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IEWS

Poor planning affects weak events business

One of the latest controversies in Eugene is the issue of whether or not to build a new fairground facility, complete with a full-size sports arena.

Proponents of this expensive project say it is necessary for Eugene to grow as a commercial center. However, we need to look only at the lack of business generated by the fairgrounds' Lane County Convention Center to have serious doubts about how much business we can reasonably expect to attract with new facilities to a metropolitan area of around 300,000.

Perhaps Eugene should pass a bond measure to fund research by the University department of economics and/or marketing, which could then determine why existing facilities sit vacant without a constant flow of event business for most of the year.

As with most of the playing pieces in this game called Big City Politician — of airport expansion and paid parking — that our local officials like to play, assessment of the economic impact of the convention center was woefully inadequate or nonexistent.

The convention center was added in the early 1980s and consisted of a performance hall, exhibit hall and the ice skating arena, with capacities ranging from 2,000 to 6,000 (*Performance Guide: Facilities*, 1991).

With the exception of local trade shows, these facilities rarely host major events.

Focusing on the concert industry, something most students would like to see more of in Eugene, the facilities were used initially by promoters.

For a couple of years, major artists, such as John Cougar Mellencamp, Billy Idol, The

ON THE SCENE

Ted Hinds

Scorpions and Def Leppard, were brought to town. However, that business did not last long.

Promoters found it more profitable to do one Portland date to accommodate the entire region. Eugene concertgoers had no choice, and the fairgrounds administration did nothing to bring that business back.

Most facilities across the country offer co-promotion and in-house services as incentives to bring major events, such as concerts, to an area. Lane County will not co-promote and offers little in terms of in-house staging or sound.

As a result, thousands of local residents go up Interstate 5 each year and take their money with them.

The economic cost of such poor decision-making is passed on to local motels, restaurants, shops and, ultimately, the taxpayer, who pays for the facilities to sit unused most of the year.

Before the citizens of Lane County spend millions of dollars on a new toy for local politicians to christen at a black-tie function, we should spend a few thousand dollars to scrutinize current facilities that are operating below potential.

Good management and upgrades in services offered by the fairgrounds are the best investment that citizens of Lane County can make to attract more event business to the area.

Ted Hinds is an entertainment columnist for the Emerald.

EVENTS

Unsigned band contest offers chance for artists

The 1996 Best Unsigned Band Competition, sponsored by *Musician* magazine, is now accepting entries.

Described by *Billboard* as the most prestigious competition of its kind, interested bands are given an opportunity to have their music heard by top music critics, editors, artists and producers.

Each band is judged on a two-song cassette, and winners are featured in an upcoming issue of *Musician*, as well as promoted through the distribution of *Musician's* Best Unsigned Bands CD.

The highest-placing artists will receive several thousand dollars' worth of live sound and recording equipment.

The judges for this year's competition include: music legends Steve Winwood and Adri-

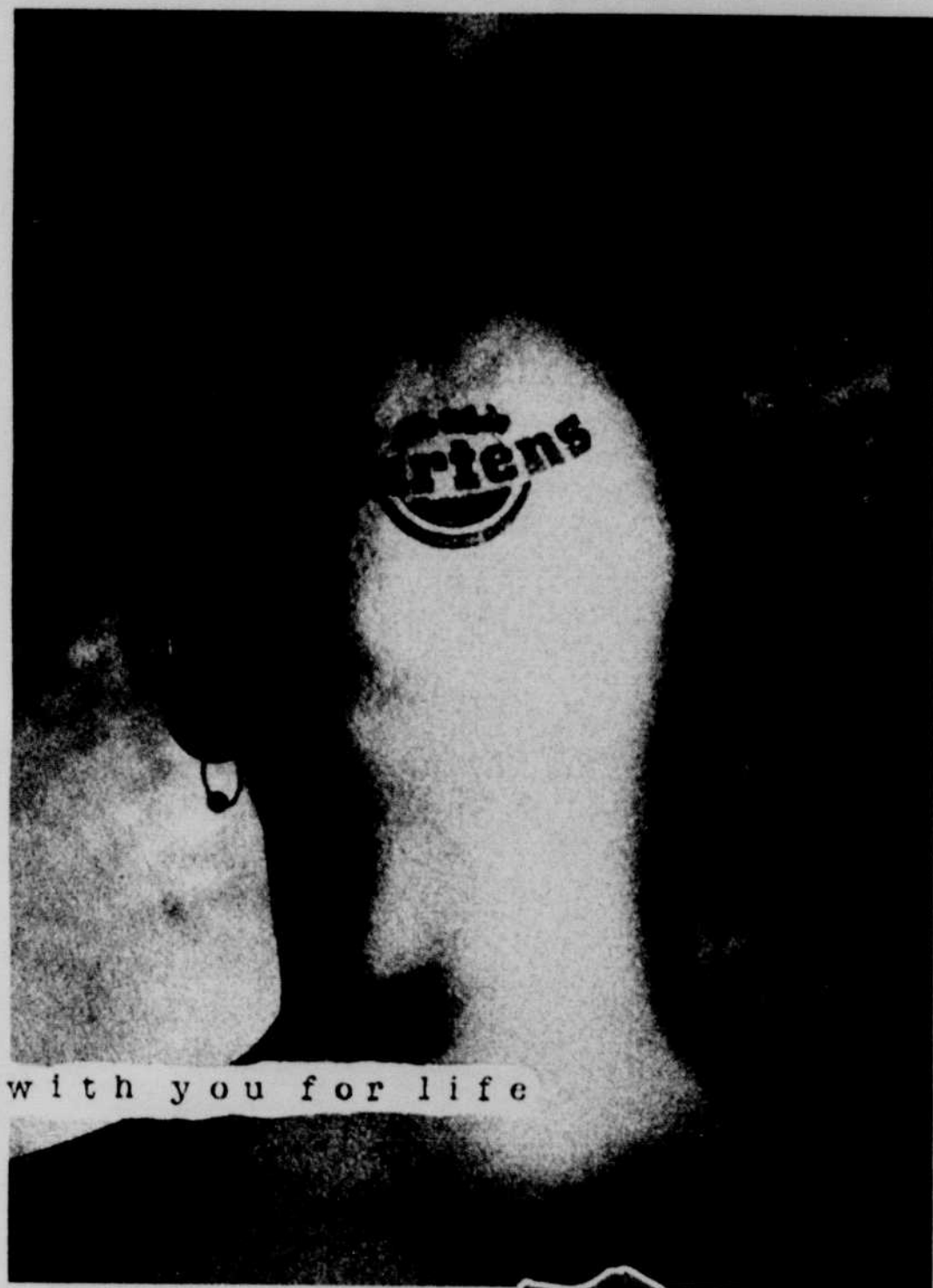
an Belew, Pearl Jam's guitarist Stone Gossard, alternative rockers Juliana Hatfield and Matthew Sweet, jazz great Pat Metheny and Grammy-winning producer Jimmy Jam.

Judges for previous competitions have been Lou Reed, David Byrne, Chrissie Hynde, Wynton Marsalis, Lyle Lovett, Sonny Rollins, Elvis Costello and professionals working in publishing and promotion of musical talent.

This year's competition is sponsored by *Musician*, Disc Makers and the EON Portable Sound System from JBL.

Deadline for entry is Dec. 31. Interested bands or artists can receive rules and entry forms by calling 1-800-BUB-7096.

— compiled by
Anne Moser-Kornfeld



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