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## Double or Nothing

Everybody has a secret vice — or at least an inclination towards one — and the time has come for me to own up to mine. For the highest of motives, I assure you I like the *Double M Disco* in the basement of the DB Tavern.

I only go to watch, though I admit I have never gone so far as to take notes. I suspect that it isn't typical of discos generally — the age limit and the alcohol alone probably take care of that. Still it fascinates me.

At the *Double M*, the real object doesn't seem to be to dance — instead the people are there to practice social mobility. All is very rigidly arranged in a hierarchy of *chic* radiating out in concentric rings from the dance floor. At the heart of the crowd are those who look like they are waiting for Central Casting to call them up for their role in *Is It Wednesday Yet?* These people do dance, but only to those songs they know well enough to be able to execute faultless routines. Generally they prefer to be still-life studies — the classy version of a wall-flower.

In the next rank are those who probably did come to dance, but who find occasional trouble organising themselves into sufficiently homogenous mobs to tackle the Hustle. I suspect these people can actually dance better than the first group — but they do it much too indiscriminately to be of the remotest interest to Central Casting.

The third ring contains almost only males. These are the predators of the disco world. Their ceaseless trek from table to table asking the same question and getting the same answer never seems to tire them, although I suspect that it is from their ranks that the fourth row is recruited. These fringe attenders — whose territory, significantly enough, also includes the bar — seem to have missed their turning at the public bar. They are here to drink and sleep, and to see them in action is enough to discredit Brahms lullaby in favour of "Stayin' Alive".

But the real attraction is not in the crowd — interesting though they may be — nor is it the music, which is pretty standard fare. The real focal point, and the delight of the third row, are the go-go girls.

Up at the front, in a little cage straight out of *Blow-Up*, two underdressed, but not underfed, young women thrash violently against the bars in ten-minute shifts. Their energy is remarkable, and their popularity unquestionable. At less regular intervals a young man enters the cage. He labours under a number of disadvantages. He is svelte. He can dance. He is fully-clothed.

Still, I think I can say that there is something for everybody at the *Double M Disco*.  
Francis Stark



Let's face it, the Bee Gees are a phenomenon, but not in the rock 'n' roll field; they've notched into what is probably best termed the "glossy wave" (most people call it show business) where artists are part of some master plan engineered by a Mr Big. But rather than get the horse pushing the cart let us go back eleven years to 1967 when the Bee Gees burst upon the international charts with "New York Mining Disaster 1941", their first million seller. They were certainly distinctive, and as was to become obvious, prolific.

Between February and August 1967, they had three singles reach the English top ten. Basically in the romantic mould (I should have said *entirely*), their music was based on three facets: the songwriting of the Gibb brothers, their excellent vocal work and the production of their manager, Robert Stigwood, with, more importantly, musical arrangement and direction by Bill Shepherd.

From Feb '67 to March '69, the group released four albums which is a remarkable output, although no-one would deny that the three ingredients of the Bee Gees sound only produced satisfactory results on less than half of the material. "To Love Somebody" (June '67), "The Singer Sang His Song" (March '68) and "I've Got To Get A Message To You" (Aug '68) are perhaps the best examples of just how fine a production the Bee Gees and Bill Shepherd were capable of. In contrast, their fourth album (a double) entitled *Odessa* was the prime example of just how gross they could be. An album of excesses, it should really have been titled 'Bill Shepherd and his Orchestra with Special Guests, the Bee Gees'.

In late '69, with personnel problems (Robin fell out with Barry and Maurice . . . tut, tut) and touring pressures, the group split but, due to the fact that they were worse on their own (those who witnessed Robin Gibb's appearance at the Redwood Festival in Auckland in 1970 must agree) they reformed in early '70. Thus began phase two; the worst in their career.

Initially things looked good with "Lonely Days" achieving considerable chart success but then things slid and record sales of fu-

