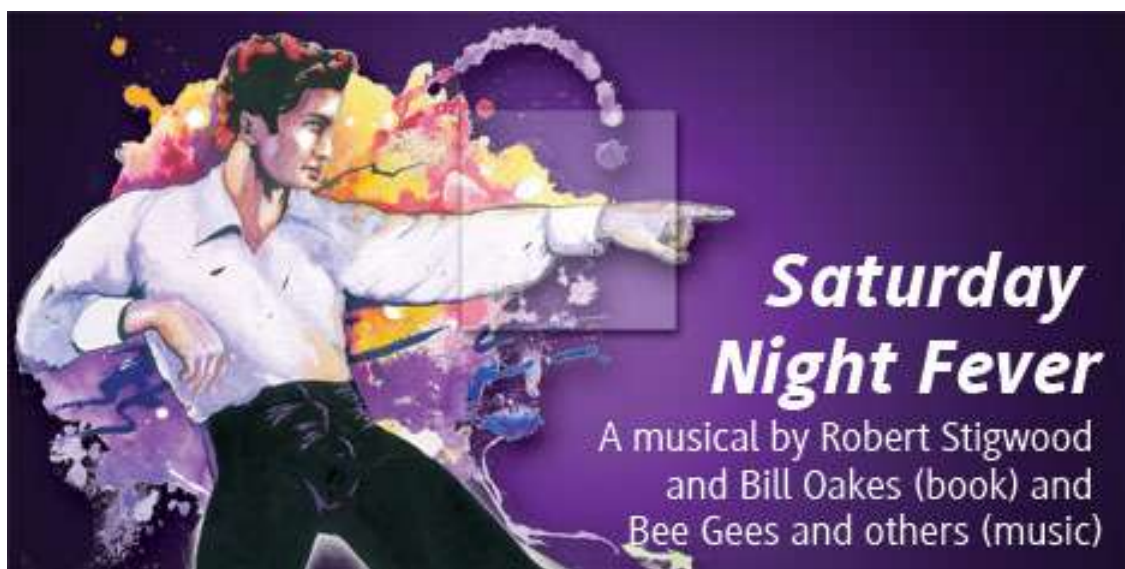


# The English Theatre Frankfurt

presents



**Teacher`s Support Pack**

## ***CONTENTS***

### ***Texts:***

1. The Story of “Saturday Night Fever” (Film)	p. 4
2. Robert Stigwood (Producer)	p. 6
3. The Musical on Stage	p. 8
4. The Plot	p. 9
5. Characters	p. 11
6. Musical Numbers	p. 12
7. Scenes and Settings	p. 13
8. The Lyrics	p. 14
9. Themes	p. 17
10. Points for discussion	p. 22
11. Girls don`t do this - Tony and sexism	p. 24
12. Social background - Bay Ridge	p. 28
13. Tony`s family life (Act I, Sc. 3)	p. 29
14. Power and Politics – Carter`s crisis of confidence speech and the Opening scene of the ETF Production 2013	p. 33

***Assignments for students:***

***See pp. 15,16,22,23,32,33***

Diese Version ist für die ausführliche Behandlung des Stücks im Unterricht der Gymnasialen Oberstufe gedacht. Sie decken mit den Texten wesentliche Unterrichtsinhalte ab von

- Q 1: Them and Us (the One- Track mind, Prejudice, Intolerance)  
Q 2: Extreme Situations (Love and Happiness, Fight for Survival, Tragic Dilemma)  
Q 3: Power and Politics (The American Dream) (The dynamics of change)

Sie können dieses Teacher`s Support Pack auf Anfrage auch als Word-Dokument ohne Bilder bekommen, um einzelne Texte/Aufgaben vor Ausdruck für ihre speziellen Zwecke zu bearbeiten und in der von Ihnen gewünschten Fassung an Ihre SchülerInnen digital weiterzuleiten.

Das Bild- und Informationsmaterial kann den SchülerInnen dabei helfen, sich einen Überblick über die relevanten thematischen Aspekte zu verschaffen und eigene Sichtweisen des Stücks zu entdecken. Bei allen Fragen bezüglich dieser Materialien oder Interesse an

- Begleitworkshops zu einem Aufführungsbesuch für Ihre Lerngruppe
- Gespräche mit Schauspielern nach der Vorstellung

wenden Sie sich bitte per Email an uns: [michael.gonszar@english-theatre.de](mailto:michael.gonszar@english-theatre.de)

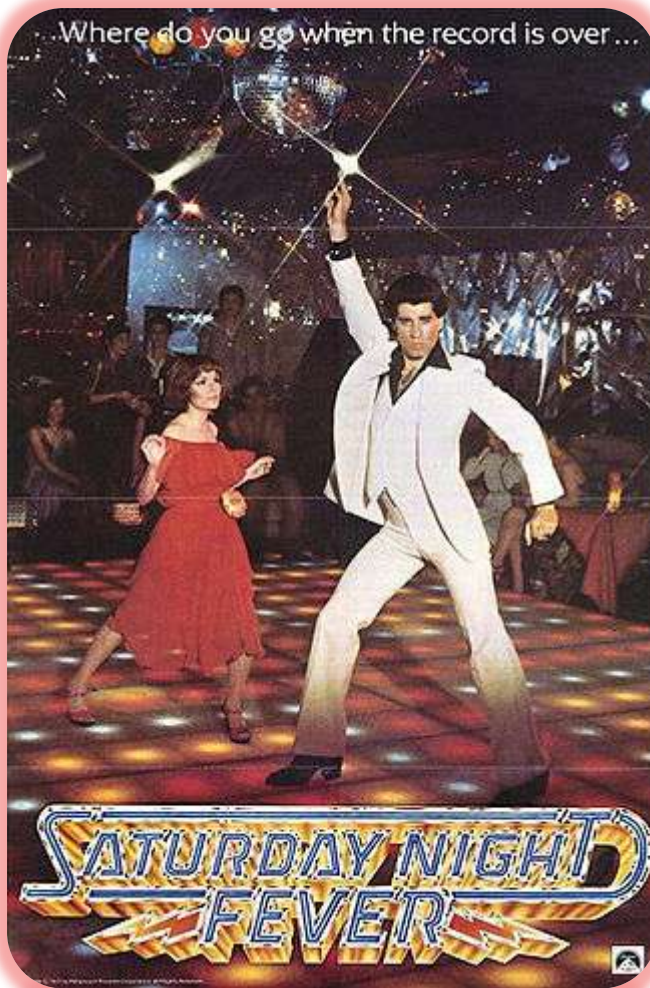
Das Team von T.I.E.S (Theatre in Education Service) wünscht Ihnen viel Erfolg bei der Arbeit mit dem Teacher`s Support Pack. Wir freuen uns auf einen Aufführungsbesuch mit Ihrer Lerngruppe.

