

IN MY OWN WORDS



(from left) Barry, Robin and Maurice Gibb, who made up the Bee Gees; performing solo; (inset) with wife Linda.

Australia is still my home. This upcoming tour is a sentimental journey. I want to visit Redcliffe [near Brisbane], where we lived after we emigrated from England in 1958, and see the places where we played as kids and as musicians.

Dad was leader of a big band, and Mum was the vocalist. They played for American soldiers who were posted in England during World War II. My wife Linda's parents danced to my father's band. It was serendipitous that I'd meet her one day.

When we arrived in Australia, I thought it was paradise. My starkest memories are of butterflies and snakes. At first, we were frightened, but then we started to live amongst it. It was fantastic to see blue-tongued lizards.

We started singing in the lounge room, imitating Elvis and The Everly Brothers. I heard that music and my hair stood on end. I was the eldest, but Maurice and Robin said, "We'd like to do this, too." I thought, OK, let's do it together.

Our first gigs were at Redcliffe Speedway. We sang in between the races. That's how we got our name, because deejay Bill Gates was there one night and he put our music on the radio. He suggested we call ourselves the Bee Gees because there were so many Bs and Gs in our names. The speedway is still there - that's one of the places I want to visit.

We met Col Joye and Johnny O'Keefe while doing shows in Surfers Paradise. They said we had to go to the 'big smoke', which was Sydney. We ended up getting on the TV show *Sing Sing Sing*, in the '60s.

You couldn't become international if you stayed in Australia. We reached a point

"LIFE MUST GO ON"

BARRY GIBB

where we had to leave. But when we returned to England in 1967, people told us to go back to Australia; groups were out.

Then producer Robert Stigwood called.

We sent tapes to so many people in the music industry; he was the only one who called. He believed in us.

We went to America in the '70s and our sound started to change. In England, no one wanted to know us. People were sick of ballads. It was Eric Clapton who suggested we do a record in America. 'Jive Talking' was the first song we wrote when we arrived.

One day, Robert [Stigwood] called and said, "I'm doing a film about youth culture and dancing." It didn't have a title, so I suggested *Night Fever*. The producers were worried it sounded like a porno and added 'Saturday' to the name.

The falsetto thing was discovered by accident. We were recording 'Nights on Broadway' and one of us would scream in falsetto at the end. It became so successful, we couldn't not do a falsetto album.

Now those songs are called classics.

Whenever someone says something negative about that period, I feel I can't regret having six American number ones in a row.

All my brothers have gone. It's been a shocking decade. It's tough for Mum; she sheds a tear nearly every day. I feel for her. But, as I say, the windows are opening, the fresh air's coming in and life must go on.

All of us stumbled with alcohol and substance abuse. Luckily, it wasn't as much of a problem for me. But there is the stress of being in the public eye and having to raise the bar every time. Look at the casualties - Michael Jackson wanted to escape. He had people taking from him all the time.

My youngest brother, Andy, and I were very much alike. Because Maurice and Robin were twins, we gravitated towards each other. But his struggle with drugs claimed him in the end. [Andy died from a heart attack in 1988.]

Maurice was a warm, giving person. He'd do magic tricks for children. He had issues with alcohol, but he admitted his problems and fought hard to get through them.

[Maurice died from a heart attack in 2003.] **If Robin had lived longer, a lot of great work would have come out of him.** But he was troubled and difficult. [Robin lost his battle with cancer last year.]

Linda is the love of my life. We've been married 42 years and have a huge family with our five kids and their families. There's one rule in our home - we don't argue inside. Any argument, take it outside. It's a good rule.

TIFFANY BAKKER

Barry Gibb launches his *Mythology Tour* in Australia in February. Visit www.barrygibb.com.

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