



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:*

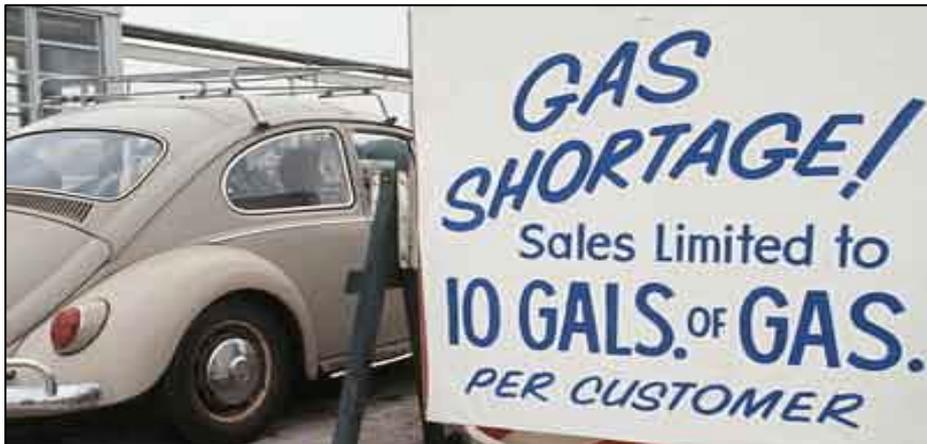
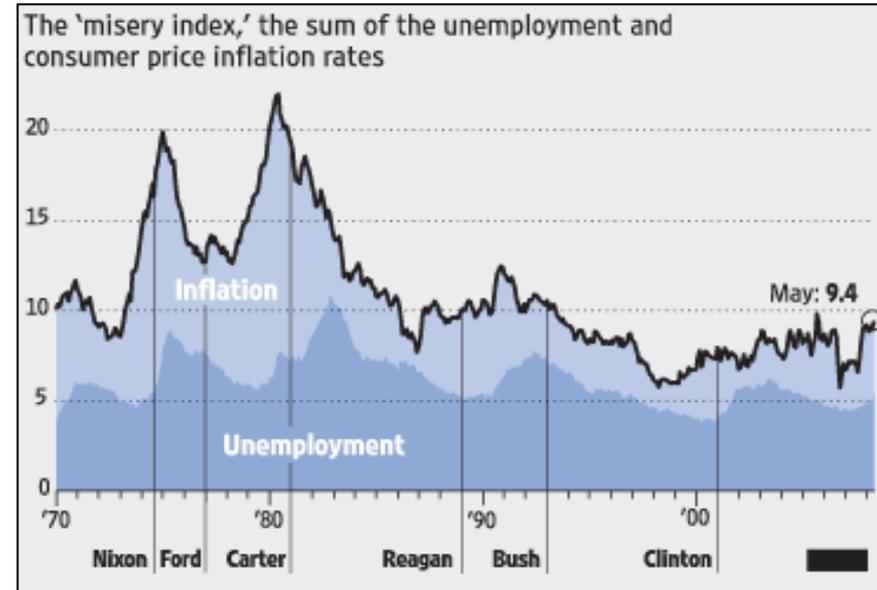
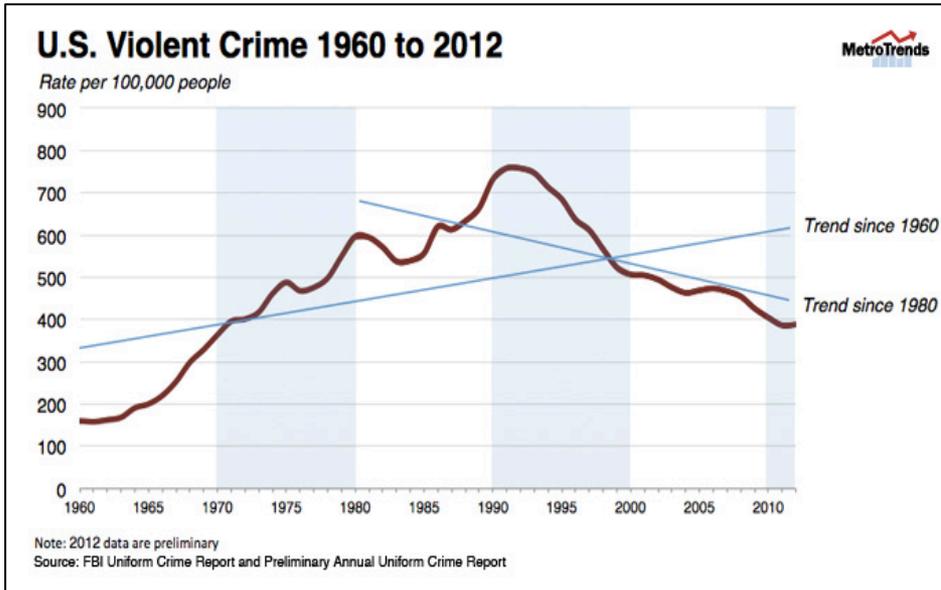
- Early disco clubs were a safe space for gay men to get together & dance
 - The first discos opened in NYC and revolutionized the club scene. Before this, gay bars were in constant fear of raids.