Theatre in Education Service  
60329 Frankfurt/M.  
Phone 242 316 33  
Email: [michael.gonszar@english-theatre.de](mailto:michael.gonszar@english-theatre.de)



Gallusanlage 7,  
DI - MI - DO 10 - 15 h  
Mobile 0172 6039 157  
[www.english-theatre.de/education](http://www.english-theatre.de/education)

**Lea Dunbar, Dr. Karl Guttzeit, Michael Gonszar**



## 1. The Story of “Saturday Night Fever” (Film)

In 1977 the Bee Gees manager Robert Stigwood was producing a movie about the New York Disco scene. The working title of the film was "Saturday Night," so he asked the group to write a song of that name. The Bee Gees thought it was a dumb title, but they had already written a song called "Night Fever." They convinced Stigwood to use that and change the film's title to *Saturday Night Fever*. The movie became a classic, telling a coming-of-age story in the Disco era. It helped launch the film career of John Travolta, who starred as Tony Manero, the conflicted youth who escaped his troubles on the dance floor. The soundtrack for ***Saturday Night Fever*** sold over 30 million copies worldwide and it won the 1978

Grammy for Album Of The Year. This was the third single from the soundtrack and became that album's biggest hit single, remaining on the top of the American Pop charts for 8 weeks in early 1978. It also topped the British charts for two weeks and won a 1978 Grammy Award for Best Pop Vocal Performance By A Group.

Until the film came out, 'Disco' meant something very different in the UK to the US. We were writing what we considered to be blue-eyed soul. We never set out to make ourselves the kings of Disco, although plenty of other people tried to jump on the bandwagon after the success of the film. When we went to the

premiere at the Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles it was obvious the film and the songs really gelled, but none of us had any idea how huge it would become. It remains the biggest-selling soundtrack ever, and very few artists have created something with the cultural impact that *Saturday Night Fever* had.

In America, with eight weeks on top of the chart, it spent more weeks at Nr.1 than any other song in 1978. For five of those weeks (March 18 - April 15), another Bee Gees song from *Saturday Night Fever*, "Stayin' Alive," was Nr. 2.

Robin Gibb wrote in the *Observer Music Monthly* in January 2008: "The idea for the film that became *Saturday Night Fever* started when our manager, Robert Stigwood, saw an article in *New York* magazine entitled 'Tribal Rites of the New Saturday Night' by Nik Cohn, talking about teenagers going to dancing competitions. When they first started dance rehearsals for the film with John Travolta, they were using our song 'You Should Be Dancing,' which had been released the previous year. We were mixing a live album in France and Robert rang and asked if we had any other songs we could contribute. In the end we had five new tracks - 'Staying Alive,' 'How Deep is Your Love?,' 'Night Fever,' 'More Than a Woman' and 'If I Can't Have You' (recorded by Yvonne Elliman) - plus the previously released 'Jive Talkin' and 'You Should Be Dancing.' It was also our idea to call it *Saturday Night Fever*, because the competitions were on Saturday and we already had the track 'Night Fever.' "



John Travolta, who starred as Tony Manero



## 2. Robert Stigwood (Producer)



Born in Adelaide, Australia in 1934 and educated at Sacred Heart College, Robert Stigwood began his career as a copywriter for a local advertising agency and then, at 21 departed Australia.

Opening a London theatrical agency, after trying his hand at various occupations, he began casting commercials for television and was soon producing records for many of his clients; becoming the first independent record producer in the United Kingdom with the John Leyton hit, "**Johnny Remember Me**", which topped the UK chart for fifteen weeks.

During the mid 1960's Stigwood joined forces with Brian Epstein, the manager of the Beatles, to become co-manager of NEMS Enterprises. After Epstein's untimely death, Stigwood decided to form his own company, The Robert Stigwood Organisation (RSO), and promoted artists such as Mick Jagger, Rod Stewart, David Bowie and ultimately managed and forged the careers of, amongst others, the Bee Gees, Andy Gibb, Blind Faith, Cream and Eric Clapton; and under the RSO Records label recorded the music of Yvonne Elliman, Paul Nicholas, Player and Soundtrack Albums for the motion pictures "**The Empire Strikes Back**" and "**Fame**" in addition to those Films produced by RSO Films .



**The Bee Gees**

Moving into the world of theatre production in 1968, Robert chose for his first venture the American rock musical, "**Hair**," a great success, which ran for more than five years in London's West End . He followed this with highly successful productions of the Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber Musicals "**Jesus Christ Superstar**" and "**Evita**" (Which were successfully reproduced on New York's Broadway - the latter picking up the Tony Award for best Musical 1980), along with productions of "**Oh Calcutta !**", "**The Dirtiest Show in Town**", "**Pippin**", "**Sweeney Todd**", "**Sing a Rude Song**", "**John, Paul, Ringo and Burt**" (Evening Standard Drama Award best Musical 1974) and more recently "**Grease**" (The first production of which to include all of the film songs) and a brand new musical "**Saturday Night Fever**" based on the film of the same name.

Falling back on his marketing instincts Robert entered into film production and reproduced "**Jesus Christ Superstar**" as a motion picture, in association with the film's director, Norman Jewison. He went on to produce "**Tommy**", directed by Ken Russell and starring Ann Margret and Roger Daltrey, with supporting and cameo roles from the likes of Elton John, Robert Powell, Jack Nicholson, Tina Turner, Oliver Reed, Paul Nicholas, Eric Clapton and the Who; it became one of 1975's most popular films and marked the first truly successful merger of rock music and film to tell a story.

