

Writer got feverish Saturday

By CARL STODDARD

Let me begin by saying that I don't like to dance. That's why I wasn't disappointed with the way things worked out Saturday night.

Saturday was to be my introduction to the Southfield disco scene. We had it all planned. But we underestimated the fever that is Saturday night.

It was "Saturday Night Fever". John Travolta's hit movie, that started the whole thing. Friends of my wife and mine had seen the movie and wanted us to see it while they took it in a second time. And because the movie makes you want to dance, they said, we should head for a discotheque afterward.

We began at Yesterdays, a watering hole at the Southfield Sheraton, before the movie. Surrounded by brass railings, stained glass windows and piped-in music, we ordered a round of drinks and tried to get in the mood for the movie. It wasn't easy.

We were almost the only ones in Yesterdays until we left at 7:30 that night. The fever, we learned, starts later in the evening. Within an hour, the bartender told us the lines would begin to form outside Yesterdays. At the peak of the night, the lines would mean a 45 minute wait just to get in the door, he said.

WE HAD advance tickets for "Saturday Night Fever" showing at the TeX Cinema. We still found ourselves standing in a line just to get into the theater. A longer line stretched through the mall lobby as people waited for the last tickets to the show.

The movie itself revolves around a young disco dancer in step with the times. It was set in New York, which is closer to Southfield than you might imagine.

After the movie, we decided to try our luck at the Giraffe, a popular night spot at the Raleigh House. The parking lot was filled and we expected problems getting in the door. We got in the door, however, and paid the man taking \$2 a head for admission.

The Giraffe was "Saturday Night Fever" all over again. The music was appropriately loud, the lights flashed and flickered just right and the dance floor was filled with writhing bodies. But there were differences, too.

In the movie, John Travolta never seemed to have any problems finding a seat. We spent half an hour treading our way through crowd, but ended up standing up. Folks at the Giraffe apparently were there for the evening.

John Travolta wasn't there, but his brothers were everywhere. Every third young man, it seemed, looked like John Travolta's clone. Their hair was cut short and swept back. Small gold chains dangled from every open-collared neck.

WHILE I STOOD around wondering what happened to the Beatles, my wife headed for the women's restroom. It was as crowded

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as the dance floor, she said, and filled with young women applying another layer of lipstick and more blusher and getting every hair in place.

We decided to go elsewhere for food, liquid refreshment and a chair. All three were available at Marvin Gardens on Telegraph north of Twelve Mile.

There we ate, drank and talked about dancing. But the music, supplied by a combo of young men in sport coats, slowly took us out of the mood.

To recapture it, we headed back for the Giraffe. It was more crowded than ever. And as before, most of the people at the Giraffe were younger than our group and decidedly single.

By that time it was midnight and our search for a place to buy was becoming a grind.

But we tried again. Back in the car, we drove again to Yesterdays. As we had been warned earlier, a line stretched outside the night spot and still more people continued to arrive as we stood in the lobby and decided what to do next. Southfield, we learned, has more than its share of night people. We also learned that we weren't among them.

Tired of standing, again, we called it an evening and headed home. We promised each other to try again. And next time, we will skip the movie and stake out a place early.

As I said in the beginning, my legs weren't made for dancing. One left foot keeps stepping on the other. But I have to admit that, despite the hassles we encountered while trying to hustle, I somehow managed to get plugged into the electricity of the dancing scene.

Before last weekend, I was surmising that the discos were on their last legs. I was wrong. Discos and all their variations are still alive and well. The fever is still raging, even for folks like me. So I'll be back, as soon as I get my hair combed back and pick up a couple gold chain necklaces.

Even if I can't dance like John Travolta, I can look like him.



The dancing fever has invaded not only the discos, but also the high schools. Two Southfield-Lathrup students bump to the times during a dance marathon at their high school.

Meanwhile, their older brothers and sisters are standing in line for a chance to dance at several popular Southfield discos. (Staff photo)

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