

## NICKELODEON

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forerunner of the motion picture.

The machine operated a lot like a flip-book where still images were put into motion to create a "movie." In those days, a person could pay a couple pennies to look through a viewfinder and watch an animated "film."

Today, the machine's jerky picture would seem completely unrealistic, even though modern movies are still based on this concept of combining many individual pictures.

Modern motion pictures appear smooth because the human brain is unable to perceive that 24 still images are projected onto the screen each second. The film seems as if it is completely fluid.

At first, the Nickelodeon theatre, just like the old-fashioned machine, only played black and white films. Silent movies and Classics were less expensive to run and quite popular in the theatre's early days.

The beginning film series of the Nickelodeon was planned around the themes of American Directors, Greatest Movies of All Times and Alfred Hitchcock productions.

Of course, Davis and O'Connor could not possibly have done all this by themselves. Their friends and acquaintances donated hard work, time and money.

"It's always been run by volunteers. There are a couple staff members, but many, many volunteers. And that's still true today," Campbell said.

In 1980 Davis and O'Connor wanted to pursue aspirations of going to Hollywood so they recruited Campbell to learn to run Nickelodeon. At the time Campbell was working at an esoteric record store where he met Davis and O'Connor through a mutual friend.

Campbell trained for three months. "I had to learn a lot about films in a short amount of time. I read everything I could and subscribed to the movie channels. I became a taping fool for several years," he said.

Campbell taped so many movies from the television that he now has a collection of 2,000 videos.

Suddenly thrown into the position of manager and programming director evoked mixed feelings for Campbell. "It felt great to run a business but to book the films was a little intimidating," he said.

It took Campbell about 6 months to become comfortable in his new job. "I inherited the place, with its terrible equipment and seats. It was a shoe-string operation," he said.

His initial improvements to the theatre began with a brighter light source, a better sound system and a loan from the bank to finance it.

Davis and O'Connor never made it back to Columbia to resume control of Nickelodeon. Still residing in California, they have since parted and traveled their separate ways.

However, here in South Carolina, Nickelodeon's success continued to escalate, and today the theatre has survived as the only single screen left in Columbia.

"When I started, there were seven or eight theatres along Main Street. There are none now," said Campbell.

At 937 South Main, Nickelodeon occupies a great location downtown, near both the capitol and USC, and within a ten-square block area of some of the best artistic and cultural organizations in Columbia.

Directly next door to Immaculate Consumption, Nickelodeon sits quietly on the corner. The painted glass windows are decorated with the likenesses of film stars Marlene Dietrich, Charlie Chapman, and Humphrey Bogart.

Inside the building, the purple ceiling and black lighting contribute

to the comfortable atmosphere of the small lobby. The theatre itself is very intimate. It seats 77 people, which ensures none of the seats are too far from the screen.

Refreshments at the Nickelodeon are as varied as the movies themselves.

Besides popcorn, soda, and candy, the concession stand also sells freshly baked cookies from Immaculate Consumption, Red Hot Blues Chips from Rosewood Market, coffee, tea, juices and mineral water.

Because the theatre does not show juvenile movies, Nickelodeon can offer beer and wine to its customers. "It's the only theatre in town where you can have a beer or a glass of wine while taking in and enjoying a favorite movie," Campbell said.

Every two months, Campbell publishes a calendar of upcoming attractions at Nickelodeon. The calendar tells people about each film and why it is worth seeing. This publication includes a brief synopsis of the story, critic's quotes, running time, rating and starting time.

Ten thousand of the calendars are printed and distributed every eight weeks and distributed around

town. Most movies run between two days and one week.

Besides the variety of their films and food, a final reason to attend a movie at Nickelodeon instead of staying at home with the TV, in Campbell's words: "The filmmaker wants the picture and sound to be bigger than you. He or she wants you to be overwhelmed. You just have to sit there and go 'Wow!' TV is just not the way film was envisioned."

Admission prices at Nickelodeon are \$3.50 for members, \$4.50 for students and senior citizens and \$5.50 for non-members. Buying a regular priced ticket entitles you to a two-week temporary membership. Nickelodeon's box office and movie hot-line can be reached at 254-3433. Check out Nickelodeon on the Internet at [www.scsn.net/users/nickelodeon](http://www.scsn.net/users/nickelodeon).

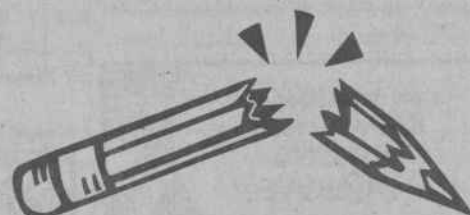
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