With a good start in this medium of entertainment the newly formed RSO Films went on to produce the hugely successful "**Saturday Night Fever**" and "**Grease**", which launched the then little known John Travolta to superstardom. These two blockbusters were followed by "**Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band**" (based around the Beatles album of the same name and starring Peter Frampton and the Bee Gees), "**Moment by Moment**", "**The Fan**", "**Times Square**", "**Grease 2**", "**Staying Alive**", "**Gallipoli**" (under the R&R Films banner) and the 1997 Golden Globe Awards best film "Evita".

Robert remains active primarily in the Theatrical Musical industry and resides at his Barton Manor Estate on the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England.

### 3. The Musical on Stage



***Saturday Night Fever* is a musical with a book by Nan Knighton (in collaboration with Arlene Phillips, Paul Nicholas, and Robert Stigwood) and music and lyrics by the Bee Gees.**

The Original London production (1998) was directed and choreographed by Arlene Phillips, the £4 million stage adaptation premiered in the West End on 5 May 1998 at the London Palladium, and closed on 26 February 2000. The original cast included Adam Garcia as Tony and Anita Louise Combe as Stephanie. Laurence Olivier Award nominations went to Garcia for Best Actor in a Musical, Phillips for Best Theatre Choreographer, and the production for Best New Musical. A cast album was released by Polydor Records.



#### 4. The Plot

Anthony "Tony" Manero is a 19-year old Italian American from the Bay Ridge neighborhood of Brooklyn in New York City. Tony lives at home with his parents, and works a dead-end job in a small hardware store by day. But every Saturday night, Tony is "king of the dance floor" at 2001 Odyssey, a local disco club. Tony has three close friends: Joey, Double J, and the diminutive Bobby C. Another informal member of their group is Annette, a neighborhood girl who longs for a more permanent and physical relationship with Tony.

One plot device in the story is the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, on which the friends ritually stop to clown around, but is particularly symbolic to Tony as an escape to a better life on the other side, in more suburban Staten Island.

Tony agrees to be Annette's partner in an upcoming dance contest at 2001



Odyssey, but her happiness is short-lived when Tony becomes infatuated with another girl dancing at the club, Stephanie Mangano. Stephanie coldly rejects Tony's advances, but eventually agrees to be his partner in the competition, nothing more. Tony's older brother, Frank Jr. who was the pride of the family since becoming a priest in the Catholic Church, brings despair to their parents when he quits the priesthood. Tony shares a warm relationship with Frank Jr., but feels vindicated, no longer being the black sheep.

While on his way home from the grocery store, Joey is attacked by a Hispanic gang and is hospitalized, and tells the guys it was the Barracudas. Meanwhile, Bobby C. has been trying to get out of his relationship with his devoutly Catholic girlfriend, Pauline, who is pregnant with his child. Facing

pressure from his family and others to marry her, Bobby asks former priest Frank Jr., if the Pope would grant him dispensation for an abortion. But when Frank tells him this would be highly unlikely, Bobby's feelings of despair deepen. Bobby C also lets Tony borrow his 1964 Chevrolet Impala to help move

Stephanie from Bay Ridge to Manhattan, with Tony promising to call him later that night, but Tony does not. Eventually, the group gets their revenge on the Barracudas, and crash Bobby C's car into their hangout. Tony, Double J and Joey get out to fight, but Bobby C. takes off when a gang member tries to attack him in the car.

Later, Tony and Stephanie dance at the competition and end up winning first prize.

However, Tony believes that a Puerto Rican couple performed better, and the judges' decision was based on racism. He gives them the first prize, and leaves with Stephanie in tow. Once outside in the car, he tries to rape Stephanie, resulting in her fleeing from him.

Tony's friends come to the car along with a drunken and stoned Annette, who Joey says has agreed to have sex with everyone. Tony tries to lead her away, but is subdued by Double J and Joey, and sullenly leaves with the group in the car. Double J and Joey take turns with Annette, who begins to sober up during what has become a rape scene.

Bobby C. pulls the car over on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge for the usual cable-climbing antics. Typically abstaining, Bobby gets out and performs more dangerous stunts than the rest. Realizing that he is acting recklessly, Tony tries to get him to come down. But upset at his lonely life, his situation with Pauline, and a broken promise from Tony earlier, Bobby issues a tirade at Tony's lack of care before slipping and falling to his death more than two hundred feet in the water below.



Disgusted and disillusioned by his friends, his life and his family, Tony spends the rest of the night riding the subway. As morning comes, he finally shows up at Stephanie's apartment in Manhattan, apologizing for his bad behavior. He tells her that he plans to leave Brooklyn and come to Manhattan to try and start a new life. Tony and Stephanie salvage their relationship and agree to be friends, sharing a tender moment as the credits roll.

## 5. Characters

<b>Tony Manero</b>	A 19 year old man living in the 1970s. His passion is dancing on a Saturday night down at the local dance club. He finds himself caught up in a love triangle. His ex-girlfriend Annette is madly in love with him, but he has eyes for a new girl Stephanie Mangano. Stephanie likes Tony back, and after an incident following the dance contest, she goes off him.
<b>Stephanie Mangano</b>	A 20 year old office worker from Manhattan. Stephanie classes herself as a refined citizen and convinces Tony she is a snotty bitch, however she is the complete opposite. Stephanie meets Tony at the dance club and after agreeing to be his dance partner in the dance contest, falls in love with him. After he tries to rape her, she runs away crying. She feels sorry for Tony after his best friend dies and goes to talk to him.
<b>Annette</b>	A sex-crazed girl. Annette is obsessed with Tony and even though she loves him, only wants to use him for one thing.
<b>Bobby C</b>	A troubled youth. Bobby's life gets turned upside down when he gets his girlfriend Pauline pregnant. He ends up having a breakdown after his friends ignore his call for help. He dies after falling off the Manhattan bridge.
<b>Monty</b>	DJ at the Odyssey 2001 Dance Studio.
<b>Joey</b>	A friend of Tony Manero's. After getting beaten up by a gang, he tells his friends it was their rival group, but they later discover he had made it up.
<b>Double J</b>	A friend of Tony Manero's
<b>Frank Manero</b>	Unemployed Father of Tony
<b>Flo Manero</b>	Tony's very religious mother
<b>Frank Manero, Jr.</b>	Tony's priest brother. After leaving the church and returning home, Tony takes him clubbing, their mother Flo flips on both of them.