- *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?



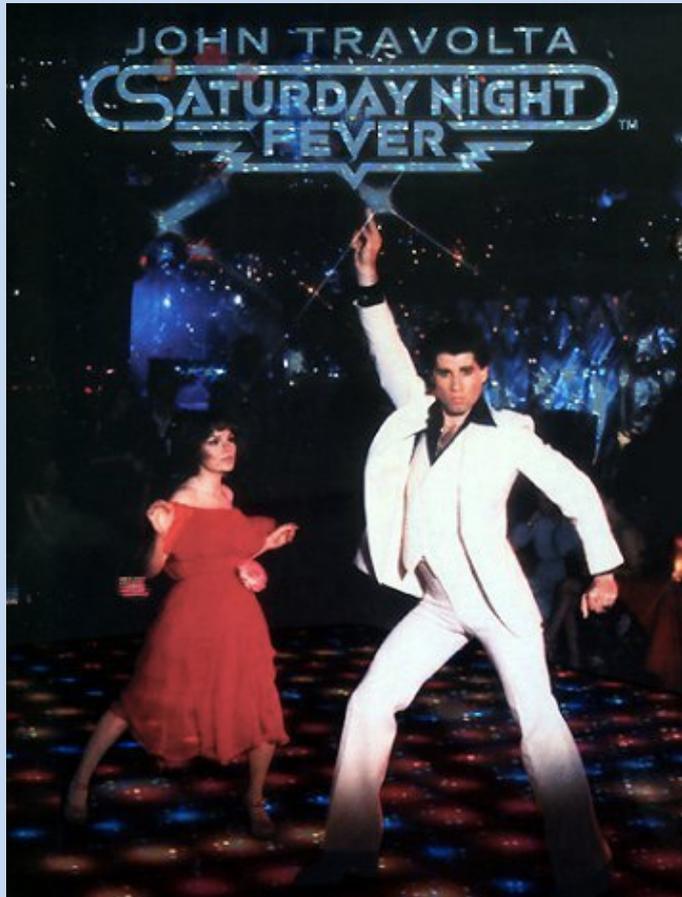
Roots of Disco – Economic & Political Changes

