

THIS WILL BE
by Joe Hanrahan

Space has 3 stools. 2 standup mikes.
2 music stands.
Additional mikes for vocals from piano/percussion
Face mikes for 3 performers.

COLIN (BAND enters.
MUSIC Begin light version
of THIS WILL BE. Midway through
the song, KIMMIE enters. Song
winds down as she speaks.)

KIMMIE: When I was growing up, I found myself in a house, with a family, that was surrounded by art and music. And when I was very small, a certain piece of music captivated me. It was the Natalie Cole album, INSEPARABLE. And her big hit song, THIS WILL BE. And to that music, little Kimmie would sing and dance all around the house. And that would be the beginning of a lifelong fascination with a woman, an artist... her tumultuous life and unforgettable music.

MUSIC: Final THIS WILL BE sting
COLIN

(CHRISTINA enters)

KIMMIE: Natalie Cole was born into privilege, into the first African-American family in a very exclusive Los Angeles neighborhood.

CHRISTINA: We were the Black Kennedys.

(DEREIS enters)

KIMMIE: Her mother was a jazz singer, who worked with Count Basie and Duke Ellington. And her father was...

DEREIS: Nat King Cole.

KIMMIE: He was the leader and pianist of the King Cole Trio, the top selling group on Capitol Records in the 40's.

DEREIS: The iconic Capitol Records Tower in Los Angeles was called "The House That Nat Built."

KIMMIE: In a short time, he became better known as a singer. And it was in 1948, that he became a famous singer. Almost as if by magic.

CHRISTINA: The way I heard it, there was this guy...

KIMMIE ...Eden Ahbez. That was his adopted name as a member of this group that called themselves the Nature Boys. They had long hair and beards, ate mostly fruits and vegetables...
CHRISTINA: Early day hippies.

KIMMIE: Ahbez was living in a cave, underneath one of the "L's" of the Hollywood sign. Nat King Cole was appearing at the Lincoln Theatre in Los Angeles. In the cave, Ahbez had written a song, and for some reason, he just had to get it to Cole. He left it with Cole's valet at the stage door.

(MUSIC - underscore intro to NATURE BOY, intermittent phrases)

DEREIS: I took a look at the song. And it killed me. I tried to find this...Eden...Ahbez. But he'd moved to a different cave. I started doing the song in clubs, and people loved it. I finally was able to track down Mr. Eden in New York City. He said he was living in the best hotel in town. Central Park.

KIMMIE: The song was finally recorded. Entitled NATURE BOY, it sold a million copies, introduced Nat King Cole to white audiences, and established the career of this superstar singer.

MUSIC: DEREIS sings cut of NATURE BOY

KIMMIE: Nat King Cole went on to have a spectacular, if too short career. He was the star of the first network tv show hosted by an African-American. The show didn't last long despite extra efforts by friends like Tony Bennett and Peggy Lee. National advertisers would not support a show headed by a black singer, and it was cancelled.

DEREIS: Madison Avenue was afraid of the dark.

KIMMIE: But his records sold millions. He had so many top 40 hits, and he continued his deep love affair with jazz.
He loved and sang all kinds of music, including a Spanish album he recorded in Cuba.

CHRISTINA: But though I loved Elvis Presley and The Beatles, dad always said...

DEREIS: ...Mr. Cole does not rock and roll.

KIMMIE: His Christmas music was among his most popular.

CHRISTINA: Christmas was so important for the family. The first time I ever sang in public, six years old with my Dad by my side, was on a record called I'M GOOD WILL, YOUR HOLIDAY SPIRIT.

KIMMIE: But Nat's big holiday song - of course, it was THE CHRISTMAS SONG

MUSIC: DEREIS, KIMMIE and CHRISTINA sing THE CHRISTMAS SONG

KIMMIE: But then in 1964, Nat King Cole was diagnosed with lung cancer.

CHRISTINA: I was just 14. I didn't even know he was sick.

KIMMIE: He would die just six months later.

CHRISTINA: My mother hid his illness from me.

KIMMIE: Just as the Coles tried to hide it from the world. Nat King Cole worked up to the last possible minute.

CHRISTINA: Some of his last music would be some of my last memories...and some of my favorite songs.

KIMMIE: This...one of his final hits, one of his most beloved songs.

CHRISTINA: This...John F. Kennedy's favorite song.