<b>Jay</b>	A record producer. Friend of Stephanie.
<b>Maria</b>	A Spanish dancer at the Odyssey 2001
<b>Cesar</b>	A Spanish dancer at the Odyssey 2001
<b>Doreen</b>	A shy geeky teenager at the Odyssey 2001. She has an obsession with Tony and is fixated by watching him dance.
<b>Mr Fusco</b>	Tony's boss at the paint store.

## 6. Musical Numbers

1. **Stayin' Alive** - *Tony Manero, the Company*
2. **Boogie Shoes** (Music and Lyrics by Harry Casey / Richard Finch) - *Tony Manero, the Faces*
3. **Disco Inferno** (Music and Lyrics by Leroy Green/ Ron `Have Mercy' Kersey) - *Monty, the Company*
4. **Night Fever** - *Tony Manero, the Company*
5. **Disco Duck** (Music and Lyrics by Rick Dees) - *Monty*
6. **More Than a Woman** - *Tony Manero, Stephanie Mangano*
7. **If I Can't Have You** - *Annette*
8. **It's My Neighborhood** - *The Company*
9. **You Should Be Dancin'** - *Tony Manero, the Company*
10. **Jive Talkin'** - *Tony Manero, Annette, the Faces, the Company*
11. **First and Last** - *Bobby C.*
12. **Tragedy** - *Bobby C.*
13. **What Kind of Fool** (Music and Lyrics by Barry Gibb and Albhy Galuten) - *Stephanie Mangano*
14. **Nights on Broadway** - *Annette, Stephanie Mangano, the Company*
15. **The Dance Competition:** Open Sesame (Music and Lyrics by Robert Bell, Ronald Bell, George Brown, Charles Smith, Dennis Thomas) - Danced by *Chester and Shirley*  
More Than a Woman - Danced by *Tony Manero, Stephanie Mangano*  
Salsation (Music by David Shire) - Danced by *Cesar, Maria*
16. **Immortality** - *Tony Manero*
17. **How Deep Is Your Love** - *Tony Manero, Stephanie Mangano*

## 7. Scenes and Settings

**Time: 1976. (or: whenever you were 19.)**

**Place: New York City (Brooklyn and Manhattan)**

### Act 1

Scene 1: The Neighbourhood. Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

Scene 2: The Manero House.

Scene 3: Outside 2001 Odyssey — Saturday Night.

Scene 4: Inside 2001 Odyssey — Saturday Night.

Scene 5: The Neighbourhood Paint Store.

Scene 6: The Manero House.

Scene 7: Dale Dance Studios.

Scene 8: The Neighbourhood.

Scene 9: Inside 2001 Odyssey — Saturday Night.

### Act 2

Scene 1: The Verrazano Narrows Bridge — Saturday Night.

Scene 2: Dale Dance Studios.

Scene 3: The Neighbourhood.

Scene 4: Stephanie's Apartment — Manhattan.

Scene 5: Bench overlooking Bridge.

Scene 6: The Neighbourhood.

Scene 7: Inside 2001 Odyssey — Saturday Night. The Dance Competition.

Scene 8: Exterior 2001 Odyssey — Saturday Night.

Scene 9: The Verrazano Narrows Bridge — Saturday Night.

Scene 10: Park Bench near the Bridge.





## 8. The Lyrics

The soundtrack for *Saturday Night Fever* sold over 30 million copies worldwide and it won the 1978 Grammy for “Album Of The Year”. This was the third single from the soundtrack and became that album's biggest hit single, remaining on the top of the American Pop charts for 8 weeks in early 1978. It also topped the British charts for two weeks and won a 1978 Grammy Award for Best Pop Vocal Performance By A Group.



### 8.1 Night Fever

Listen to the ground  
There is movement all around  
There is something goin' down  
And I can feel it  
On the waves of the air  
There is dancin' out there  
If it's somethin' we can share  
We can steal it  
And that sweet city woman  
She moves through the light  
Controlling my mind and my soul  
When you reach out for me  
Yeah, and the feelin' is right  
Then I get night fever, night fever  
We know how to do it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to show it  
Here I am  
Prayin' for this moment to last  
Livin' on the music so fine  
Borne on the wind  
Makin' it mine  
Night fever, night fever  
We know how to do it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to show it  
In the heat of our love  
Don't need no help for us to make it  
Gimme just enough to take us to the mornin'

I got fire in my mind  
I get higher in my walkin'  
And I'm glowin' in the dark  
I give you warnin'  
And that sweet city woman  
She moves through the night  
Controlling my mind and my soul  
When you reach out for me  
Yeah, and the feelin' is right  
Then I get night fever, night fever  
We know how to do it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to show it  
Here I am  
Prayin' for this moment to last  
Livin' on the music so fine  
Borne on the wind  
Makin' it mine  
Night fever, night fever  
We know how to do it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to show it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to do it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to show it  
Gimme that night fever, night fever  
We know how to do it

This song rocks!!! I defy anyone to listen to this song and not freak out when the first verse begins. Something happens to your right arm as soon as Barry sings the first line. It shoots up, pointing towards the sky, and in your mind, you're wearing a white leisure suit with a black shirt, and you have a really serious look on your face.

- Jeff, Austin, Texas

**Writer/s: GIBB, MAURICE ERNEST /  
GIBB, ROBIN HUGH / GIBB, BARRY  
ALAN**

**Listen to it again:**

**<http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=4206>**

**See also:**

**<http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=5534>**

“Sometimes it's hard to speak about things, so it comes out through the music.”



**This photo of Lady Di went around the world; the British Princess is dancing with the actor John Travolta.**

## 9. Themes

By: Judy Weightman (August 31, 2010 in: *Books & Movies*)

### 9.1 A coming of age story

***Saturday Night Fever*** retains its interest after more than 30 years for its power as a **coming of age story** and for its evocation of a specific time: that brief moment of sexual freedom, post-Pill and pre-AIDS. Its characters' efforts to find themselves ring true to those of us born to that particular slice of the Baby Boom.