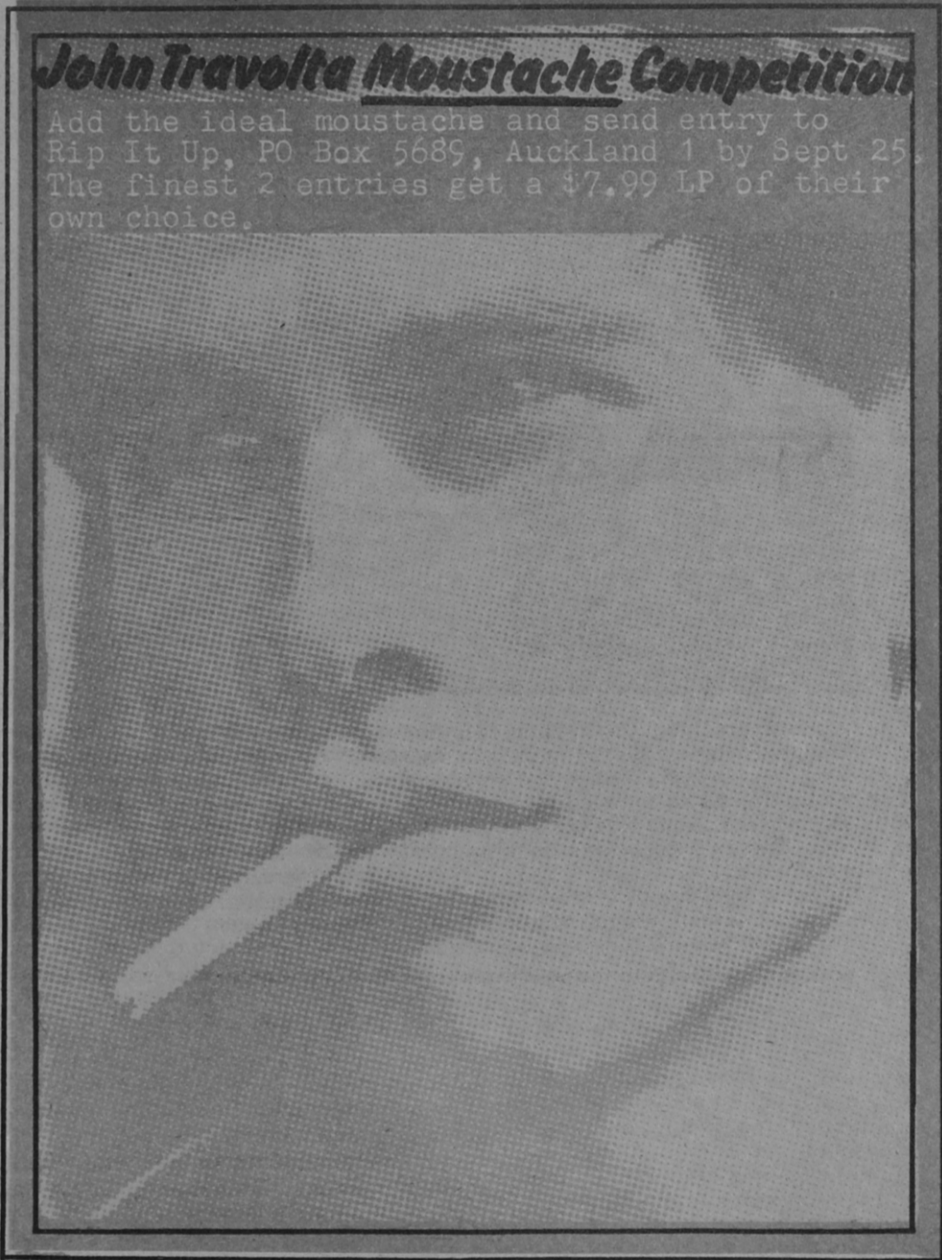
ture singles crashed. The problem? It was now 1973 and the Gibbs were singing sappy stuff that no-one was interested in. In mid '74, Robert Stigwood, still their manager, stepped in (shortly after the release of the unpopular *Mr Natural* album) and said "You guys are a bunch of saps. Cut out all this poofa stuff and give us some decent funky stuff that people can get their feet into".

Now the Bee Gees, it must be realised, are very good at doing what they're told, particularly if they are in the pits, so they sat down on command and produced the *Main Course* album which was released in '75. The single from the LP, "Jive Talking", was a huge success and surprised everyone with its disco orientation.

Robert Stigwood, renowned for his keen sense of the show-biz market, realised the Bee Gees had got into a rut so he told them to pull finger, as he puts it, "I had a confrontation with them." With the success of "Jive Talkin'" and obvious record company pressure to continue in that vein, the Bee Gees have been producing American music (principally white disco) ever since.

Old fans, of course, jumped up and down complaining of a cop-out but the Bee Gees replied "We were always writing this kind of music but we weren't putting it down right. We were writing R & B but we weren't going in an R & B direction." Very interesting, methinks, but I suspect it's all bullshit.

