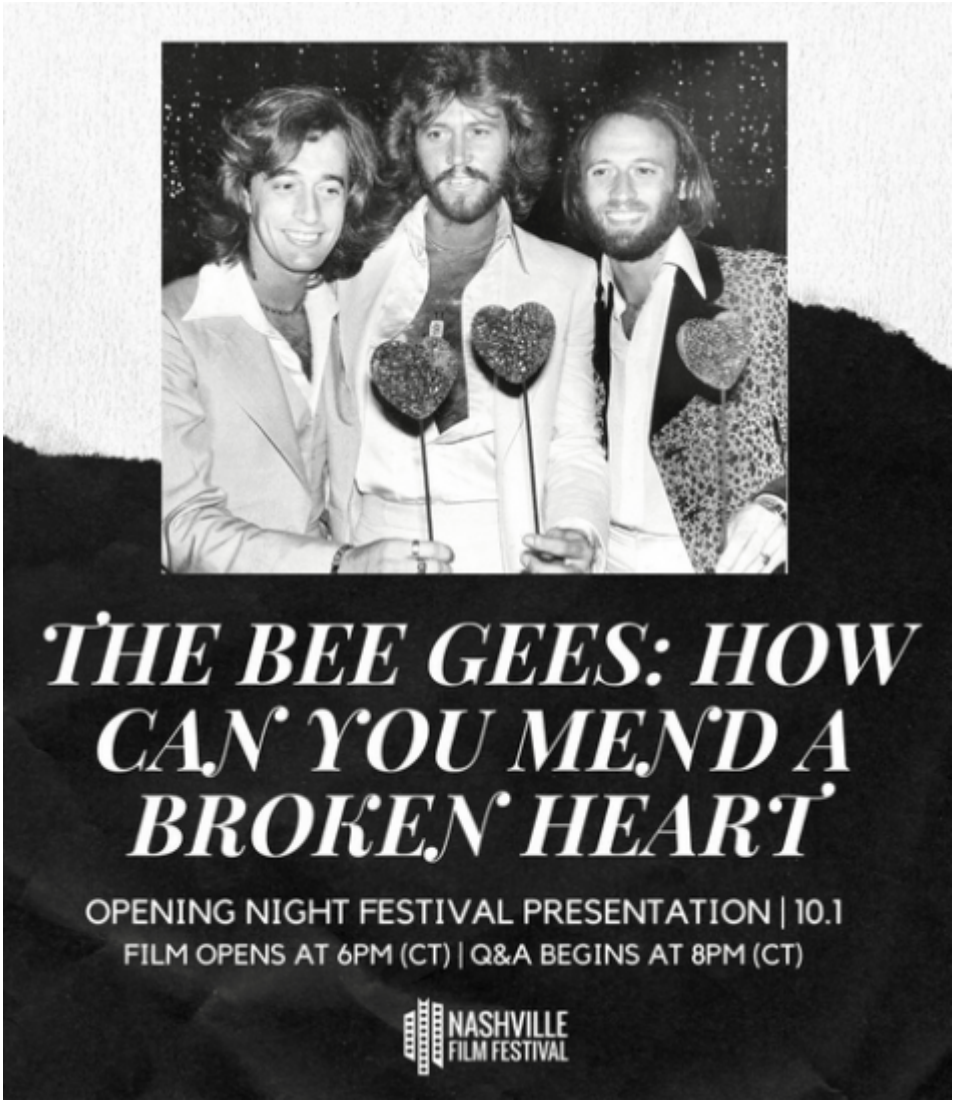
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Nashville Film Festival 2020 FILM REVIEW The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend A Broken Heart (Frank Marshall, USA)

Description

Reviewed by Larry Gleeson as part of the Opening Night Presentation of the virtual 51st Nashville Film Festival â??featuring the finest in films, music, and culture.â?•



During the Disco Era of the late 1970s, no one was bigger than the Bee Gees (the Brothers Gibb), a band composed of brothers Barry, Maurice, and Robin Gibb. They seemed to be everywhere â?? on the radio, in the theatre (with six of ten songs on the second-biggest selling soundtrack of all-time from the 1977 film, *Saturday Night Fever*, starring John Travolta), guest appearances on television talk shows, andâ?¦..their music was danced to several times a night in disco clubs across the globe.

THE BEE GEES: HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART, directed/produced by acclaimed filmmaker Frank Marshall, producer or executive producer for six Best Picture Oscar nominees: Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), The Color Purple (1985), The Sixth Sense (1999), Seabiscuit (2003), The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008) and War Horse (2011) In*The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend A Broken Heart,* Marshall spotlights the legendary band who wrote more than 1,000 songs, including twenty number one hits throughout their career.