Ostensibly, ***Saturday Night Fever*** was based not on fiction but on journalism specifically, a 1976 *New York Magazine* article, "Tribal Rites of the New Saturday Night," describing the nightlife of working-class kids in Brooklyn. Though most hip observers thought disco's moment had already passed by then, the Australian producer Robert Stigwood bought the rights to the article and proceeded to make a film whose subject embraced much more than disco. Not until 1996 was it revealed that the original article's author, Nik Cohn, had fabricated the whole story.

#### Disco Dance History

Disco dance emerged during the 1970s, reaching its popularity peak with the release of the blockbuster film "***Saturday Night Fever***." Latin dances such as the samba, cha,cha, and tango inspired many of the popular disco moves. One of the pioneers of disco dance was Tom Moulton, who some believe reinvented disco music to be better suited for choreography

#### There are two central themes.

1: the desire of all young people to escape from a life sentence of boring work and attain their version of the beckoning towers of Manhattan. 2: the difficulty that some men have in relating to women as comrades and friends and not simply sex facilitators.

There is a scene in the movie where the hero, Tony Manero, sits on a bench with Stephanie, the girl he loves, and tells her all about one of the bridges out of Brooklyn: Its height, length, how many cubic yards of concrete went into its making--and you can taste his desire to cross that bridge and leave Brooklyn behind. Earlier, Stephanie has described him in a few brutal words: "You live with your parents, you hang with your buddies and on Saturday nights you burn it all off at 2001 Odyssey. You're a cliché. You're nowhere, goin' no place." Tony senses that she is right.

Disco dance is a style of dance highly dependant on disco music. Disco music consists of strong, rising vocals over a steady beat and bass line. If you are familiar with disco dance, you probably remember performers and bands such as Donna Summer, Amanda Lear, The Bee Gees, KC and the Sunshine Band, Chic, and The Jacksons. During the 1970's, disco clubs were abundant and alive with disco dancers.

#### Disco Dance Characteristics

Disco dance is moving to music in your own way, while wearing disco-inspired clothing. Disco consists of steps and moves performed in time to the beat of disco music. Some common elements of disco dance include side stepping in between bigger moves, raising your arms overhead, large hip and pelvic movements, and twisting your hands in time to the beat. A few common disco dance steps include pivot turns, foot stamps, and shoulder rocks.

The theme of escape to the big city is central to American films and literature, and "Saturday Night Fever" has an obvious predecessor. Both the lure of Manhattan and the problems with women were treated 10 years earlier in Martin Scorsese's "Who's That Knocking at My Door?" (1967), which also has a hero who suffers from what Freud called the Madonna-Whore Complex. (The complex involves this logic: I love you so much I want to sleep with you, after which I cannot love you any more because you are the kind of woman who has sex with men.) By the end of the film, Tony has left his worthless friends behind and made the first faltering steps to Manhattan and to a more enlightened view of women, and so the themes have been resolved.

#### 9.2 Madonna vs. whore

Tony, a product of his culture and his time, lacks a mental model for females beyond the extremes of Madonna or whore. Annette, who pines for Tony, struggles to embody either of those archetypes in order to win him, but she is elbowed aside by Tony's fascination with the slightly older, apparently sophisticated Stephanie.

The film's secondary characters also struggle to resolve the conflicts between the strictures of family, church and neighborhood on the one hand and their own desires and needs on the other. Tony's brother, Father Frank, decides to quit the priesthood. Bobby C., one of Tony's sidekicks, seeks advice from one



person after another as to what to do about his pregnant girlfriend. (None of them can suggest anything but marriage.)

The various elements all climax in a single evening, during which (a) Tony and his friends attack a Puerto Rican gang in retaliation for an earlier attack on Tony and Stephanie win over a Puerto dance contest, unsuccessfully Stephanie, (d) successfully Annette, with but not and (e) Bobby romantic travails as a running joke falls/throws himself been used as



Rican gang in retaliation for one of their own, (b) score an undeserved Rican couple at the (c) Tony tries to rape Tony's friends gang-rape Tony present participating, C., whose had been played until this moment, off the bridge that had symbolic *leitmotif*.

### 9.3 Between drama and musical

But there's a whole separate tradition of movie musicals in which the performances are integrated into the narrative, as something that the characters actually do. However, musicals of this sort traditionally involved characters who are performers, from Busby Berkeley's show biz musicals (such as *42nd Street* and *Footlight Parade*, both 1933) to Bob Fosse's classics, *Cabaret* (1972) and *All That Jazz* (1979) the latter, of course, also set in New York.

*Saturday Night Fever* takes off from this latter tradition of integrated musicals. All the dancing is done by characters who dance. Most of the music is framed as recordings in the dance venues (disco, studio) where the non-singing characters do their dancing. Not all of it, though: The exception"" the Bee Gees songs written for the movie"" is precisely where the film straddles the line between urban drama and musical.

## 9.4 Words vs. music

In the late '70s you couldn't escape the music from *Saturday Night Fever*. The soundtrack album sold 40 million copies, and its songs (only a third of them by the Bee Gees) were everywhere: on the radio, at parties, in bars and, of course, in discos. The album thus took on a life and a cultural resonance that ignored the film's subtler usage of the music.

The movie opens with Tony strutting down the street in time to the BeeGees' anthemic *Stayin' Alive*: "You can tell by the way I use my walk/ I'm a woman's man; no time to talk./ Music loud and women warm,/ I've been kicked around since I was born." The song perfectly encapsulates both Tony's character and, with its quintessential "four on the floor" disco beat, the milieu in which Tony comes (and stays) alive. A few minutes later, we hear *Night Fever* in counterpoint to Tony's *Saturday Night* primping.



Both of these songs are played over scenes in which Tony is alone: they are part of the music that shapes Tony's not particularly complex interior life. The music thus serves to comment on Tony's character, and functions somewhat more ironically than one might expect from the songs themselves.



