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Family fun at McMenamins Kennedy School



Photos by Liz Devine

McMenamins Kennedy School

Parents and tiny tots can enjoy movies, pizza and fun at Kennedy School

## McMenamins Mommy Matinees: No Babysitter Required

By Kimberly Gadette  
 August 29, 2007

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Babies bouncing up and down in the semi-darkness, as if they're jumping on invisible trampolines instead of being propelled by their parents.

Babies lounging on their backs on cushy loveseats, pointing their chubby fingers at the softly-glowing amber fixtures suspended from above.

Babies transported via stroller, sling or mama herself; babies gathering to eat, whimper and particularly since the lights are low...sleep.

What is this, baby daycare after dark? Nope. It's mommy daycare at the movies — namely McMenamins "Mommy Matinee," held at the Kennedy School on Mondays and Tuesdays at 1:00pm sharp. Well, not exactly 1:00pm sharp — the management kindly waits for everyone to settle before starting the film.

Moms can first order lunch (a dizzying variety of McMenamins pizza and calzone creations, soda, beer and/or wine), and then enter the refurbished school auditorium/movie house. With an extra-wide screen, excellent sound system and aisles big enough to accommodate strollers, the theater is chockablock full of couches, loveseats and chairs of all sizes, shapes and materials, with end tables conveniently positioned for holding food, bottles, toys, etc. Looking more like a massive used furniture showroom than a cinema, it boasts blackout drapes, great A/C and oh, yes, a second-run movie.

Though it's called "Mommy Matinee," McMenamins Theater Film Buyer/Manager Peter Boicourt is quick to state that, "Daddies are welcome as well — we only call it 'Mommy Matinee' because of the alliteration." Boicourt explains that this matinee is different because of only two factors: First, the films are not necessarily family movies ("This is for the parents, not the kids.") Second, no matter how loud the child, you can stay.

Just in case the infant wants no part of the film (perhaps two baby-sucked thumbs down?), mother and junior can beat a hasty retreat, since the parking lot to this reconvered 1915 elementary school is directly behind the building.

Though nowhere as old as the school itself, the infant-friendly matinee originated in October 2004, when a mother approached Boicourt. He was intrigued, having heard about successful

parent/baby matinees in other cities. So Boicourt made a deal with the mom: "Get 30 friends to attend the movie with their infants and I'll do it." She did — hence the birth of the Mommy Matinee. Tuesday screenings were such a hit that McMenamins quickly added Mondays as well.

Moviegoers who recently showed up to a screening of *Pan's Labyrinth* sung Mommy Matinee's praises. "It gets me out of the house!" was the constant refrain. "You can't beat the \$3 price," said Carrie, her four-month old Madeline peeking out from the folds of mom's rainbow-colored baby sling. Carrie's sister Emily, tending to baby Cyrus (the infants are nine weeks apart), tries to go as often as possible.

Two mothers said that since television wasn't allowed in their homes, the movie was a special treat. Per enthusiastic mom Kelly, her baby Miles cradling her neck, "I love movies — and the chance to spend time with Miles while visiting with all my friends — it's a regular chatfest." To accommodate the moms who want to visit beforehand, Boicourt opens the theater 30 minutes early.

Speaking for the dads, Papa Patrick had just recently heard about Kennedy School. (Two other McMenamin theaters also hold Mommy Matinees: [St. John's Theater & Pub](#) at 1:00pm and the [Grand Lodge](#) in Forest Grove at 3:30pm, both on Wednesdays.) "Normally you can't see a movie unless you get a babysitter," he said, bouncing daughter Lily-Belle, looking sharp in candy-striped tights.

His friend JoAnn, playing with ten-month-old Oliver chimed in, "...and the pizza is great!" Another mother blurted out, "I've seen more movies since the baby was born than I have in years!"

Since *Pan's Labyrinth* had subtitles, mom Kelly thought that she might miss plot points, unable to read the titles and take care of her son concurrently. Yet looking at the baby bottle as half full, the children could cry as loud as they wanted — and everyone would still be able to read the screen.

During the film, when loud gunshots blared, some babies cried. When a child cooed onscreen, a few of the infants cooed back. In the end, it was a tie as to which was more entertaining: the movie...or the moviegoers.

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