*Children of the World* ('76) saw a change in production crew although the basic slick feel remained (Stigwood saw to that) and then in '77 Stigwood realised his golden opportunity. A disco film with the Bee Gees dominating the soundtrack . . . showbiz . . . bright lights . . . white disco music for the dudes . . . and once again under instruction from Stigwood, the Gibbs came up with the goods. Well, good on them. It's bland, yes, yes, but it has sold phenomenally, and money in the USA speaks louder than anything. So the Bee Gees are now more popular than they probably ever imagined (if that's a desirable thing). It took eleven years and a certain Mr Stigwood . . . Phase three complete and what next? You guessed it. Movies.  
Raymond Hooper



## John Travolta Moustache Competition

Add the ideal moustache and send entry to Rip It Up, PO Box 5689, Auckland 1 by Sept 25. The finest 2 entries get a \$7.99 LP of their own choice.

## the Hollywood Hustle

Since the fifties, and even before, Hollywood hasn't been slow to see the bankability of movies about youth trends. Often, however, the movie moguls have been loath to spend money, *Rock Around the Clock* looks as if it was filmed in a weekend with a cast of dozens; the Beach Party flicks just needed sand and Annette.

Disco, the latest trend, has so far spawned two movies. Both are playing in Queen Street. They make an interesting contrast in the manufacture of what are inarguably-exploitative films.

*Saturday Night Fever* is not a cheap film. It's from the Robert Stigwood mint and stars well-dressed, well-choreographed John Travolta, with a soundtrack dominated by the Bee Gees.

*Thank God It's Friday* is a cheap, cheap film. It's a Casablanca Records project "starring" badly-dressed non-actors who can't dance. The music is as strident as the murky visuals which plumb new depths in ugliness. Like the audience in the storyline, one hoped for something from the Commodores. Sadly,

they mimed and most of it was lost in the forced frenzy of the dance contest finale.

Both films have simple stories. *Saturday Night Fever* is a calculated melding of the hoary old riff about Brooklyn boy trying to break out of the ghetto with the appearance of today: clothes, dance, attitudes. *Thank God It's Friday* is just plain dumb. There's a disco called The Zoo, everyone from two pubescent girls to a suburban couple celebrating their anniversary goes along, finds or loses romance, and there's a fast-talking DJ (isn't there always?) who's meant to supply comedy interest but in fact is a real wimp.

*Saturday Night Fever* has been made with care; *TGIF* was made. Personally I can't see the latter having anything like the success of *SNF*. Its ineptitude is insulting. But, as they say, nobody ever went broke underestimating public taste. *TGIF* has one big advantage, of course. Even though the *SNF* we're seeing is a "soft" version, it's still restricted. *TGIF* is being pushed as the disco film everyone can see certified GA. God Awful.  
Ken Williams

## Neville Purvis Let Bee Gees be Bygones

They've asked me to say something nice about disco music.

After a solid hour meditating with a couple of tubes, the nicest thing I can think of is that this time next year disco will have disappeared.

I said it all on me underground hit single. If the radio stations hadn't banned it I wouldn't have to repeat myself:

*Ain't nothin' in the world  
Bound to make me feel sick (Eurgh!)  
Like turnin' in to  
Crappy Disco music*

— words & music by N. Purvis  
Don't get me wrong. Not all the music is bad and there are some good groups playin' it.

What tends to inflame my ulcer is the effect it's having on the local music scene. For a working band to stay alive they do mainly pub work with whatever extra gigs they can get.

In the last three months, all over the country, pubs have been switching from live music to disco. It still keeps the patrons dancing — and thirsty — and it's cheaper than paying a band. And without pub gigs Kiwi bands are up the well-known creek.

I've just got back from a week in Wellington workin' with Rough Justice — the story down there is the same as Auckland. Two of the best of the Capital's live pub venues have

switched to pimples and a turntable.

At a time when the local product should be being encouraged, bands that have been professional for years are splitting.

So don't ask me about disco music. To say I'm against it is like sayin' Mt Cook is a steep hill.

The way I see it, the Hustle is a hassle, white funk is commercial junk and the sooner the Bee Gees are Bygones the happier I'll be.

I'm supposed to write more than this but I think I've made me point, and frankly I've got better things to do. So instead I'll ask for a bit of white space.

You kin look at it and meditate on the fact that the people are gettin' fooled again.  
On the level,  
Neville Purvis