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Night Out: Discover 'folkabilly'

By Bill Locey, Correspondent

Folk singers are like firemen, banjo players and waterfalls --everybody likes them. One particularly affable folkie is Ventura local J. Peter Boles who will be doing a duo thing with his pal Jim Monahan (not the developer-friendly Ventura councilman, but the guitar player for the Desert Rose Band) Sunday afternoon at the Ojai Brew Pub.

Boles is a small guy with a big voice and a lot of songs --hundreds of them, in fact -- plus a number of originals, many of which appear on his self-titled album that came out last year. Boles is still coming down from his best gig of all time, a slot at the bi-annual Strawberry Festival over Labor Day Weekend held just outside Yosemite.

"That was wonderful," he said. "They treat the musicians very nicely up there. It's a whole new world; just the whole outlook of the crowd. There's 7,000 people there and they leave valuables lying out around their camp. We opened on Saturday. It was Monahan and I, Dan Wilson, Bill Flores, Jack Joshua and Bobby Nichols played drums, plus we had Scott Lasky on piano. We tried to capture the spirit of the album. We sold 50 or 60 CDs ... we had a good little run."

Boles, who attended Holy Cross School in Ventura, has that twang in his voice, but it's not that he's from south Ventura, it's that he's traveled extensively and has spent a lot of time in Alaska working the oil patch or mining for gold.

"Yeah man, I'm from south Ventura," said Boles. "I took my twang out of the oil fields, but I got started around campfires. I spent 15 years of my life during mining season from May to October living in a tent in Alaska. It wasn't quite the 'Treasure of the Sierra Madre' because we never found enough gold to kill each other over. We had a real social camp that was like a gathering place for a 100-mile radius. We used to trade songs, plus my big brother used to sing and taught me songs."

Boles started playing locally about three decades ago with guitar player Chris Byrd, who went on to inspire and instruct those Ventura legends Raging Arb & the Redheads. Another main inspiration for Boles was gruff folksinger Hoyt Axton, who had a hit a long time ago with "Greenback Dollar."

In addition to Axton songs, Boles covers songs by the likes of John Prine, Utah Phillips, Hank Williams and other songs so old no one remembers who wrote them. Boles often introduces those tunes as "another Tony Orlando or Lawrence Welk song from their truck-driving days."

Boles has been doing this long enough to understand the subtle musical distinctions of different genres. On one level, for example, country songs often seem as serious as an ice cream headache while folk songs seem to be more humorous. But Boles said there's more to it than that.

"A folk song is any song that contains the phrase 'Oh Lord' played on an out-of-tune acoustic guitar. The perfect folk song is usually about hookers or hobos. Now the perfect country song is about dying, dogs, mama, trains and drinking. My music pretty much relates to the old country stuff. I call it folkabilly."

Boles, who has been known to also play the Pierpont Inn and Zoey's in Ventura, has a new CD in the works, and of course, a song in his heart.

"This Ojai gig is good. They're nice people and the food is good and the beer is great. So we'll be there every other Sunday."

Martini Nation

Martini Nation, quite possibly James Bond's favorite band, will perform its bawdy show on the last Saturday night of the month as they always do at Wine Lovers in Ventura. Neither shaken nor stirred but often shaking and stirring, Martini Nation, that small musical republic, consists of sisters Gabrielle and Wendy Childs and that happy guy in the middle, Ware Christiann.

The band does a Las Vegas-style revue that begins as a lounge lizard affair with lots blues, jazz and torch songs. As the night progresses, the act becomes more outrageous, bodacious and sexy -- more adjectives could prove inappropriate in a family newspaper. Wendy plays drums, guitar and mandolin while Gabby plays mostly guitar. Christiann plays everything else and everyone sings. The band always debuts at least one new original and one new cover at every gig.

While the band knows hundreds of songs, the guy on the patio outdoors has hundreds of friends. He would be the pizza guy making these little culinary masterpieces over an open fire all for the ever-affordable price of free.

Martini Nation inside, free pizza outside . . . what could be better? Showtime is 8 p.m. and Wine Lovers is located at 1067 E. Thompson Blvd., Ventura. Call 652-1810 for information.

Hot Tickets

If I had a faster car, a richer girlfriend or both, here's where I'd be lurking this week: Mick Fleetwood & Friends at the Canyon Club in Agoura (tonight); Big Junior Little at the Simi Valley Cultural Center (tonight); American Cheese Band and Jason Webley at the Garden Village Cafe in Ventura (tonight); Teresa Russell & Cocobilli at Alexander's in Ventura (tonight and Saturday); Crust, Dogmatic and the Narcotics at Bubba's Lounge in Ventura (tonight); the Army of Freshmen and Psycho Cafe at the Bombay Bar & Grill in Ventura (tonight); Randy Rich & the Ravens at the Ojai Brew Pub (tonight); Blue Stew at Hi Cees in Ventura (Saturday and Sunday); Jackass and the Barrel Dodgers at Bubba's Lounge (Saturday), Kitty Kat Stew, 10 Cents, None the Worse and Lodestar at Libbey Park in Ojai (Saturday); the Bowlful of Blues at Lake Casitas (Saturday); and Alan Thornhill at Zoey's in Ventura (Wednesday).

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