

Local guide making plans to expand

By Mary Shuler
Emerald Contributor

What's Happening, Eugene's free art and entertainment guide, is on its way to becoming more of a general newspaper.

"We want to be 36 pages every week," said Lucia McKelvey, editor of the currently 20-page guide. "We just don't know how long that will take."

What's Happening began in a converted garage in September 1982 as a four-page calendar of local entertainment events.

"We had no real furniture — our desks were door tops. We didn't have capital, just sweat labor. But we were in touch with what the community wanted and needed, and we were patient — very patient. And it paid off," McKelvey said.

The paper is expanding its coverage of local issues in addition to the weekly calendar of arts and entertainment, book and movie reviews.

To that end, they have a new visual look and some additions to the staff that will help them be a "more fully developed newspaper," said David Johnson, contributing editor to What's Happening.

Johnson was hired to help expand and bring a

professional touch to the weekly paper.

"We wanted a more newspaper look," McKelvey said. For instance, they felt that the poster-style covers "were gorgeous, but weren't reflecting the news part (of the paper)."

Being in touch with the community is still the goal of the paper.

"Local coverage is important because that's where people can do something to affect the scene," McKelvey said.

Articles covering environmental issues, drift-netting and the Ancient Forest brought "a lot of feedback" to the paper and the number of stories on these issues was increased in response, Johnson said.

Johnson believes that one of the roles of What's Happening is to "pick up the slack" for The Register-Guard.

He said the What's Happening investigation of Rohr Industries' background was a service to the community not provided by the daily paper.

"They dropped the ball and we didn't," Johnson said. He also said he believed What's Happening's on-going coverage of the proposed Pankow development for downtown Eugene "helped arouse public opinion."

A paper like What's Happening serves a pur-

pose in the community, said Tom Jaques, assistant managing editor for The Register-Guard.

"They cover things we don't or can't or don't choose to," he said. "I see no great conflict."

Weekly publications are springing up in the larger towns all over the country, Jaques said, because the daily papers don't have the space for covering alternative issues in-depth.

"We see ourselves in the same mold as other alternative weeklies throughout the country," McKelvey said. "It's been called Advocacy Journalism. We do have a voice and we're proud of it. We're not totally objective, but we are factual and accurate."

"The Guard is for all people. What's Happening zeroes in on a more specific audience. They take a different angle — a more analytical angle — than we would," Jaques said.

"People have tried to label us 'that hippie rag,'" McKelvey said. "But from the beginning all kinds of different people have read us. We know from the feedback. Seniors, poor people, wealthy people, working people and professional people."

"No community is monolithic. There are lots of voices. It is the nature of democracy — I think it's healthy," McKelvey said.

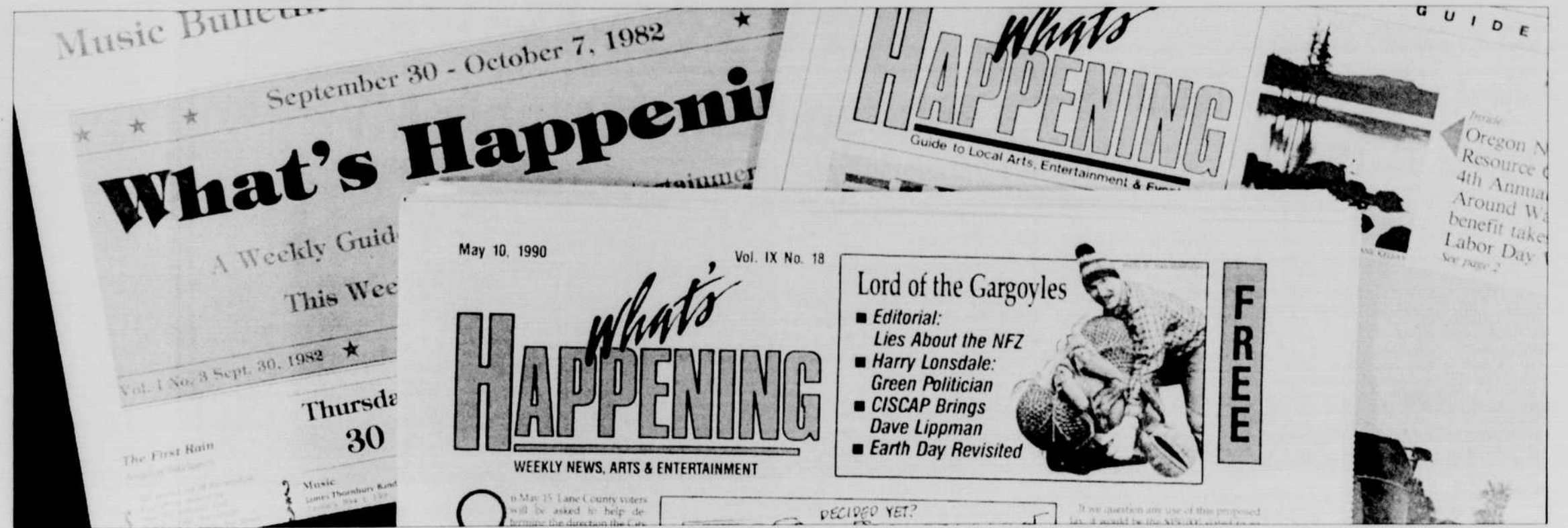


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