- **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

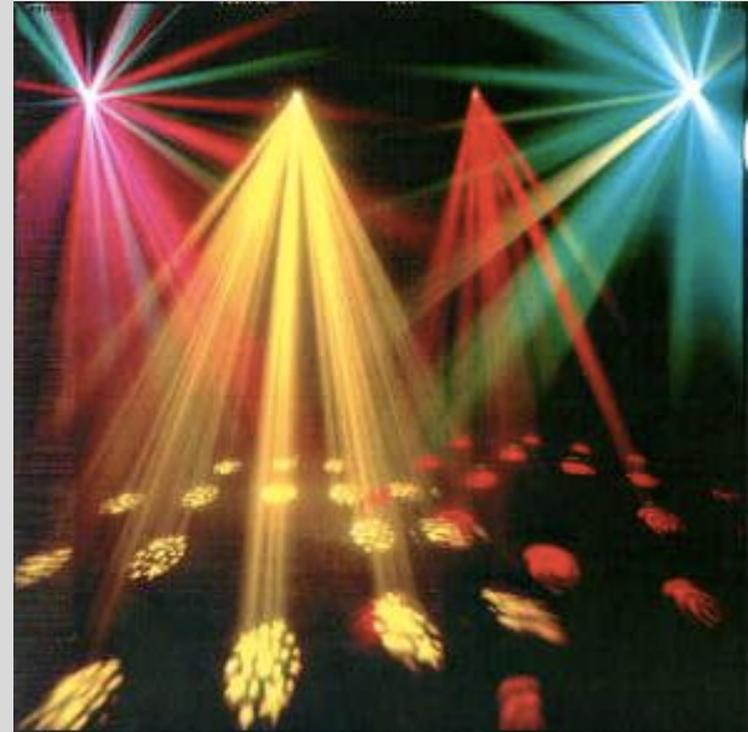
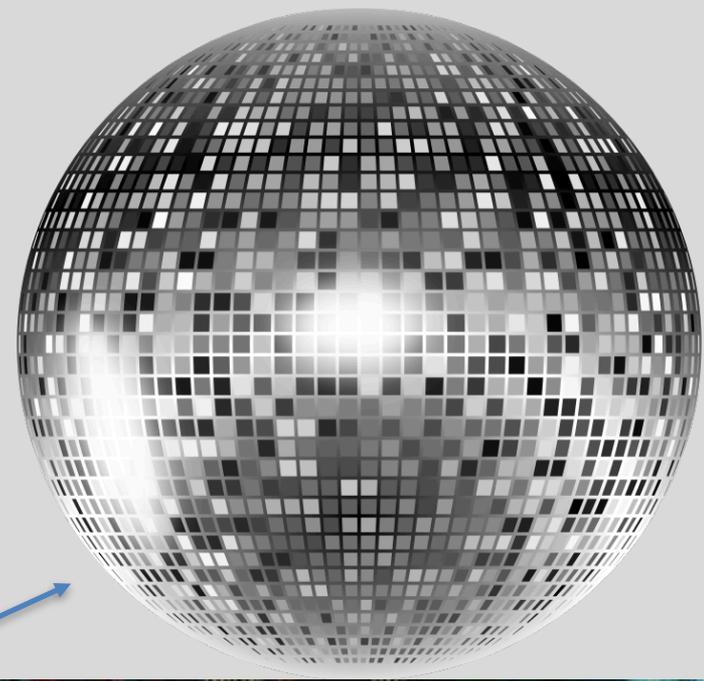
- Dancing was central to disco.
 - “What set disco apart [from [pop music] was that it was not only music *for* dancing, but also music *about* dancing.”
- Popular dances: *The Bump*, *The Hustle*



Let's dance!