COLIN

MUSIC: DEREIS sings THAT SUNDAY, THAT SUMMER backed by Kimmie, Christina and Colin.

CHRISTINA: I knew he was sick. But when he died, I was away at school. My mother had hid everything from me.

KIMMIE: Among Nat King Cole's honorary pallbearers were Frank Sinatra, Count Basie, Sammy Davis Jr, Robert F. Kennedy, and Pat Brown, the Governor of California. Her father's death stayed with Natalie for many years, and it hit her hard. During her high school years, she started to rebel, in any way she could.

CHRISTINA: Shoplifting. I discovered marijuana...and sex.

KIMMIE: She attended the University of Massachusetts, and when she went to a black students meeting there, she discovered something else.

CHRISTINA: I was black.

KIMMIE: And there were more discoveries. Natalie was hanging with some friends who were making music. So she started playing around, singing with them. But she didn't have anything to do with her father's music.

CHRISTINA: This Cole...does rock and roll.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE and CHRISTINA sings HONKY TONK WOMEN (with some backup)

KIMMIE: She was just playing with the music. But her friends said...

DEREIS: "Girl, you oughta sing...you really are good."

KIMMIE: Natalie sang at a bunch of clubs, with a group called Black Magic. It got a lot of attention in those days - four white musicians and a black chick singer. Playing nothing but contemporary hits.

CHRISTINA: Hendrix, Joplin, Grace Slick, a little Aretha.

KIMMIE: And she was doing a lot of LSD.

CHRISTINA: The drugs were...they were because of the mess of my life. Still grieving for my father. Living in the shadow of Nat King Cole.

KIMMIE: Natalie...and her family name...attracted the attention of an agent. Who put her in new bands, and she started touring.

CHRISTINA: Wherever I went, they wanted me to sing my father's music. That wasn't me.

DEREIS: That wasn't her.

KIMMIE: She toured the East Coast. Played the Bahamas and other clubs in the Caribbean. And in her travels, met a man who introduced her to heroin.

CHRISTINA: He was cute. But he was a gangster.

KIMMIE: Her heroin addiction led to broken club dates. And eventually a bust - in Canada. As Natalie was working through it all, she got very lucky. First, she got a job singing backup for the great Jerry Butler. Who introduced her to a couple of songwriters - Marvin Yancy and Chuck Jackson. Who started recording some Natalie Cole demos and shopping them around to record labels.

CHRISTINA: Turns out the most interest came from Dad's old label.

DEREIS: Capitol Records.

KIMMIE: Capitol wanted to start an R&B division. And, Marvin and Chuck had always wanted to write for Aretha Franklin.

CHRISTINA: They settled for the next Aretha.

KIMMIE: Marvin and Chuck developed a number of good songs...

COLIN

MUSIC: Colin/band do a bit of THIS WILL BE, which will play under next few lines.

KIMMIE: ...like this one they were very excited about. They thought it could be the first single. They called it THIS WILL BE. But Natalie didn't want it to be at all.

CHRISTINA: No, no,no. I'm not going to sing that! No I can't do it! All that..."huggin' and squeezin and kissin' and pleasin'." Never. No. I can't get that.

KIMMIE: Marvin and Chuck wrote another song, which became the title song of the album.

CHRISTINA: And Marvin grabbed me one day and took me somewhere - Church.

COLIN

MUSIC Intro to INSEPARABLE under

CHRISTINA: Turns out he was Pastor Marvin Yancy. And turns out this song was going to describe us.

KIMMIE: A song I loved when I was little Kimmie.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings INSEPARABLE.

KIMMIE: That song won a Grammy, for Best R&B Female Vocal Performance.

DEREIS: My baby won a Grammy.

KIMMIE: Aretha Franklin had won that Award for nine years in a row. Up to that point, Aretha and Natalie were friendly. Aretha even included THIS WILL BE in her concerts. But the press started a feud, saying Natalie was the new Queen of Soul.

CHRISTINA: I didn't think of myself as the queen of anything.

KIMMIE: The distance between the two lasted many years. But good things were happening for Natalie. A hit record. And she did...finally...kick heroin.

CHRISTINA: Thanks be to God.

DEREIS: Amen.

