

The Bridges of *Saturday Night Fever*

**Ulf Zander,
Professor of History, Lund University, Sweden
Department of History
Lund University
Sweden**

Bridges have both figuratively and literally roles in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). It begins with a journey from the center to a periphery, illustrated by the camera which moves away from Manhattan and end up in the suburbs. A common theme is the continuous pursuit that the main characters Stephanie and Tony have to cross bridges in order to get to New York's heart and build their future there.

Especially important is the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Tony, played by John Travolta, knows almost everything about the creation of the bridge and a variety of technical data. Furthermore, he collects anecdotes about the construction.

The importance of bridges is also evident in other scenes. I would argue that other important aspects of this film, like class and ethnicity, becomes more evident when they are analyzed together with bridges as both important constructions in their own right as well as a powerful metaphor.

In my paper I would elaborate that the success of *Saturday Night Fever* had a number of explanations, from the timing of the film, which coincided with the rise of the disco music, and the stardom of John Travolta to more subtle ingredients. Some of these had to do with the politics in the US in the 1970s. In many of these cases the bridge became a useful symbol, for instance when it came to possible connections between the past and the present, between the Italian heritage and the Italian-American experience and between the reality of a shop assistant in the suburbs and the dream of a famous dancer in Manhattan.