Clubs – The Discotheque

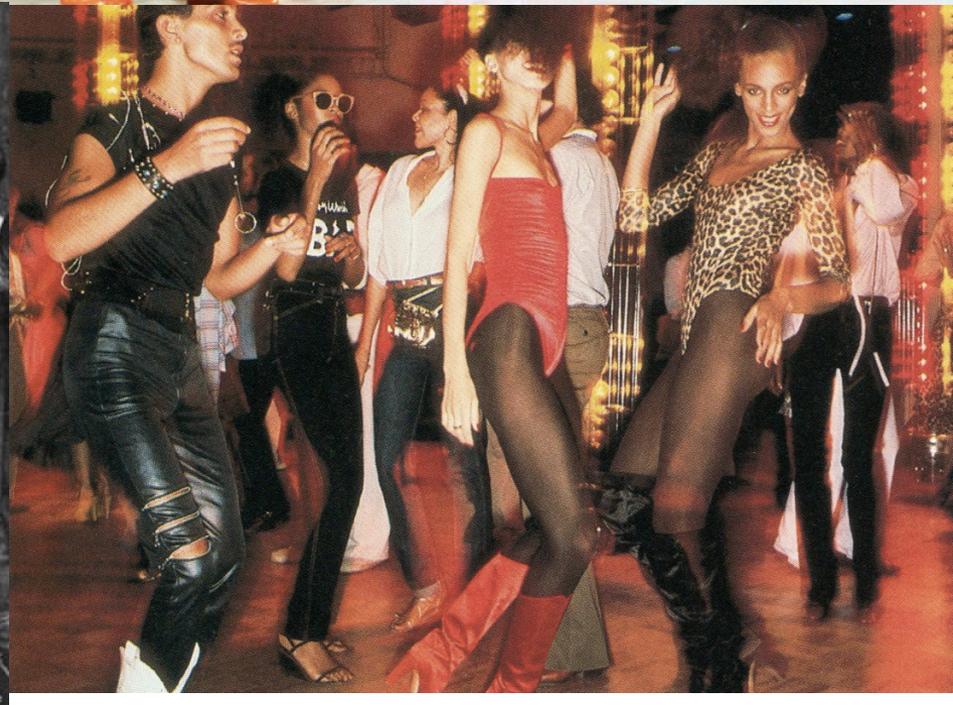
- Common discotheque decor:
 - DJ at the center of the club
 - Mirror ball
 - Synchronized lights
 - Smoke machines & dry ice
 - Pin spot light