Other Bee Gees songs are played in the disco. Tony does his floor-clearing solo to *You Should Be Dancing*, which includes a telling bit of byplay. The scene opens with Tony dancing with some random girl; when the song starts, he mutters something and walks away from her. Everyone quickly leaves the floor, except for this girl, who stands at the edge but remains on the dance floor, watching expressionlessly as Tony struts and preens. Alone among the crowd, she's not nodding or clapping or grooving along; she simply stands and watches, giving lie to the lyrics

*("My woman gives me power,/ Goes right down to my blood")*.

### 9.5 Prelude to rape

In the dance contest, Tony and Stephanie dance to a fourth Bee Gees song, *More Than a Woman*, ending with a long romantic twirl during which they lose themselves in the moment and forget the careful choreography they'd prepared. Tony then struts off the floor, Stephanie trailing behind him, as the song fades out. Again, Badham uses the song with a certain amount of irony: A few minutes later Tony is trying to rape Stephanie, proving that she isn't, actually, more than a woman to him.

The final Bee Gees track is, again, used to show us Tony's inner thoughts, now more tumultuous. He spends the night after the contest riding back and forth alone on the subway, trying to sort out everything that's happened. The song is the gentle disco ballad (sic), *How Deep Is Your Love*. In the morning he finds his way to Stephanie's new Manhattan apartment, begs for (and receives) her forgiveness, and the movie ends with them pledging friendship, if not love.

## 10. Points for discussion

9.1 I've always thought Annette was a better choice for Tony than Stephanie, because Annette has fewer delusions. ("Why do you hate me so much," she asks him, "when all I ever did was like you?") But Tony can't see that because he can't really see women at all.

**10.2 "Devote your life to something you love--not like, but love!"**

**"Saturday Night Fever" is about how Tony Manero does that.**

**10.3 Sometimes, human beings can learn important things from people who shouldn't be capable of teaching them.**

“Saturday Night Fever” has just such a message. The hero, Tony Manero, is in dire need of ambition. Where does he find it? From a woman who is nearly a complete phony. Does that negate the wisdom she imparts? No, because maybe ambition is something that can't really be taught, only realized.

**10.5 “Saturday Night Fever” is among a highly select club** including

“Star Wars,” and perhaps “Jaws” and “The Godfather,” of 1970s films where theatergoers would emerge afterwards, stunned, wondering, “What did I just see?” - Badham, the director of the movie, says he didn't get a couple scenes he really wanted. One of them might've been an understatement. He talks of wanting to show the dance hall at closing time, when the house lights go on, the floor lights go off, the music stops, everyone remaining groans, and the party abruptly ends. No doubt this is a powerful image and one we've all felt at a club or bar somewhere when we've been having too good of a time.

**“Fever,” though makes that point clear for two hours. Sometime, the music is going to stop. The success of Tony is, he knows it.**

**10.6** A more realistic story, and message, would be someone persuading Tony not to follow a phony to Manhattan, but to make something of himself where he's comfortable, in Bay Ridge or elsewhere. Why doesn't he, for example, teach dancing? Surely women would pay a premium to learn from him. If he's not comfortable with that, he should be comfortable with the paint shop. He is well-liked there. He could be a manager soon, there or somewhere else; maybe save his money and open his own place.

**Those thoughts never cross Tony's mind. The script never lets him get that far, and that is a problem. If it did, we'd have a different story .**

**10.4** We all have a powerful memory of the person we were at that moment when we formed a vision for our lives. Tony Manero stands poised precisely at that moment. He makes mistakes, he fumbles, he says the wrong things, but when he does what he loves he feels a special grace



## 11. Girls don` t do this - Tony and sexism

From: **Widescreenings (arts criticism)** <http://www.widescreenings.com/fever.html>

The opening scenes accomplish three important goals: We hear the famous soundtrack, we see that this film is about the grittier portions of New York City, and within moments we know all about Tony. He hauls paint cans around (low-paid, lightly educated), eats pizza rather indelicately (unsophisticated), doesn't have enough money to buy a flashy shirt, flirts relentlessly, and charms his way out of sticky conversations.

An early little scene in the paint store serves as a warning. Tony has arrived a bit late from his assignment — filling a customer's paint order from a rival shop — angering his good-natured boss, Mr. Fusco, but he engineers a little boss-approved chicanery to make a healthy profit from an irritated customer.

Then he makes friends with a different customer, and the shop is seen as a likable neighborhood establishment. But at the end of the day, Fusco closes the place with the type of heavy gate that is commonplace in many parts of big cities. The world is still a dangerous place. Fusco and Tony chat briefly about the future. "The future ... catches up with you, and (expletive) you if you ain't planned for it," he tells Tony.

It may be tough to convince Tony, though, because he has a great thing going on the dance floor at the nightclub 2001 (a year that must've seemed **so** far into the future when this film was released). A few of cinema's most memorable scenes occur here. The first is when Tony leads his crew into the club, to the sounds of "A Fifth of Beethoven" (the disco version of the symphonic smash). "You guys have the Moses effect," Tony's brother Frank will say, and the regulars are seen clearing out to let Tony through, shake hands, slap him on the back, and escort him to the table they've reserved for him. The second occurs later when Tony clears out the lighted dance floor.

But always, the music will finally stop, and we're back to another day, another week on the job, perhaps another week of going nowhere. Tony's circle of friends, and even his parents, seem content with this lifestyle. His family is blatantly sexist.



**Minskoff Theatre, Boadway New York opening Date 28.9.1999**

At one point Tony is about to clean the dinner table when his father says, “Girls do that.” Around the dinner table, they are proud and close-knit and seemingly of high character, but can’t avoid screaming at each other and slapping each other on the head. Tony at one point volunteers that his father doesn’t think he is good for anything, and his father does not disagree.

Tony’s frustration, and disdain for Bay Ridge, is ramped up when he sees Stephanie on the dance floor at 2001. The first thing we notice about Stephanie is that she doesn’t look like the other women at 2001. She is more reserved, formal, professional, austere, proud.

Tony is not accustomed to this type of woman. He is regularly hit on by others not as elegant, and he has grown to disdain them. When Stephanie enters his world, briefly, he is actually impressed, and his confidence is diminished around her. This is expertly shown in their scenes together as Tony attempts to cover his awkwardness with charm.