KIMMIE: And Marvin and Chuck kept writing great new songs for Natalie. Her second album, called simply NATALIE, went gold in a month. And the following year, she won another Grammy - Best R&B Female Vocal Performance - for a song she co-wrote.

CHRISTINA: (posing) Sophisticated Lady

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings SOPHISTICATED LADY, backed by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

KIMMIE: And there was another hit from that album.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings MR. MELODY, backed by CHRISTINA and DEREIS

KIMMIE: Not only was Natalie's talent and versatility growing, her feelings for Mr. Marvin Yancy were growing as well.

CHRISTINA: He and Chuck were writing beautiful love songs. And I had a hard time keeping my mind on the songs.

KIMMIE: Marvin and Natalie were married. And this song from the UNPREDICTABLE album, captured her feelings.

CHRISTINA: My pastor...and my husband.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings I'VE GOT LOVE ON MY MIND, backed by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

KIMMIE: Another album - called, appropriately, THANKFUL - followed.

CHRISTINA: With new songs - and more - coming from my new husband and musical partner.

KIMMIE: Natalie continued composing - two songs on the album. One was inspired by someone - Stella, a young girl who came to work for Natalie and Marvin as a housekeeper. They treasured her, and they became close. One day Stella revealed to Natalie what had been her hard, hard life. She was working now, doing everything she could to get beyond the tough times. And to move forward. Natalie had so much respect for her, and for the many kids out there like her. So she wrote a song about her. But she didn't call it Stella. She picked a different name. But it was a lucky one. Turned out to be the name her mother-in-law used to be called.

CHRISTINA: And turned out to be Tina Turner's real name.

KIMMIE/CHRISTINA: Annie Mae.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings ANNIE MAE backed by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

KIMMIE: But the big hit of the album was another great one from Chuck and Marvin.

CHRISTINA: And it told the story of our great love.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings OUR LOVE backed by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

CHRISTINA: And our great love welcomed someone new. Our baby boy. Robbie. The love of my life.

KIMMIE: That new baby brought great happiness to Natalie. But it was now a musical world that was moving into the disco era. The disco era brought in a lot of fun, and something else. A lot of cocaine. It was laid out like candy backstage and at parties, and it was so hard for Natalie to resist.

CHRISTINA: And Marvin, too. Misery loves company.

KIMMIE: Natalie's addictive personality fell hard into this new drug. And her loyal husband went down right along with her. It brought them into contact with a new breed of people - dealers and party people. And the drug pulled them deeper.

CHRISTINA: We went from snorting...to freebasing.

KIMMIE: And the drugs changed them - their personalities and then their marriage. And soon it led to divorce.

CHRISTINA: My regret. Marvin and I were meant for each other.

KIMMIE: Natalie's drug use was out of control for a while. There was a fire in the Las Vegas hotel where she was staying. They had to drag her out. She didn't want to leave her pipe behind. And then the time at home when she was so gone, she didn't notice Robbie falling into the pool and going underwater. Thankfully he was saved.

CHRISTINA: Thanks be.

KIMMIE: Some hard, dark years followed. Where she received a lot of help. And spent some very valuable time at a rehab center. While there she was forced to confront a number of episodes from her life, none more important than her relationship to her father.

CHRISTINA: What? You think? Still grieving for him? He's been dead for twenty years.

KIMMIE: But through therapy, she was finally able to reconcile the deep love and deep pain that was still with her. And she was finally able to make him a loving part of her life, and was now able to move on.

CHRISTINA: I still miss him.

DEREIS: I know, baby.

KIMMIE: There followed some years of recovery, regular AA meetings, and, finally, a dip back into music - in Vegas clubs and back into the recording studio. But it wasn't till 1987's album, EVERLASTING, that she was back on top. One of her great songs spoke to her struggles.

CHRISTINA: I LIVE FOR YOUR LOVE

KIMMIE: Natalie was learning to love again. Her love for her son and family, of course. Her love for Music. And, important, the love for yourself.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings I LIVE FOR YOUR LOVE, accompanied by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

KIMMIE: And she was also learning to have some fun again. With her cover of a song by Bruce Springsteen.

CHRISTINA: The Boss loved it.

COLIN

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings PINK CADILLAC, accompanied by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

KIMMIE: Love - and joy - over the next few years - was back in the air for Natalie.