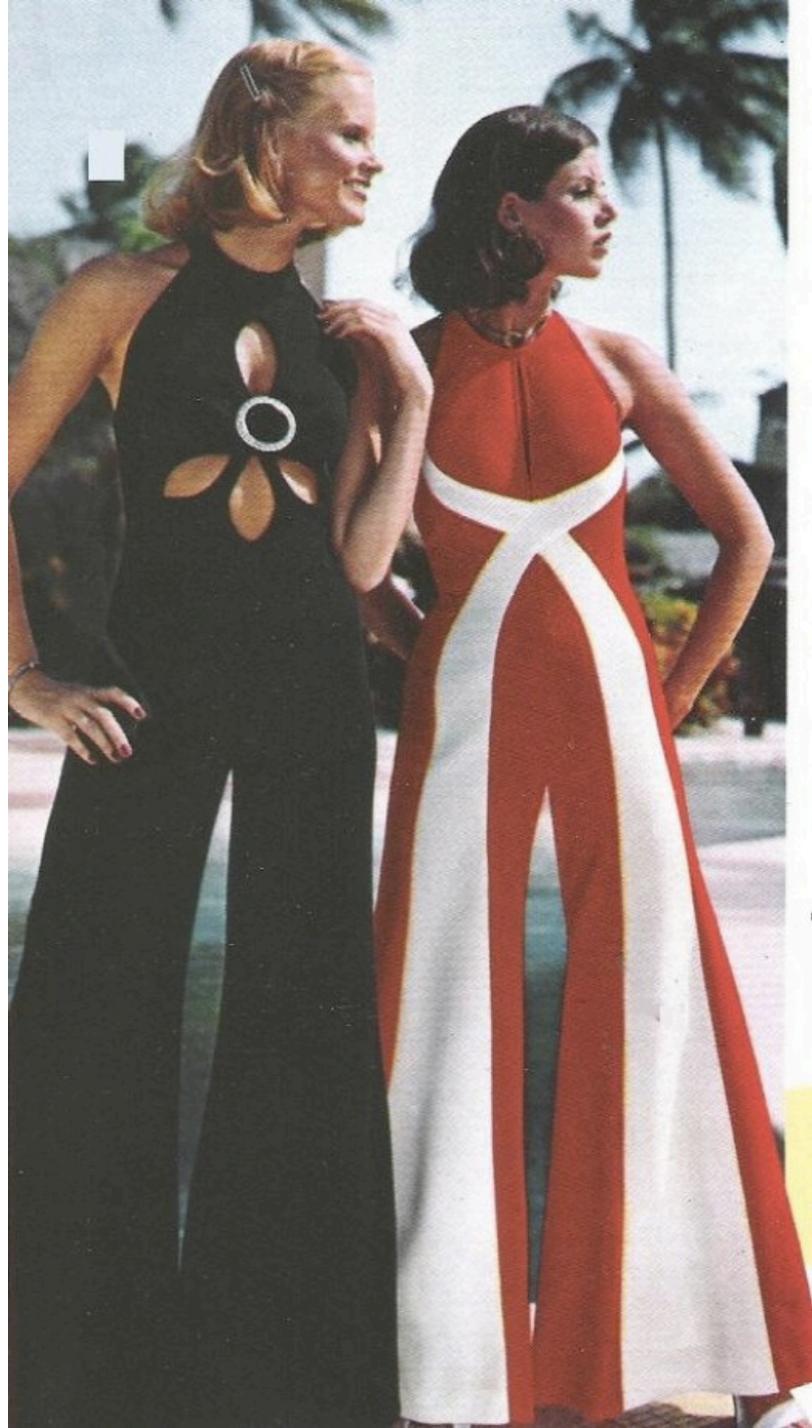


- Disco fashion was a form of expression:
 - Acceptance of many different styles of dress
 - Emphasis on individualism
- Discos were “a fantasy world, where you can change your identity by changing your costume.”
- Styles included:
 - Platform shoes
 - Polyester, bright colors and loud prints
 - Shiny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