The only problem with Stephanie is that the more we see of her, the less we like. Presumably, Tony should feel the same way, but he doesn’t. We begin to see Tony pulled in two directions, from his small-minded friends who offer no

future, and Stephanie, whose pronouncements seem more and more bogus.

In a climactic moment, leaving 2001, Tony could seal the deal with Bay Ridge and depart with Stephanie, leaving his buddies behind. But instead he attempts to treat Stephanie like he and his gang typically treat women. Stephanie objects and leaves. Rather than follow, he rides home with his buddies, only to witness tragedy, and then we see him visually turn his back on them, en route to the future.



Tony reluctantly tells it like it is. “I work in a paint store,” he says, to which she replies, “You’re a cliché.” She’s harsh, but unfortunately, correct. She knows his routine and can confidently declare “You’re nowhere, on your way to no place.” But she isn’t completely negative. She asks, “Did you ever think about going to college?” Tony may be unimpressed by her empty boasts, but her ambition has him hooked.

Stephanie’s world cracks when Tony helps her move. He is fired by Fusco for taking the afternoon off, but that’s not such a bad thing, as maybe he’s finally crossing over into Manhattan for good with Stephanie. But once they get there, the facade disintegrates. Stephanie has apparently been

living with a much older man who thinks little of her. He mocks her for using the word “super,” in the same way she would criticize Tony.

When she bursts into tears in the car, she has hit rock bottom, and when Tony is welcomed back by Fusco, it’s even a hint that Bay Ridge isn’t so bad. It all sets the stage for their climactic moment in the car at night and at her apartment the next morning, when Stephanie says she hangs out with him because of “dancing,” and then later admits, “You made me feel better, give me admiration, respect, support.” And so they agree to be friends, and so in the end Tony has conquered at least one of his vices — sexism!



**SO THE HARDER A WIFE WORKS, THE CUTER SHE LOOKS!**

1. GOSH, HONEY, YOU SEEM TO THRIVE ON COOKING, CLEANING AND DUSTING - AND I'M ALL TUCKERED OUT BY CLOSING TIME. WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

VITAMINS, DARLING! I ALWAYS GET MY VITAMINS

**Kellogg's PEP**  
VITAMIN-D-ENRICHED  
30% BEAN FLAKES

**Vitamins for pep! PEP for vitamins!\***

BEERANDSTUPIDITYBLOGSPOT

## 12. Social background - Bay Ridge

**Bay Ridge** is a neighborhood in the southwest corner of the **New York City** borough of **Brooklyn, US**. It is bounded by **Sunset Park** on the north, Seventh Avenue and **Dyker Heights** on the east, **The Narrows** Strait, which partially houses the **Belt Parkway**, on the west and the Verrazano bridge on the south. While Fort Hamilton is often considered a separate neighborhood, it is part of Bay Ridge. Bay Ridge is a largely middle-class neighborhood. With its strong family presence, it is not uncommon to see third or



fourth generation families living in the region. Until the early 1990s Bay Ridge was a primarily Irish, Italian, and Norwegian neighborhood. Today, Bay Ridge maintains a sizable Irish, Italian, and Greek population, but like other areas in South/Southwest Brooklyn, late in the 20th century it saw an influx of Russian, Polish, and Lebanese, and lesser numbers of Chinese. In recent decades many Middle Eastern and Arab Americans have moved to Bay Ridge. Bay Ridge has many international restaurants and bars, especially along 3rd and 5th Avenue, its main commercial strips. Many refer to the community as "Brooklyn's Gold Coast."

Bay Ridge has a high elderly population. It has been called a NORC or a naturally occurring retirement community because many of its families have grown up in the neighborhood while their children move away. In 2006 it was reported that 20% of the population of Bay Ridge is 60 or over.



### 13. Tony`s family life

#### Act 1 / Scene 3

FLO

Where you been?

FRANK

Your mother wants to know where you been.

(louder)

Where you been?

FLO and FRANK MANERO sit at the dining table, along with his little sister LINDA.

Tony enters, and sits down.

FLO

Tony, your father's been askin' you! Where you been?

TONY

(indignant)

Every day it's the same thing! I come home and you tell me I'm late for dinner when you know that I gotta work till six o'clock, and I can't make dinner in time.

FLO

You should've been a priest, like your brother. You wouldn't worry about a job.

Flo looks up at the picture of Tony's brother, FRANK JUNIOR, on the wall, and crosses herself.

TONY

Every time you mention Frank Junior, you gotta cross yourself?

FLO

He's a priest, ain't he? Father Frank Junior - your brother.

FRANK

See, your mother doesn't have too much to cross herself about these days.

LINDA

(to Tony)

You're so jealous of Frank Junior!

TONY

Shut up, will ya?

Frank slaps the back of Tony's head. Flo slaps Frank's arm. Frank hits Flo's arm. Linda throws an olive at Tony. Flo slaps her.

TONY

Hey, the shirt! Watch the shirt, stupid!

Frank slaps Tony. Tony's mother pounds the table.

FLO

Eat. Go ahead. I got more pork chops, more spaghetti.

FRANK

What do you mean, you got more pork chops? I'm out of work!

FLO

Yeah, well, as long as we got a dollar left, we eat good in this house.

(hesitates)

I might even get a job myself.

FRANK

Like hell you will! Twenty-five years in construction work, I always brought home a paycheck. I'm out of work six, seven months, and all of a sudden - what? You hit me, you're talking back -

FLO

All right, all right -

FRANK

Talking about getting a job and hitting me!

FLO

All right - no hitting at. -the dinner table, okay? That's the rule. But you was the one that was hitting - you!

FRANK

You never hit me before, never! Not in front of the kids.

Frank fumes for a moment, then picks up a pork chop from Tony's plate and slams it on the table.

One pork chop! One! (*A commotion at the table as everybody protests.*)

TONY

It's disgusting! That's it!

Frank slaps Tony again.

Would you just watch the hair?

(takes a deep breath)

You know, I work on my hair a long time, and - he hits it. He hits my hair!

Flo reaches out to Tony, grasps his hand.

FLO

Tony, you walk me to church later?

TONY

Didn't you go already?

FLO

Yeah - confession. I got to go back and pray for something.

TONY

For what?

FLO

I got to pray for Father Frank Junior to call me.

