Déjà Vu (1985) finds veteran composer Pino Donaggio working with his signature vernacular of thrills and suspense. Tense and frightening string figures, jolting brass stings, numerous elements of murder and suspense plus an expressive love theme at the center are all on display. Déjà Vu gave Donaggio the opportunity to brew this rich assemblage of musical motifs, themes, and styles, kicking off with a ballet set pieces which afforded him the pleasure of (in his words) “wearing his Tchaikovsky hat,” eliciting an original overture that holds its own against comparable work by the Russian master. The story’s central romance gets a tender, pining love theme, to which Donaggio gives generous treatment throughout the score—varying it for respective variations in mood, location, and time period. Suspense, supernatural thrills, and chilling nightmare sequences find Donaggio at his snaky and dissonant best, offering everything from quiet Herrmannesque passages to outright horror. As if that weren’t enough, Donaggio composed a lineup of lyrical, original source cues for scenes set in the past. The resulting score is a full blend of the composer’s many talents, and a sumptuous banquet for the listener.

In Déjà Vu, Greg Thomas (Nigel Terry) and his wife Maggie (Jaclyn Smith) attend an old film starring ballerina Brooke Ashley (also Smith), Greg becomes bewitched by the dancer—who incites in him mysterious flashes and dreams of a former life—and he decides to write a screenplay based on her life and tragic death. In order to research Brooke’s life—and chase down the reasons for his unshakable déja vu—he locates Madame Olga Nabokova (Shelley Winters), a psychic who was close to the dancer in her prime. Through hypnotism, Greg reenters memories of a previous life and as he hops back and forth between lives, his contemporary life is slowly invaded by a threatening presence...

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