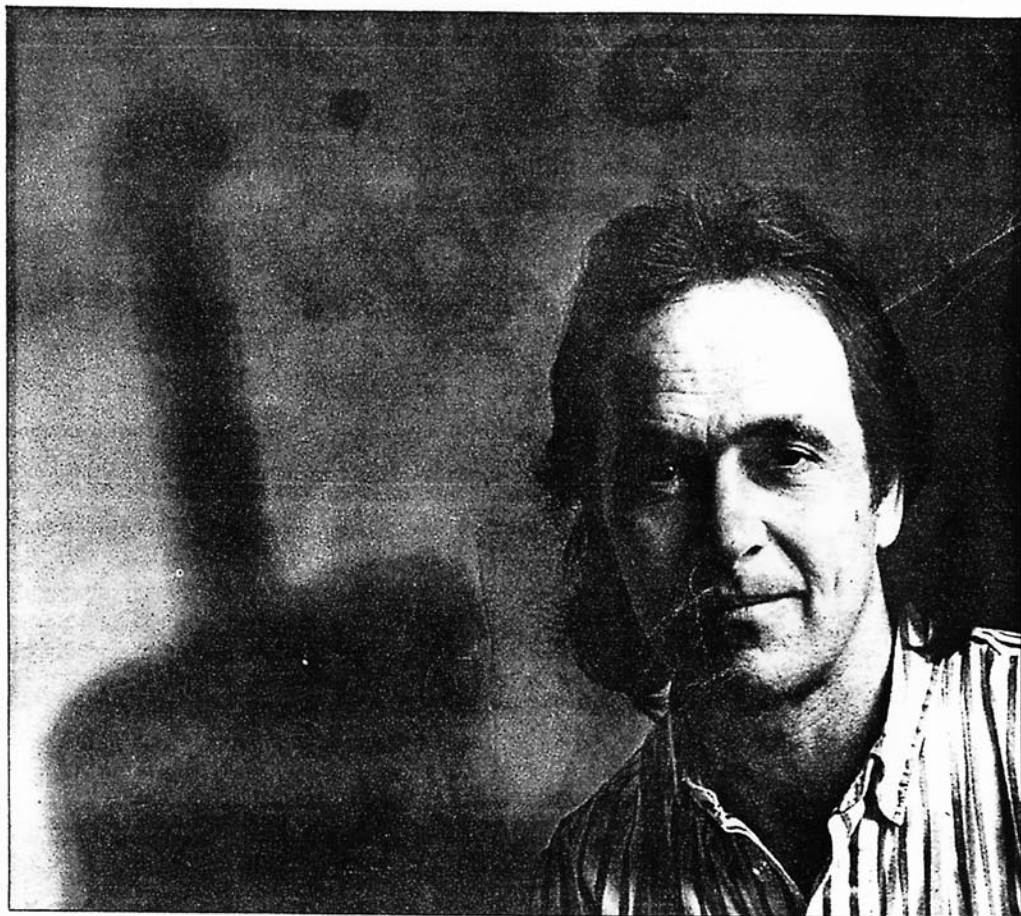


J. Peter Boles likes playing at Lorenzoni's. "Lorenzoni's is a friend to folk music," Boles says. "There are a couple of other places, but they don't pay, and I don't think I should have to try to push tips out of people, or play for somebody else's profit."



STEVE OSMAN / Los Angeles Times

NIGHT LIFE

A Friendly Venue for Folk Singers at the Ventura Harbor

■ J. Peter Boles, with his acoustic guitar and harmonica, plays at Lorenzoni's on Sundays.

By BILL LOCEY
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Folk singers are like firefighters, everyone likes them, while the jury is mixed toward rappers and cops. One particularly hot folk singer is J. Peter Boles, a most affable fellow who can be found Sundays at Lorenzoni's, spinning tales of the down-and-out for the up and about tourists-turned-pedestrians who lately frequent the Ventura Harbor.

The venue is a restaurant and bakery that serves industrial-strength coffee and cappuccino in flavors that can barely be pronounced, much less spelled. The food is great, and there's entertainment on the weekends. Boles, along with his acoustic guitar and harmonica, provides some of that

Details

- **WHAT:** J. Peter Boles.
- **WHERE:** Lorenzoni's, 1575 Spinnaker Way, Ventura.
- **WHEN:** Sunday, 6 to 9 p.m.
- **HOW MUCH:** No cover charge.
- **PHONE:** 658-2228.

entertainment.

He stands strategically underneath the security camera and between a pair of open doors where on one recent evening the fog was elsewhere and the breeze was just right—reminders of the area's long industrial tradition embodied in the nearby sewage plant thankfully were absent.

"Lorenzoni's is a friend to folk music," Boles said. "Other than this place, there's not much of a folk scene that I've been able to find. There are a couple of other places, but they don't pay, and I don't think I should have to try to

push tips out of people, or play for somebody else's profit."

Boles, a small guy with a big set of lungs, has that classic folk voice with a rich range that fills the room and obliterates the idle chitchat.

"I've got somewhere around 300 songs, I guess, and probably about 15 of my own that I'm happy with," he said. "I've always felt the compulsion to preserve other people's music—the old ballads that aren't being listened to anymore. The roots of it all for me was Hoyt Axton."

Yup, before "Gremlins," Axton was a folk singer with a bunch of albums, perhaps best known for "Greenback Dollar." Besides Axton, Boles covers songs by Utah Phillips, Hank Williams and even a John Prine song, "The Frying Pan," a musical warning about the dangers of lonely wives and traveling salesmen. Boles doesn't limit himself to just the famous songwriters.

"I do a couple of songs by Roland Mitchell, a busboy at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas—maybe he's the head busboy by now, I dunno," Boles said. "He's one of

the best songwriters I've ever heard, but he's just unappreciated."

On a purely superficial level, most country songs seem to be about as much fun as an ice cream headache, while folk songs seem to be generally funnier. But there's more to it than that, according to Boles.

"A folk song is any song that contains the phrase 'Oh, Lord,' played on an out-of-tune guitar," he said. "The perfect folk song is usually about hookers or hobos. Now, the perfect country song is about dying dogs, mama, trains and drinking."

Boles, who went to Holy Cross School in Ventura, has a twang in his voice, probably because he's traveled extensively. But like most locals, he always seems to return to the Poinsettia City.

"I've always worked. The oil fields were always my thing, but I've also mined for gold in Alaska, built boats in Washington and built homes in Hawaii," he said. "Right now, I'm a free-lance construction worker. I started performing at pipeline camps in Alaska around 1978. Later, I went to Reno, where there were a lot of

people, but not much work."

Fortunately, you need a lot less work when you are the only guy in the band. And it makes it easy to divide the loot at the end of the night; there's no one to argue with about creative differences, and solo acts rarely break up. Despite these obvious advantages, Boles may be doubling the size of his act.

"I did play with a country band for a few months in New Mexico once. Lately, I've been working with a guy named Greg Lanners, and we'll probably be doing a duo thing."

Boles, who is on the timetable where "who cares?" and "when-ever" are words to live by, released a tape five years ago and is thinking seriously about a sequel.

"Right now, the tape is the big thing for me. I'm trying to get the money together and get the thing produced. I don't have a compulsion to do all original stuff. It'll just be a tape about life."

Bill Locey, who writes regularly on rock 'n' roll, has survived the mosh pit and the local music scene for many years.