Disco Fashion







Disco Music - “Bad Girls,” Donna Summer

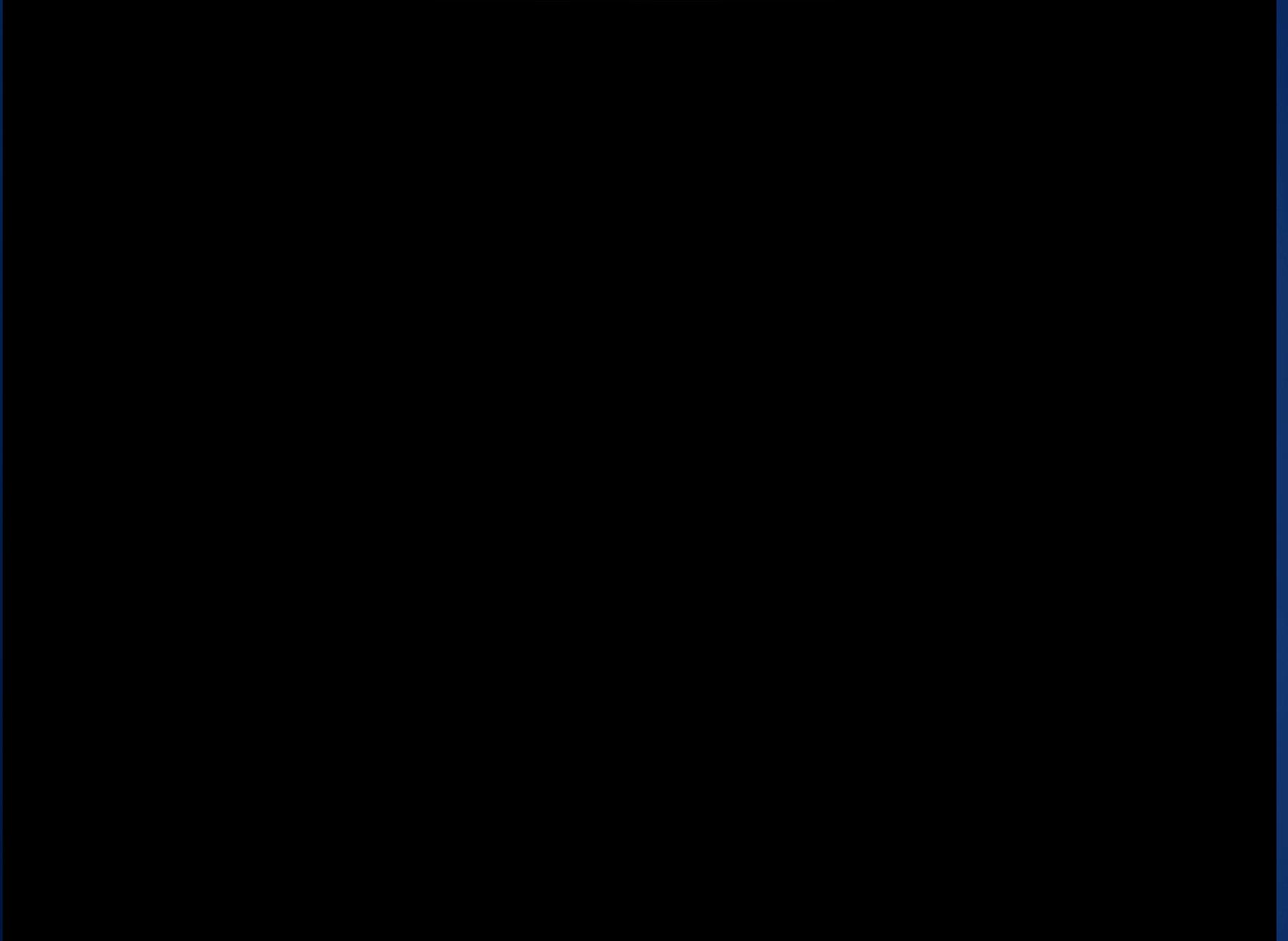


Donna Summer, *The Queen of Disco*



- 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

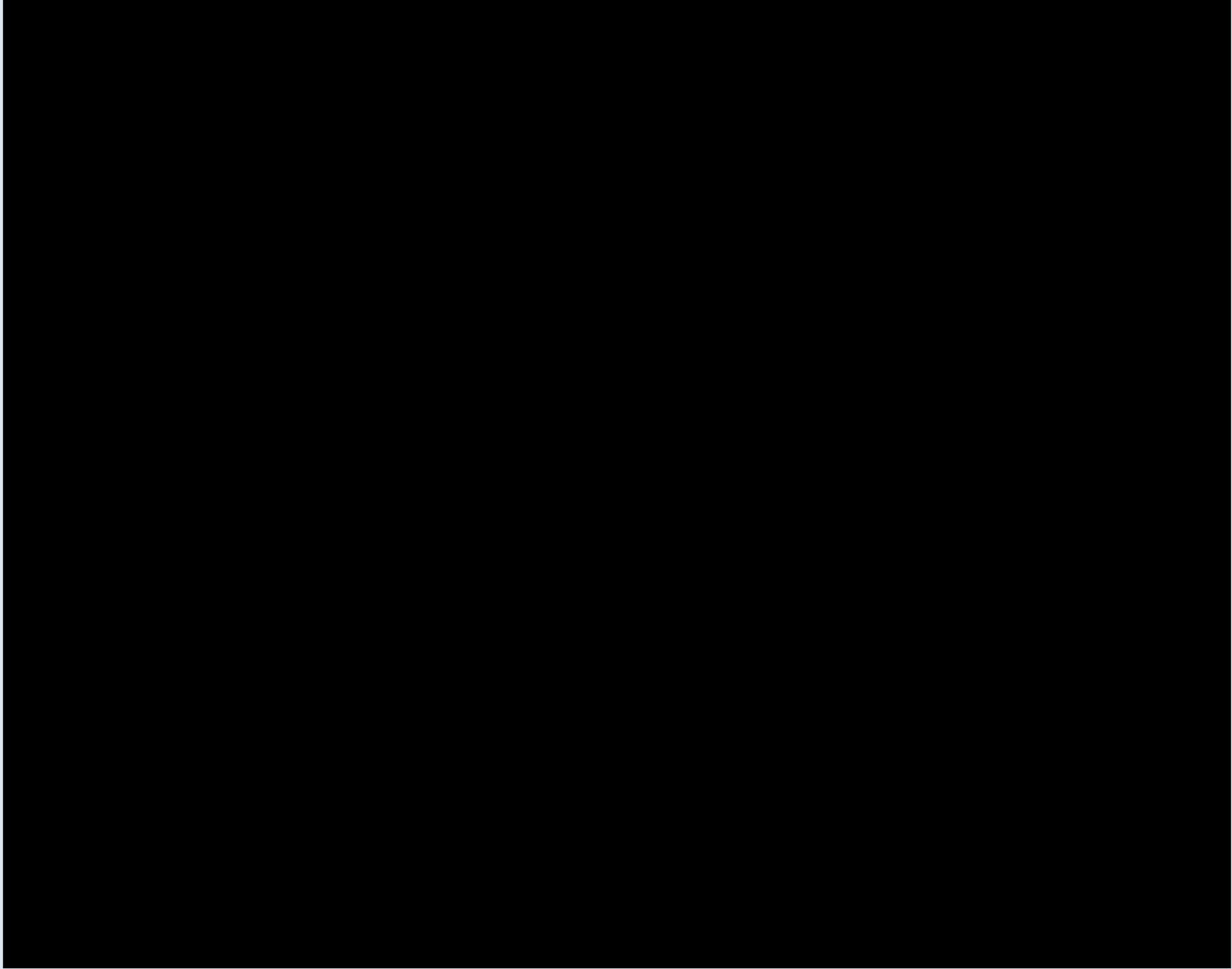


How do they reflect common stereotypes about gay men?

“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!)



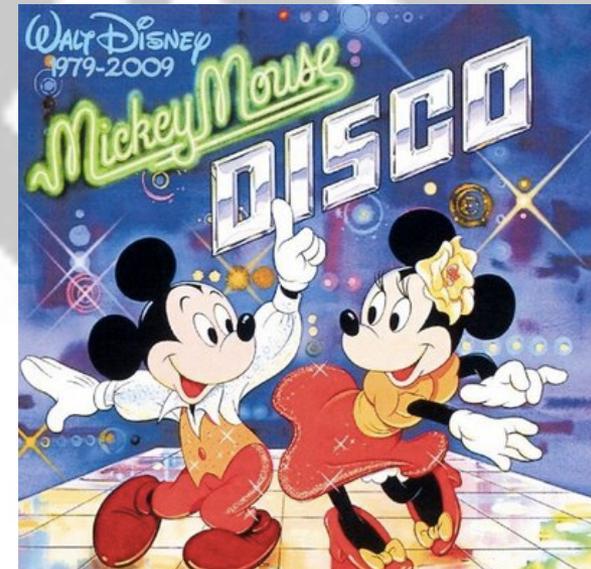


What was important about the Village People's success?

