

QUALITIES OF LIFE: SCENE

Sunday afternoon fever

Daytime nightclub for tots and for parents sick of Barney

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Special to the Tribune

Published June 18, 2006

A darkened nightclub with thumping music? Check.

Dancing with young ladies? Check.

Double-fisting bottles? Check.

Partying until 4? Check.

Burp cloths in the diaper bag? Uh ...

When nearly 100 fathers gathered at Park West last Sunday, there were elements that resembled their single, club-going days but in a drastically different form. The dancing young ladies were their own daughters. A lot of the bottles contained Similac. And the partying lasted until 4 p.m.

Welcome to Baby Loves Disco. Welcome to fatherhood. Please leave your former self at the door (near the line of parked strollers).

"This is not sing along with Barney," insists promoter Val Harris. "This is for parents who might be sick of the playground circuit. It's a dance party for the kids, but it's also for their parents."

Baby Loves Disco began a few years back in Philadelphia and attracted so many young moms, dads and rug-cutting babies and toddlers that soon similar events began popping up in New York; Boulder, Colo.; Chicago; and Aurora.

And it's really nothing more complicated than a nightclub for kids--just substituting night for day, including some healthy snacks for little bodies, installing a bubble-making machine and making sure a diaper-changing table is nearby. They wisely keep the bar open, enabling Dad to cling to at least one vestige of his younger days.

"Some people might think this is weird, but I think it's healthy. It exposes kids to music they wouldn't normally hear," says deejay Chris "Bald Eagle" Baronner, who spins tracks from the '70s and '80s while making sure to keep the decibels in check.

Now, the toddlers don't remember The Clash's 1982 hit "Rock the Casbah," but then they don't remember the Black Eyed Peas' 2005 hit "My Humps." So as long as the beat is strong, little legs keep moving.

And ... wow ... where are those bubbles coming from?

When asked what brought him here today, Mike Moran replies, "My wife." But he seems to be having fun, a Miller Lite in his left hand and a bottle of formula in the right for 5-week-old Brannon, who is curled up in mom Kristin's arms.

"He's pretty much just sleeping, burping and eating, but I think he likes the lights," says the 39-year-old Ravenswood father.

While Moran isn't doing much dancing, other fathers have checked their self-consciousness at

the door. One guy (mercifully not pictured here) elicits giggles in his kid as he shimmies with a pink plush crab to the tune "Ladies' Night."

Other dads roll around the floor, chase after the lights ricocheting off the disco ball and, generally, act as silly as their pint-size dance partners.

"He was doing a little break-dancing earlier, so he's probably going to sleep well this afternoon," says T.J. Ancheta of his 2-year-old, Joaquin. When the Southwest Sider is asked if he hits the clubs as much as he did a few years ago, he replies, "No. I've got different priorities now," as that priority races past with a scarf over his head.

There are a few dads sporting hipster T-shirts, designer jeans and chunky shoes that hint at a club-going lifestyle, but most are dressed in clothes that can easily be cleaned of spit-up. Comfort replaces style when 4 p.m. is the new 4 a.m.

And as that hour approaches, the stage grows littered with empty Guinness pints and spent juice boxes. Families head to the exits with diaper bags strapped over shoulders, strollers packed with baby gear, and shades in place to protect against the sun that still won't retire for another few hours--unlike the disco-demolished kids (sleepy-eyed as they leave) and their dads, who don't seem far behind.

Baby Loves Disco is held the second Sunday of every month at Walter Payton's Roundhouse in Aurora, and the second Sunday of every month (September through June) at Park West. Tickets are \$10 per walking human. See babylovesdisco.com.