

Robin Gibb, 61, the singer best known as one-third of the Bee Gees, and his son Robin-John, 28, talk about life in the limelight of one of the biggest pop groups ever and why they are finally enjoying time together

Saturday night fever? We know how to share it

Robin: RJ was born in Miami in 1983, the year the Bee Gees released the soundtrack to *Stayin' Alive*, the sequel to *Saturday Night Fever*. It was a very busy period for me, so my wife, Dwina, and I often flew to and from our home in America on Concorde. RJ went through the sound barrier many times when Dwina was pregnant, so he really was a supersonic baby.

Though we were working hard, I did manage to get there for RJ's birth. I have to say it wasn't an easy experience for me, but I'm glad I made it. I already had two children from my previous marriage, Spencer and Melissa, but I didn't feel it was my duty to be around as a father all the time. I think that's a bit of a myth. As a parent you have to get on with your own life too.

RJ's early years were quite different from mine because he was born in a very cool, happening city in America. He jetted around the world following the Bee Gees, grew up in the public eye a little bit, then went to university to study science. My brothers, Barry and Maurice, and I, on the other hand, started our lives in a terraced house on the Isle of Man before we moved to Chorlton in Manchester. The first time we sang together as brothers was when we were school kids there — on stage at a Saturday-morning cinema club — and we all thought it was great fun.

In the late 1950s my father decided to move the family to Australia. I'd never really been anywhere, but all of a sudden I was on a ship, sailing halfway round the world. I remember we became stuck just off Egypt because of the Suez crisis. When we finally started to sail down the canal, I went up on



to the deck and could see nothing but a logjam of boats in both directions. It was an incredible adventure for an eight-year-old boy, and it only cost a tenner!

Unlike RJ, I never went to university. Maurice, Barry and I carried on singing in Brisbane to supplement our pocket money, encouraged by a local radio DJ, who thought up the name Bee Gees — a play on "Brothers Gibb". Then in 1967 we moved back to England and we signed with Polydor.

Dwina and RJ came along on some of our later tours, but it's not an easy life being on the road with a child. RJ would watch us perform, and sometimes I'd catch a glimpse of him in the audience or watching from the wings. I'd often see him singing along to his favourites, *More Than a Woman*, or *I Started a Joke*.

RJ was born with a musical talent. I've never tried to force my beliefs and opinions on him. He never came to me and said: "Dad, I want to be like you — show me." His musical development has been natural and organic. I do believe

there must be something in his genes that has given him a head start to be as good as he is. And it's amazing to think RJ and I are now composing together. We've written 10 movements for our *Titanic Requiem*, which is being recorded by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and a choir. It'll be released six months before the centenary of the sinking of the ship in April 2012.

So nowadays Dwina and I see RJ quite a lot. He splits his time between Miami and our house in Thame, Oxfordshire, where he grew up. It's a converted monastery, believed to date back almost 900 years. Henry VIII is said to have visited with Anne Boleyn, and there's a resident ghost.

Often when kids leave home you don't see them again so much, so it's wonderful having RJ around the house. We spend many hours talking together, not just about music but about history and key events from the past. He's also interested in my charity work — I've been working on plans for a memorial to RAF Bomber Command in London. I was astounded to learn a few years back that there's no monument to those serving in the Command who lost their lives in the second world war. They served a vital role in protecting this country from German attack, and many were very young. We need to raise another £2m, but in November we're due to unveil a £5.5m pavilion at one of the entrances to Green Park in central London.

I'm about to be involved in a Steven Spielberg movie about the life of the Bee Gees, but I want to make the time to work with RJ again. My standards are very high and I'm a tough person to impress,



but he's blown me away with what he's come up with in the studio. I know I'm biased because he's my son, but RJ has a genuine talent.

RJ: My earliest memories are of travelling between our homes in England and America. Flying on Concorde just seemed like the normal thing to do. I went to school in both places, so it wasn't a conventional way of growing up. Our house in Thame was a great place to explore and have fun. There was plenty of room to wander and it was full of mystery and adventure.

I only started to realise who my Dad was when I talked to classmates at school. I kind of enjoyed the fact he was a star, because he didn't have the same routine as other people, but I probably didn't truly appreciate