



# The Rise and Fall of Disco

# Roots of Disco - Music

- Disco came out of night clubs - owners were looking for something to take the place of expensive live acts
  - DJs started playing discs, or records to get a more electronic sound that audiences could dance to.
- Disco music featured an electronic dance beat and a mix of sounds from other styles of music. Disco was upbeat, carefree and danceable.

# Early Audience for Disco



- *LGBTQ people:*

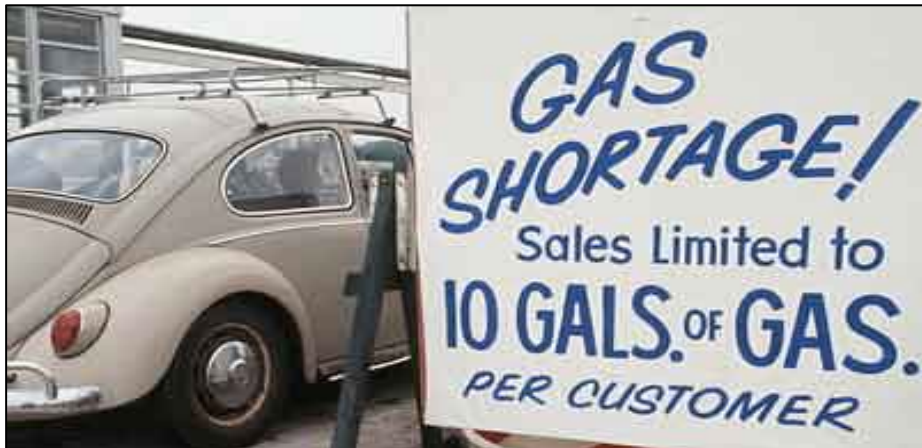
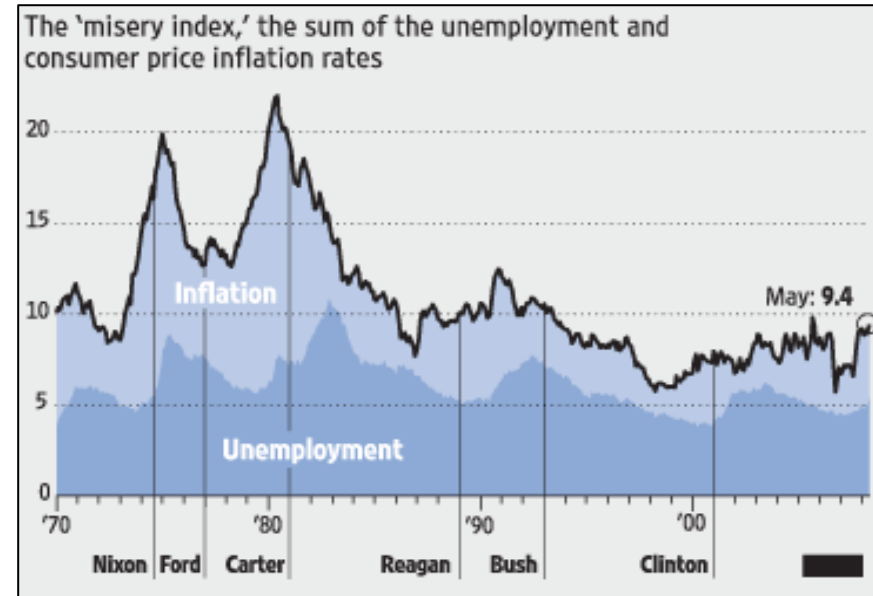
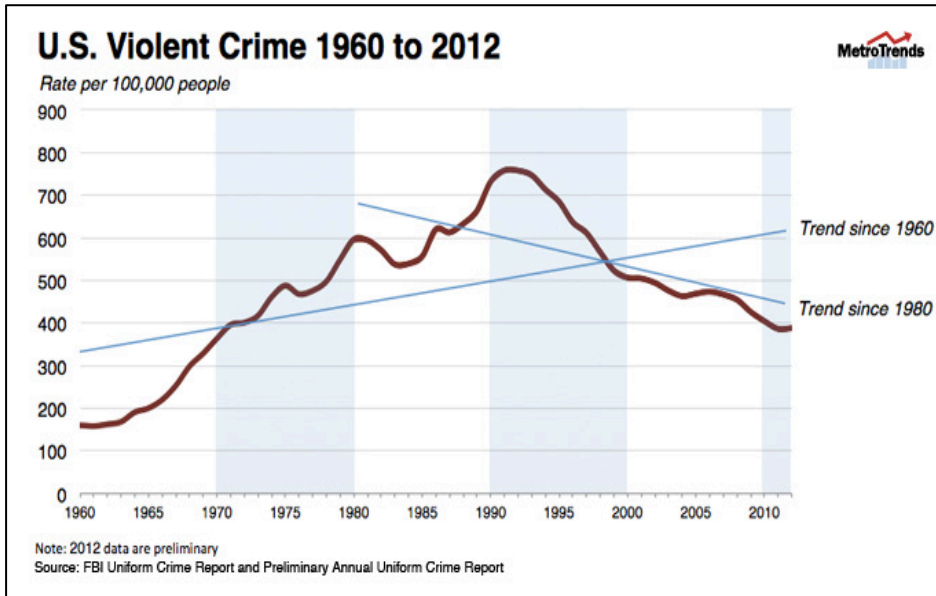
- Early disco clubs were a safe space for gay men to get together & dance
  - The first discos opened in NYC and revolutionized the club scene. Before this, gay bars were in constant fear of raids.