The film opens with archival footage of the Bee Geesâ?? performance at the Oakland Coliseum in 1979 at arguably the pinnacle of their career success. From here Marshall explores who the Bee Gees are and what they embodied as performers. The film is very reflective in a non-linear manner. Drawing

heavily from voice-over narration, archival footage, along with black and white stills, Marshall etches a portrait of the young Gibb brothers fascinated by the fame and popularity of the Beatles and captures the arrival of the Bee Geesâ?? first album, â??Spicks and Specks,â?• recorded in Australia.

With a nice touch, Marshall adds Noel Gallagher, of the global supergroup, Oasis, and more recently, Noel Gallagherâ??s High Flying Birds, to provide some insightful commentary on early Bee Gee music as classical 60â??s guitar pop sound and the remarkable resemblance to the Beatles. Yet, Gallagher adds a poetic comment citing the vocal gift of brothers singing in harmony â?? â??an added instrumentation that no one else can buyâ?• of the uniqueness of the brothersâ?? familial harmonized vocals. â??You canâ??t buy it. Itâ??s not like you can go down to the shop and buy it like a Stratocaster and run Buddy Holly through it.â?• In a direct testimonial, Nick Jonas of the Jonas Brothers also adds insight into performing and living with brothers and â??the heightened emotionality that comes into play.â?•

In a series of interviews from 1999, the Brothers Gibb open up reflecting on their career as brotherly musicians that spanned four decades at the time of the interviews. Barry, the oldest brother, and fun-loving brother, Robin, had a very public sibling rivalry leading to Robin quitting the band on March 19th, 1969. Brother Maurice dubbed himself â??the peacemaker, as he was often made into â??the go-between.â?• Marshall utilizes a montage of newspaper headlines combined with voice-over narration from the brothers to help explain what was happening and how they were feeling about the situation.

Deftly, Marshall repeats an earlier technique in having Noel Gallagher comment on the fraternal dynamic as being a bandâ??s greatest strength and its greatest weakness. The band suffered immensely during this time and seemed to be treading water until reinventing its sound in America with a 1975 album *Main Course* that topped the Canadian music charts and peaked in the US at number 14. The groupâ??s popularity surged with its 1976, follow-up, Platinum-selling album, *Children of the World,* and with the 1977 *Saturday Night Fever*, the roof came off. The run culminated with the 1979 album *Spirits Having Flown*, a best-selling, chart-topper in the US, Canada, and the UK.

In addition to Gallagher and Jonas, other noteworthy performers interviewed on the music and band were musician/actor/producer Justin Timberlake, Coldplay frontman, Chris Martin, solo performer of Fleetwood Mac heydays, Lindsay Buckingham, Alice Cooper, and band manager Robert Stigwood. Timberlake provided a commentary of the Bee Geeâ??s vocals as brass instrumentation. Martin spoke to the backlash that derailed the Bee Geeâ??s phenomenal global superstardom â?? the first band to achieve the status according to martin. Cooper and Buckingham delivered timely remarks on the music culture during the Bee Geeâ??s heyday as the â??Kings of Disco.â?• Stigwood addressed the business side of managing the band and the small number of songs radio stations played in rotation â?? one of the vital components leading to the over-saturation and ultimate backlash of the Bee Geeâ??s culminating in Chicago disc jockey Chris Dahl blowing up disco tapes and records to a massive crowd at Comiskey Park in Chicago, Illinois.

The backlash took a heavy toll on the band as they never regained their popularity. In a 2019 pensive and soul-searching clip of Barry Gibb walking a narrative, voice-over echoes the price of fame. Perception is reality as Barry often feels alone as his bandmates and brothers have all passed away including youngest brother, Andy Gibb. Andy idolized his brothers and Barry helped Andy get his solo career off the ground. Andy Gibb had an explosive solo career mimicking his brothersâ?? disco style and his number one Billboard hit, â??Shadow Dancing,â?• could easily pass for a Bee Gees song.

Andy Gibb died in 1988 at the age of 30.

The Bee Gees: How Do You Mend A Broken Heart is informative, entertaining, and heartwrenching. Frank Marshall reveals not only the heart and soul of the band and its music but also the power dynamic that shaped and molded the groupâ??s enormous and impactful musical legacy. Highly recommended.

Category

1. Documentary
2. Nashville Film Festival

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