CHRISTINA: Andre Fischer, who was the drummer for the band Rufus, wanted to meet me because he said he had a song for me. But there was something else there.

KIMMIE: Soon Natalie was in her second marriage. A few years later, there was a third. Both had their bumps - and their endings.

CHRISTINA: Don't they all?

KIMMIE: In the midst of that, she sang and started acting. She collaborated on a tv biography of her life.

Natalie sang the title track of the show - and it illustrated the love that she was looking for her entire life. Natalie was now, fervently, livin' for love. And one of her great loves - one of her greatest losses - was now reemerging.

CHRISTINA: My dad. I had never been able to say "Goodbye" to him. And now I was feeling so sorry he wasn't there to share...my son, my success.

KIMMIE: Natalie had studiously avoided touching her father's music. But she was invited to London to do a BBC tribute to her dad. It was a major success, and it put some new thoughts in her head. She had sung his great hit, UNFORGETTABLE, during a handful of Vegas shows. They even piped in Nat's voice to spice up the song. Audiences loved it.

CHRISTINA: The song was a show stopper. But, as a singer, where could I go after that?

KIMMIE: Where she could go was a full album of Nat King Cole music. One where Natalie would sing duets with her father's voice, on some of his greatest hits.

It was a hard journey, but one filled with enthusiasm and support from every person, from every angle.

An All-Star team of producers, arrangers, musicians and backup singers were recruited, many who had participated in the original recordings.

But then they had to locate the masters of those recordings.

CHRISTINA: We took a trip to storage vaults in Glendale, California. And an 80-year old man took us down long hallways of tapes. Then he stopped, pulled one off the shelves, blew the dust off it, and there it was...UNFORGETTABLE.

KIMMIE: The recording sessions were historic. And emotional. When Natalie started singing with her dad, sometimes the musicians, and the people in the booth, would stop and just...gasp.

CHRISTINA: We recored in Studio A at Capital Records...the same studio where dad had sung this song, forty years ago.

DEREIS: That was my room.

KIMMIE: The finished recording brought love...ans tears...from everyone who heard it.

DEREIS: Course, if I'd been there, I'd have been smiling...ear to ear.

MUSIC: KIMMIE and DEREIS sing UNFORGETTABLE. (and a SECOND DUET).

KIMMIE: Natalie took that music on the road.

CHRISTINA: We did 300 shows in 18 months.

KIMMIE: And then came the Grammys.

CHRISTINA: UNFORGETTABLE was named Song of the Year. And it kept on winning.

KIMMIE: Seven Grammys in all. For Natalie...

CHRISTINA: ...and my dad.

DEREIS: Now, that's what I call a comeback.

CHRISTINA: Above all, I wanted to honor my father with this album. To thank him for all he'd given me.

DEREIS: And thank you, darling.

KIMMIE: Natalie's career was at a peak. She was singing Nat King Cole classics all over the world. But she didn't ignore other music that she had grown to love. She'd developed a deep appreciation for jazz, and several hit albums followed, earning her new respect throughout the music industry. It was a glorious last act for a legendary career.

COLIN****NEW MUSIC STING***

(a bit like the semi-gospel feel you're using for some song, not a funeral dirge, but a piece that will allow us to go into her death)

KIMMIE: We lost Natalie in 2015. Among the mourners at her funeral were...

CHRISTINA: ...Stevie Wonder...

DEREIS: ...Smokey Robinson...

CHRSTINA: ...LIONEL RICHIE...

DEREIS: ...GLADYS KNIGHT...

KIMMIE: ...and so many more.

KIMMIE: I mourned her. Natalie Cole - her music and her life - has been part of my life forever. I've shared her joy and triumphs. And her heartfelt songs have been with me when things haven't been good - for either of us.

MUSIC: Band will start THIS WILL BE, under following dialogue

KIMMIE: Natalie's music - her pop hits, her exploration into so many genres, and her spectacular duets with her father - will be part of my life forever.

This will be her legacy.

CHRISTINA: This will be her inspiration.

DEREIS: This will be her story.

KIMMIE: This will be...what Natalie Cole has given the world - and all of us!

MUSIC: KIMMIE sings THIS WILL BE accompanied by CHRISTINA, DEREIS and COLIN.

After song, Blackout

MUSIC: Band continues THIS WILL BE

Lights up, curtain call for cast and band.

THE END