- *Women & African-Americans:*

- Disco offered a home & a voice to women and African-Americans. (Mainstream music up to the mid-'70s was very white male dominated – disco broke that mold.)

# Roots of Disco – Economic & Political Changes

What can we say about the economy/political situation in the 1970s?



# **Roots of Disco – Economic & Political Changes**

- **How do you think a troubled economy/politics helped the rise of disco?**
- **Disco provided an escape from “the general depression and drabness of the political and musical atmosphere of the ‘70s.”**

# Disco Moves into the Mainstream

- Mainstream radio started playing disco in the mid-1970s
- Popular disco artists included: The Village People, Diana Ross, the Bee Gees, etc.
- At first, disco was an outlet for LGBT people & women. -> **BUT** by the mid-1970s, disco was mainstream and targeted at heterosexual working class youth.

# *Saturday Night Fever*



- The film *Saturday Night Fever* made John Travolta famous.
- The film centers around the life of Tony Manero, a working class 19-year-old from Brooklyn who finds local stardom as a dancer at a neighborhood discotheque.
- *Saturday Night Fever* helped make disco popular in mainstream, heterosexual culture. HOW?









DISCO

Came from the French term  
“discotheque.”

Disco was more than a type of music – it was also a *style of dancing, a type of dance club style, a way of dressing & an attitude.*

# Dancing

- Dancing was central to disco.
  - “What set disco apart [from [pop music] was that it was not only music *for* dancing, but also music *about* dancing.”
- Popular dances: *The Bump*, *The Hustle*



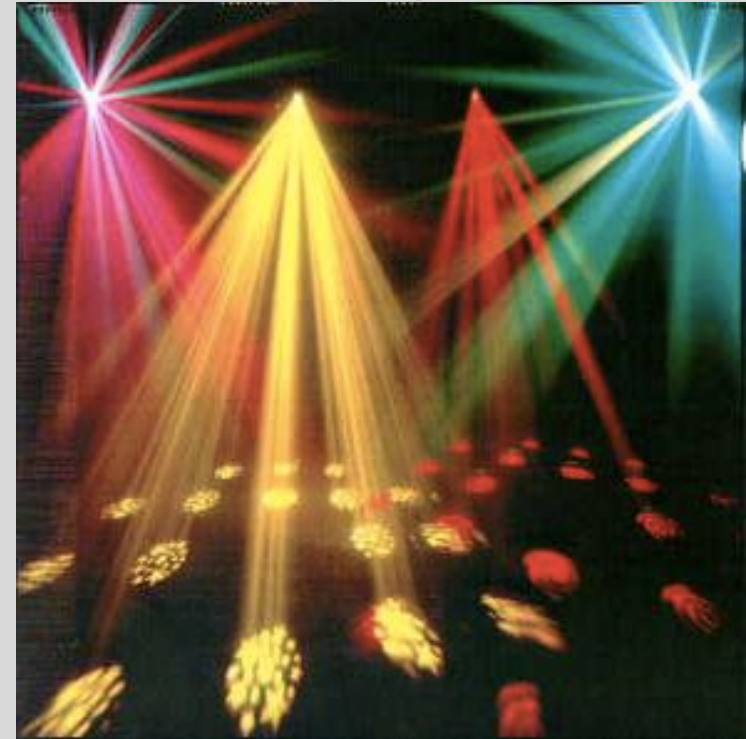
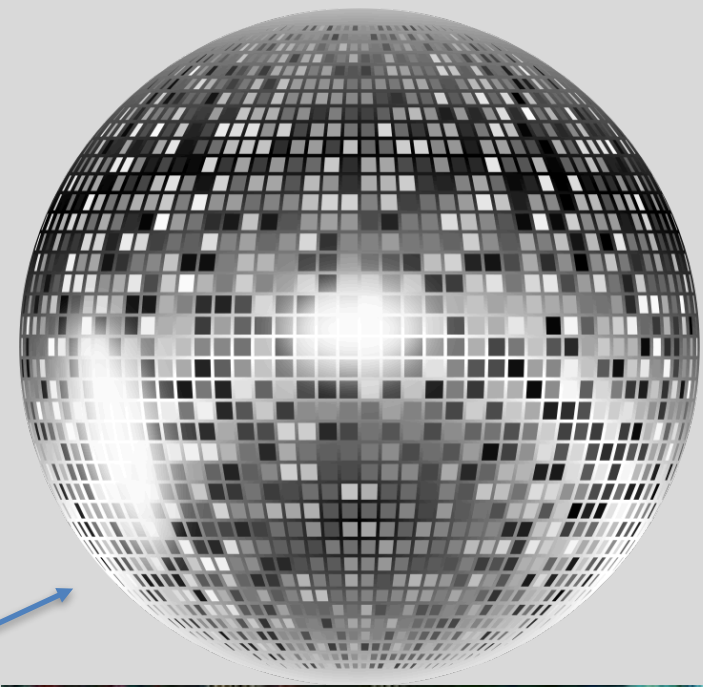




