even BEEN to Mexico. Also, this will make casting much easier.

Broad vs. Racy

Furthermore, it’s a musical/love story that would attract younger audiences (and the tone mostly skews younger), but it has racy moments that make it more adult fare. We should broaden the appeal to younger audiences and families.

- *Tone down the raciness.* The sex scene (pages 61-62) should be more implied than overt or interrupted before things go too far. Perhaps Seema calls Anji on her cell phone and demands she come to the club that very moment. We should also ease down the use of racial epithets. It darkens the tone too drastically.

FLESH OUT THE DANCE-CLUB WORLD COMPETIVENESS

Culture War

- *We need a bigger inciting incident to cause these cultures to clash.* In Queens, why and how is the Concorde the only place to go at night? Perhaps the rival club burned down, or perhaps the Man is Latino (not Italian) and considering selling the Concorde to Indian buyers. The Latinos would really have no where else to go so they need to maintain a presence.
- *Where do the other kids club?* On page 3, we establish that Latino club kids are crowded off by “Black, Indian, and Sikh” kids, but what about other races? Let’s make the point that blacks, whites and East Asians are a part of this world but a minority, and they have few options in Queens outside the Latino or Indian circles.

“The Noise” Contest

- *Let’s figure out a more logical judging scenario.* Presently, the winner has nothing to do with talent. It’s whoever has the most people turn out to cheer. It should be evident that this neighborhood is dominated by Latinos and Indians, but we should have a sense that there are also whites, blacks and Asians sprinkled in to vote for the best music. In 8 MILE, the mob is unbiased and decides the winner.
- *Make the spoils more believable.* It’s not realistic – or good business sense – that the Man will play ONLY the winner’s music all week. The point is that these kids don’t have much so they fight for their Saturday nights -- the only night they can really cut loose. Perhaps they should compete Friday nights at midnight to see who controls the Saturday night DJ booth. There should be another “carrot” that the Man can offer the victorious DJ. Perhaps, the Man has connections in the record industry.
- *Let’s explore the talent of mixing.* We should really get inside Raj and Jose’s head to see what it takes to mix tempos, beats and various genres of music. Raj working through “35 records in 60 seconds” (page 4) is an amazing feat that would be very cinematic. Let’s really understand what kind of preparation goes into this and be impressed by how the sound comes together.

BROADEN (AND EXPLAIN) THE INDIAN AND LATINO ELEMENTS

Indian Culture

- *Arranged Marriages.* It’s only presented as an arcane, financially self-serving custom. While not condoning arranged marriages, we should consider adding some heartfelt explanation of its roots or see a positive side to the parents’

involvement in finding a mate for their children. The point is to treat this custom with a respect and in a light that enables it to translate universally to other cultures.

- *Too “Insider.”* We need to eliminate references to things that don’t have broader understanding, such as the Shah Rukh Kahn movie reference and India Abroad comment (pg 28). Furthermore, we need to add more opportunities to explain commonplace Indian customs – like touching of the feet as a sign of respect or the proper usage of “Namaste.” Finally, it might seem odd to an outsider that the wedding is so soon unless there is a better explanation.

Latino Culture

- *Latino Pride.* After Jose “attacked” Nasir at the Concorde (pg 66), it inspires the local community to feel “Latino pride.” Why? What is the correlation? It’s established that there is animosity among the cultures, but it’s unclear why attacking Nasir would instill a sense of Latino pride in the community. Nasir should say or do something derogatory of Latinos, and Jose reacts – or at least it appears that he reacts.

CHARACTER NOTES

JOSE

He’s described as having “soulful eyes and a poet’s heart,” but we never really hear him say anything very moving or revealing. For example, after Anji sings an original song to Jose (page 61), his response is “it’s really good.” We need a poignant moment here that lets us into Jose’s head and heart so that we can see why Anji would fall for him.

JOSE / ANJI

Their first interaction at the club should lay the groundwork and give a reason – other than the physical attraction – for Jose to seek her out at the temple to give her his CD. Perhaps she comments about the music of the club. She expected more “variety.”

Their interaction at the temple should have more impact and a purpose (page 31). Anji should not be flirting at this point. She should be very skeptical that this guy has more to offer than good looks. They should antagonize and test each other playfully. Furthermore, his departure is too abrupt.

GRANDMA GUPTA / ALDO

This forbidden love story between Grandma Gupta and Aldo is a great touch. However, Aldo and Jose make the point that Latinos are so much more welcoming to other cultures so Aldo should wear his affection for Gupta on his sleeve. It isn’t until Gupta sees Anji’s predicament that she caves and accepts Aldo.

RAJ

We need more tension between Jose and Raj. Raj should reach the boiling point when it's clear that he's not "good enough" for Anji, and even worse, she's fallen for the rival DJ who's not even Indian.

PAGE NOTES:

- Page 45 "Many are moved to tears by the sound of her voice." Are the "traditional" gospel songs that she sings going to be in Sikh? As good as Sikh and Indian music can be, it's hard for the sound to crossover to Western tastes. We should consider how to make this music accessible – be it in English or a hybrid sound.
- Page 63 Nasir "finds a flyer" in Anji's bag about Club Concorde, but we never set up how Anji got it. Perhaps Jose wrote her a note when they first met, or it was included with the CD he gave her.
- Page 76 Eva and Jose's scene in the gas station office is awkward and out of place. When did Francisco cheat? Did Eva just find out from Jose? Why would Jose betray his friend like that?