LINDA

Why don't you call him direct?

FLO

I want him to call me. A son should call his mother!

TONY

Wait a minute. You're going to church to have God make Frank Junior call you?

FLO

Right.

TONY

I don't believe it. You're turning God into a telephone operator.

**13. 1**

**Read and act out scene 3. Discuss the statement in the box on the right!**

“Notice that Tony comes from a religious, two-parent family and not a broken home. It seems that in the filmmaker’s mind, the problem isn’t the family structure, but Bay Ridge. Everything in this Bay Ridge is toxic; you don’t want to be there under any circumstances. Get out while you can, while you’re young and can do something about it. This sweeping generalization preys successfully upon people’s most outrageous beliefs about geography that our own surroundings can be blamed for destroying our potential and that where we live or where we’re from determines in part whether we’re better than someone else”. (from: **Widescreenings- arts criticism**)  
<http://www.widescreenings.com/fever.html>

**14. Power and Politics - The Opening scene of the ETF Production 2013**

*Act I, Scene 1 Down town, Brooklyn. Fall, 1979.*

*A Man carrying a petrol can queues outside a gas station. Above him a giant billboard reads, “ENJOY LIFE.” In front of him on the gas station door a smaller sign reads, “GAS SHORTAGE - SALES LIMITED TO REGULAR CUSTOMERS ONLY.” The Man is joined by more citizens of Brooklyn carrying petrol cans, all queuing for gas.*

*As they queue we see President Carter delivering his infamous Crisis of Confidence speech projected on to the giant billboard.*

PRESIDENT CARTER

I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy.

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence.

We were sure that ours was a nation of the ballot, not the bullet, until the murders of John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. We were taught that our armies were always invincible and our causes were always just, only to suffer the agony of Vietnam. We respected the presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate.

***As the President speaks we see clips of iconic events that shaped America in the 1970’s.***

We remember when the phrase "sound as a dollar" was an expression of absolute dependability, until ten years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings. We

believed that our nation's resources were limitless until 1973, when we had to face a growing dependence on foreign oil.

These wounds are still very deep. They have never been healed.

*While the President has been speaking more and more citizens have joined the queue. A busker has spotted the opportunity to make a quick buck. She starts to play a blues riff on her saxophone. Another saxophonist who has been queueing joins her, then a trumpet player, then a guitarist. Angry and frustrated the citizens start to vocalise their discontent.*

### CITIZENS

**LIFE GOIN' NOWHERE  
SOMEBODY HELP ME  
FEEL THE CITY BREAKIN' AND EVERYBODY SHAKIN'  
GOING NOWHERE  
I'VE BEEN KICKED AROUND SINCE I WAS BORN  
STAYIN' ALI-I-I-I-IVE**

In 9.4. we learnt that the music serves to comment on Tony's character, and functions somewhat more ironically than one might expect from the songs themselves.

Which function has the song "Staying Alive" in this first scene?



This was a bold speech delivered by President Carter in the summer of 1979, in which he attempted to lead Americans out of a kind of collective funk the people had fallen into after a series of disastrous events in recent years.

The events included three assassinations in the 1960s, followed in the early 1970s by a lost war in Vietnam and the shattering fallout from the Watergate scandal. Shortly thereafter, Americans experienced another blow, an unprecedented sense of helplessness while waiting in long lines at gas stations amid a punitive oil embargo by seemingly all-powerful Arab oil producers.

The end result was an erosion of American pride and confidence amid a growing feeling that America's best days might indeed be behind it.

This is what the President hoped to address, while offering concrete steps to resolve the steadily worsening dependency on foreign oil.

But in delivering this speech, President Carter struggled to find the right tone – at times sounding like a stern preacher; other times like a father lambasting his wayward child; and even pleading on occasion as well.



President Jimmy Carter  
"A Crisis of Confidence"

"The oil and natural gas that we rely on for 75 percent of our energy are simply running out.... World oil production can probably keep going up for another 6 or 8 years. But sometime in the 1980's, it can't go up any more. Demand will overtake production. We have no choice about that."

"To some degree, the sacrifices will be painful—but so is any meaningful sacrifice. It will lead to some higher costs and to some greater inconvenience for everyone. But the sacrifices can be gradual, realistic, and they are necessary."

"We must not be selfish or timid if we hope to have a decent world for our children and our grandchildren."

- Jimmy Carter, [Energy Address to the Nation](#), April 18, 1977

- See more at: <http://www.masterresource.org/2011/07/jimmy-carter-energyspeech-april-1977/#sthash.3vw2mXEz.dpuf>

# Stayin' Alive

from the Motion Picture *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*

Words and Music by Barry Gibb, Maurice Gibb and Robin Gibb

Moderately ♩ = 104

Fm Bb

Rhy. Fig. 1

Gtr. 1 (acous.)

\* Gtr. 2 (elec.)

Riff A

mf w/clean tone

End Rhy. Fig. 1

End Riff A

Bb

Rhy. Fig. 2

End Rhy. Fig. 2

Fm

Gtr. 1: w/Rhy. Fig. 1

Gtr. 2: w/Riff A

Riff B

End Riff B

1. Well, you can tell \_

Verse

Gtr. 2: w/Riff A (2 times)

Fm Eb Fm

\_ by the way I use \_ my walk, I'm a wom - an's man, no \_ time to talk. And

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 3

End Rhy. Fig. 3

The musical score is written for guitar and voice. It includes guitar parts for acoustic (Gtr. 1) and electric (Gtr. 2) guitars, and a vocal line. The score is divided into sections: an instrumental introduction with Rhythm Figures 1 and 2, a Verse with Rhythm Figure 3, and a Chorus. The key signature is F major (one flat), and the tempo is Moderately at 104 beats per minute. The time signature is 4/4. The score includes guitar-specific notation such as 'mf w/clean tone' and 'w/clean tone'. The lyrics are: '1. Well, you can tell \_', 'by the way I use \_ my walk, I'm a wom - an's man, no \_ time to talk. And'. The score ends with a double bar line.

Copyright © 1977 by Gibb Brothers Music  
All Rights Administered by Careers-BMG Music Publishing, Inc.  
International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved