

Saturday Night Fever – Review



For many of us who grew up in the 1970s, the film Saturday Night Fever has iconic status. The disco music classic – if that's not a contradiction in terms – made John Travolta a star and the image of him strutting his stuff across the dance floor in his white suit with flared trousers, waistcoat and black open-necked shirt to the sound of the Bee Gees is one which can both induce feelings of nostalgia and make you cringe, depending on your view.

Nearly 40 years on from that landmark film, Saturday Night Fever, the stage show, arrived at Edinburgh's Festival Theatre on Tuesday night. I recall watching the film for the first time when I was 16 years old in 1978 and, upon leaving the cinema, pontificating along Aberdeen's Union Street in a rather hapless imitation of Travolta himself. So when I headed for the stage show 37 years, two daughters and four grandchildren later, I wasn't sure what to expect. I'm delighted to report, however, that I had a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

The man behind the film – Robert Stigwood – is also behind the stage production which is expertly directed by Ryan McBryde. The two main players – Danny Bayne as Tony Manero and Naomi Slights as Stephanie – are quite superb.

Set in New York, Manero is a young man stuck in a dead-end job in a paint store where he has to fight for even a meagre pay rise. However, he comes alive on the dance floor on a Saturday night. When he meets Stephanie, who dreams of the high life, they decide to enter a dance competition – with the result their lives begin to change.

The thing that struck me about this stage version is that while the music was excellent, with all the classic numbers

you associate with the film, the storytelling was, in my opinion, actually better than the film. There's a chemistry between the two lead players and this rubs off on the rest of the cast. Bayne, who is a previous winner of ITV's Grease is the Word clearly relishes the part of Tony Manero while Slights, who has Mamma Mia, Women of Rock and The Ripper in her theatrical credits, is the perfect foil.

Saturday Night Fever is on at Edinburgh's Festival Theatre until Saturday 14th February. If you enjoyed the film all those years ago, you'll love this stage version. It's hugely enjoyable – and will keep those disco memories 'stayin' alive'...

Edinburgh Reporter rating: 4 stars.