Let's dance!

# Clubs – The Discotheque

- Common discotheque decor:
  - DJ at the center of the club
  - Mirror ball
  - Synchronized lights
  - Smoke machines & dry ice
  - Pin spot light



- Disco fashion was a form of expression:
  - Acceptance of many different styles of dress
  - Emphasis on individualism
- Discos were “a fantasy world, where you can change your identity by changing your costume.”
- Styles included:
  - Platform shoes
  - Polyester, bright colors and loud prints
  - Shiny things: sequins, glitter, metallic fabrics
  - Bell bottoms, jumpsuits, halter tops, & feather boas

# Disco Fashion









# Disco Music - "Bad Girls," Donna Summer



# Donna Summer, *The Queen of Disco*



- Born in Boston in 1948
- Released “Love to Love You Baby” which was a 17 minutes long song, featuring moaning and suggestive lyrics which led many radio stations to refuse to play the song.
- Other big hits: “Last Dance,” “Bad Girls,” “Hot Stuff” and “She Works Hard for the Money.”

“Love to Love You,” Donna Summer

# The Village People





- The Village People

- Named for NYC's Greenwich Village, an area with a large gay population, where the modern Gay Rights Movement started with the Stonewall Riots.

- Group was created to attract gay audiences while also poking fun at some of the major stereotypes of gay men

- Known for their popular songs, “YMCA,” “Macho Man,” and “In the Navy.”

