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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Saturday Night Fever

Musicalsommer Kufstein, Festungsarena, 03.08.2026 [ENA]

There is something almost surreal about hearing the song of Bee Gees "Stayin' Alive" bounce off dolomite battlements first raised in the twelfth century. And yet, on a warm Tyrolean night in the Festungsarena, that is precisely the collision of eras that makes the Musicalsommer Kufstein production of Saturday Night Fever one of the summer's most joyful open-air events.

Directed by Vanni Viscusi and musically led by Eva Maria Brugger, this staging of the Stigwood/Oakes musical — running from 31 July to 16 August — is a genuine hit: hot-blooded, wonderfully sung, and set inside one of the most cinematic venues in the Eastern Alps. Before a single Bee Gees bar-line lands, the venue does half the storytelling. The Festung Kufstein rises on a ninety-metre dolomite cliff directly above the Inn, and its documented history reaches back to 1205, when it appears as castrum choufstain in an agreement between Bishop Konrad of Regensburg and Duke Ludwig of Bavaria. For centuries it was called "der Schlüssel von Tirol" — the key to Tyrol — changing hands between Bavaria and Habsburg Austria, reinforced by Duke Ludwig.

The Duke Ludwig the Bearded in 1415, besieged and taken by the future Emperor Maximilian I in 1504, and crowned in 1522 by the massive round Kaiserturm designed under fortress architect Michael Zeller. Margarethe "Maultasch" received it as a wedding gift in 1342; Andreas Hofer's shoe still sits in the Heimatmuseum inside; and every day at noon the Heldenorgel, installed in the Bürgerturm in 1931 with its 4,948 pipes, sends a low, sacred rumble across the whole valley. To stage a disco musical inside that stonework is not a gimmick — it is a small act of dramaturgical genius.

The Festungsarena itself, with its mobile roof, holds up to 4,200 guests and manages the Tyrolean weather with a shrug; on the evening reviewed, a brief mountain rainshower was neutralised in seconds, and the show never blinked. Andrea De Majo's Tony Manero is the heart of the evening. He has the physical grammar the role demands — the loose-hipped Brooklyn swagger, the pointed finger frozen against a mirror-ball sky — but what lifts his performance above pastiche is a lyric tenor of real openness. In the ballads he sings on the tone rather than under it, and his "How Deep Is Your Love", delivered almost as a whispered confession downstage, was the most moving three minutes of the night.

Verena Kollruss's Stephanie Mangano is his ideal foil: a soprano with a bright, cutting top that never turns metallic, and an actress alert to what she has called "Stephanie's ambivalence — strong and insecure,

Redaktioneller Programmdienst: European News Agency

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elegant and vulnerable at once". Their studio-scene duets crackle. Around them, Viscusi has assembled a genuinely European ensemble — performers who have carried Moulin Rouge, Tanz der Vampire and West Side Story — and it shows in the ensemble numbers.

Clara Marie Hendel's Annette is heart-breaking without ever slipping into sentimentality; Frederik Stuhlemmer gives Bobby C a bruised, unstable pathos that turns his story into the show's genuine tragedy; Taddeo Pellegrini's DJ Monty and Elisa Filace's Club Singer / Flo Manero drive the 2001 Odyssey sequences with real vocal power. The dance numbers — polished, sharp, unapologetically theatrical — use the Festungsarena's wide stage as if it had been built for hustle formations rather than infantry parades.

Musically, the evening belongs to Eva Maria Brugger. Her band handles the Bee Gees catalogue with respect but not reverence: horns are punchy, the rhythm section is tight enough to eat off, and the falsetto backing lines shimmer without ever sounding like karaoke tribute. "Night Fever", "You Should Be Dancing" and "Stayin' Alive" all land with the crowd on its feet by the second chorus. Crucially, Brugger also honours the score's darker corners — the underscoring around Bobby's arc has a real orchestral weight — so that the disco euphoria never feels cheap.

By curtain call, four thousand people were dancing on ramparts that once absorbed cannon fire. In that image — mirror ball above, medieval stone below — the Musicalsommer Kufstein has found something close to perfect summer theatre: a show that respects its material, a company that can genuinely sing and move, and a castle that turns every performance into an occasion. Catch it while you still can.

Bericht online lesen: https://ena-press-ram.en-a.eu/kunst_kultur_und_musik/saturday_night_fever-94208/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

V.i.S.d.P. und gem. § 6 MDStV: Dr. Nadejda Komendantova

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