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

The Death of Disco

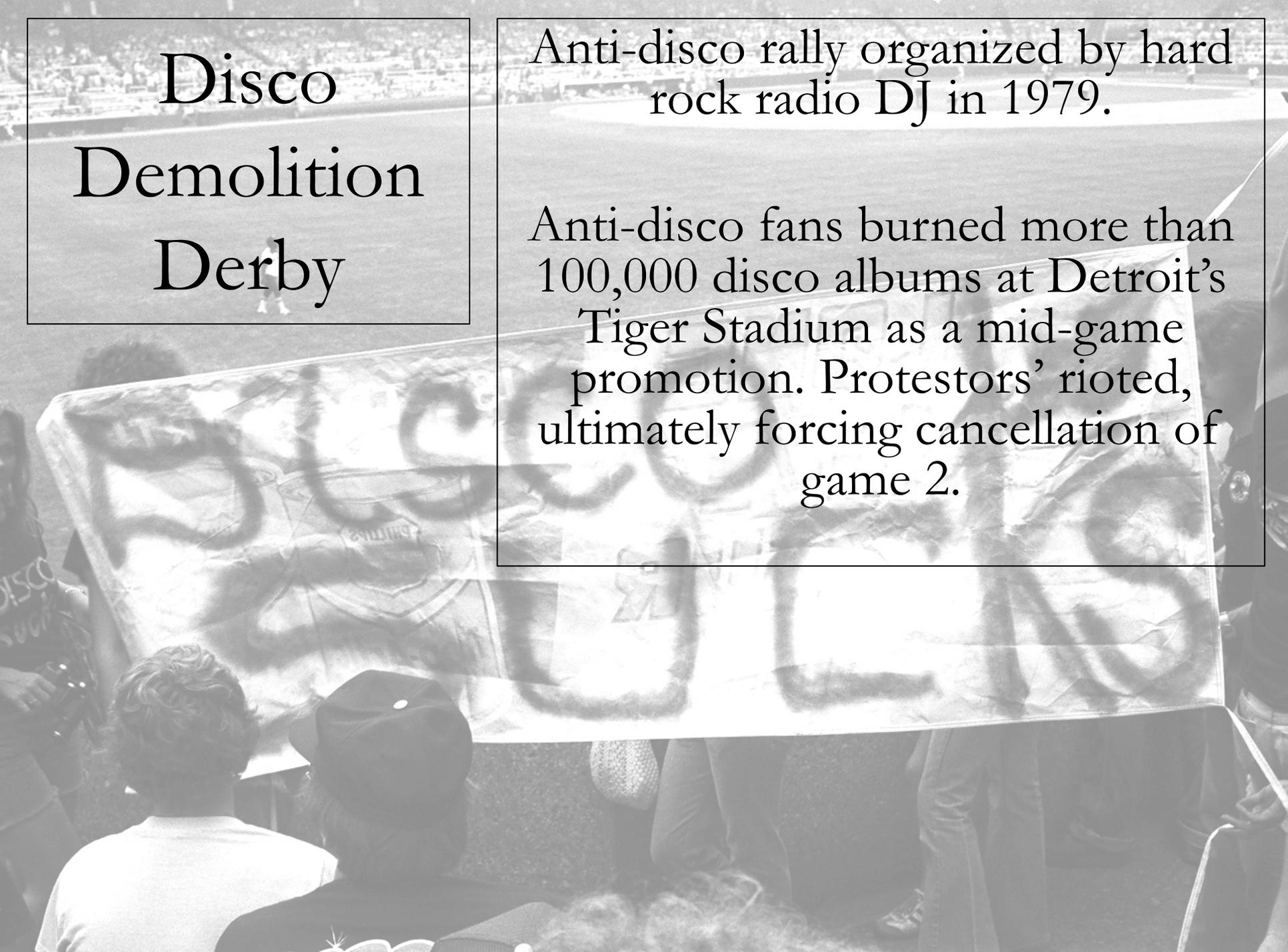
- Some said that *disco singers* *lacked talent*.
 - In live performances, disco stars relied heavily on recorded tracks and off-stage musical support.
- Disco became *VERY commercial*.
 - Burger King ran a commercial with the Burger King dancing to disco in a restaurant & Disney even had their own disco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