# “YMCA,” The Village People



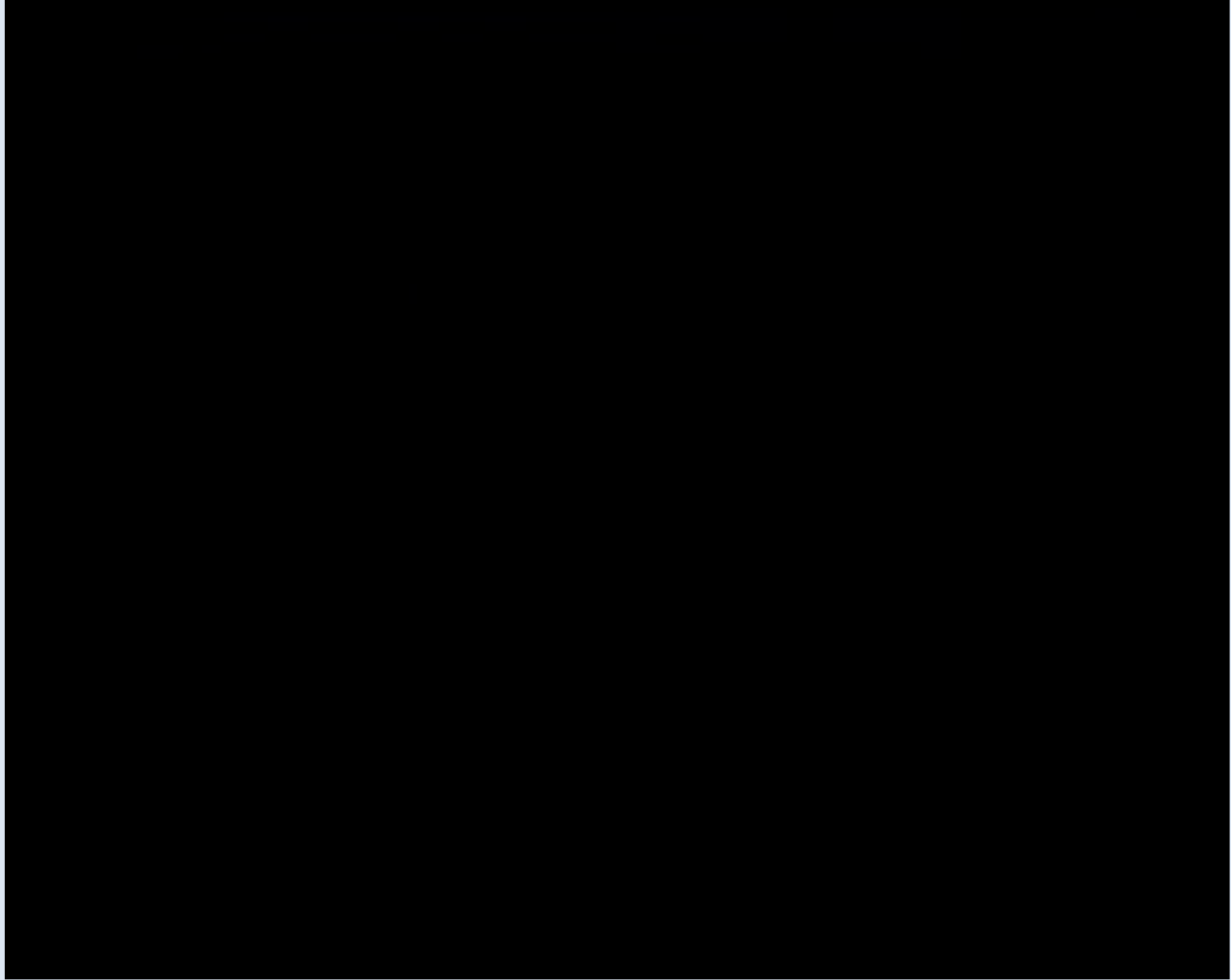
How do they reflect common stereotypes about gay men?



# “In the Navy,” The Village People



- The Village People were one of the few groups in the '70s to shoot music videos for their singles (which were popular in Europe – pre-MTV!)
- The success of YMCA led a Navy spokesperson to contact the band asking for a similar song (since that song had done so well for the actual YMCA.)
  - Village People wrote the song in praise of the US Navy (free advertising!)



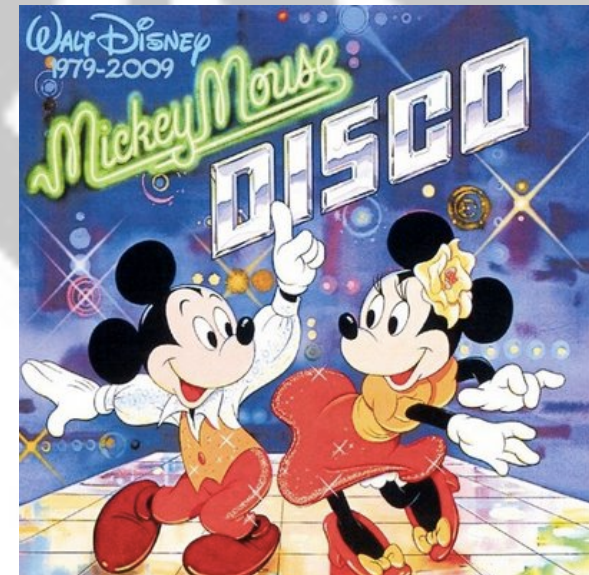


What was important about the Village People's success?

- *They helped to make disco more mainstream AND to help bring aspects of gay culture in mainstream American life.*

# The Death of Disco


- Some said that *disco singers* *lacked talent*.
  - In live performances, disco stars relied heavily on recorded tracks and off-stage musical support.
- Disco became *VERY commercial*.
  - Burger King ran a commercial with the Burger King dancing to disco in a restaurant & Disney even had their own disco albums!





# Disco Demolition Night

July 12, 1979, at Comiskey Park



# Disco Demolition Derby

Anti-disco rally organized by hard rock radio DJ in 1979.

Anti-disco fans burned more than 100,000 disco albums at Detroit's Tiger Stadium as a mid-game promotion. Protestors' rioted, ultimately forcing cancellation of game 2.



NFL **BREAKING NEWS** Federal agents arrest convicted man **ESPN**