

WILDE TALES of a Rocker

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

Playing to a quiet, coffee-drinking crowd is never easy. When your music is best suited for the crude, drunken atmosphere of a bar, it's especially hard.

To local folk singer Peter Wilde, though, it's just another gig.

Witnessing Wilde in action — he's a songwriter who adds rock, pop, country and bluegrass tendencies to his repertoire — makes it evident that the musician has years of experience under his belt.

Wilde even persevered when the Jan. 8 crowd at The Buzz was sparse and their double lattes didn't provide quite enough oomph to make them sing along to his song "Parasites," about getting the affliction in Mexico. He actually seemed to relish in the fact that he might have disturbed the minds of these bookworms.

Besides, "you get used to nobody singing along," Wilde said while sitting in Sam Bond's Garage, the Whiteaker neighborhood venue where he regularly performs.

His songs are about his life, but the personality behind his poetry draws listeners of all sorts. Wilde has a story to tell for every song he has written, which makes his music easy to relate to because it's about real life.

Since 1991, Wilde has recorded six CDs. Only his latest two, the 1997 recording "Carnival" and the 1999 release "Pete's Cheap and Easy," are available for purchase at retail stores. Others are available on his Web site, www.efn.org/~peter.

"Carnival" pushed him into the

Peter Wilde in action

Catch the local folk singer at two separate venues during February.

The Buzz in the EMU

When: Saturday, Feb. 5 at 9 p.m.; free to all ages

Sam Bond's Garage, 407 Blair Blvd.

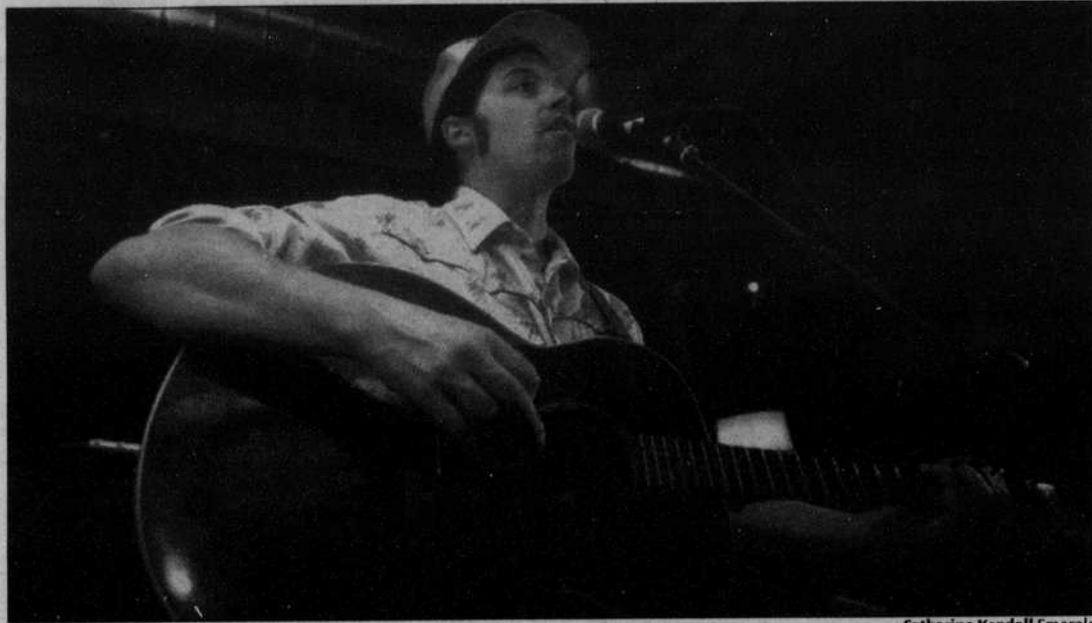
When: Sunday, Feb. 6, 20 and 27 at 8:30 p.m.; ages 21+

Alt-Americana category because it is more varied than his previous compilations, with the all-inclusive sounds of "bluegrass, rock and folky solo stuff," he says. The recording is also unique because the studio project included 30 different guest artists that could never play together in a live performance.

His Alt-Americana style — so dubbed because of its traditional roots, modern flare and sometimes eccentric outlook — has changed over his nine-year song-making career.

"I have become more and more focused with performing rather than with environmental issues," he writes in an e-mail dialogue during a recent 16-day, 12-gig solo tour through Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Utah. "I still play benefits, support actions and perform at protests, but when I write songs and think about writing songs that are specifically directed toward certain social issues, I draw a blank."

On the third message in the series of e-mails from the road, Wilde reveals that he is traveling in a car that was given to him by local



Catharine Kendall Emerald

(Peter Wilde has been playing his guitar in Eugene since 1991 and has recorded six CDs during that time. Wilde, who also plays at various clubs around town, plays what reviewers call an "Alt-Americana" style of music.)

Communist Kevin Hornbuckle. The vehicle probably isn't the best for this trip, Wilde admits, but it makes a good tale.

"I'm working on my rags to riches story," he notes. "I figure touring the Rocky Mountains in January with a car with no heat will be great on the late-night shows someday."

These troubling conditions are offset by Wilde's popularity at the area's various establishments, however. In Lander, Wyo., for instance, he meets a couple who drove 163 miles to see him perform. Their friend had called from the bar the night before and held the phone up so they could hear the music.

Though the mini-tour wasn't all packed houses, huge CD sales and visits with old friends, Wilde is currently reveling in the relative success of this latest voyage. He has come a long way from the 12-year-old boy who sat in his bed-

room and listened to the likes of the Grateful Dead, Joni Mitchell and John Harford.

Appreciating music was the extent of Wilde's involvement with the art until attending Colby College in Maine. In the midst of pursuing an American studies degree, Wilde, then 17, found time to play in a college rock band. He soon realized that he wanted to try a professional music career.

This desire, however, was outweighed by his need to find a city with a strong sense of community. In 1991, Wilde embarked on a journey to the West Coast and found what he was looking for in Eugene. Because of the city's activism and simultaneous small-town manageability, Wilde says he can see himself staying here for a long time. Sometimes, though, he thinks about moving to a bigger place like Portland with more music marketability.

For now, Wilde makes ends meet between recording projects and performance gigs by continuing to work as an arborist, pruning trees in residential areas.

"It's fun, pays well and I can work on my own schedule," he says of his side job.

Wilde is content in Eugene as he dreams of getting college radio air time and drawing a crowd of 100 people wherever he plays. Meanwhile, the songwriter waits for someone to make a hit covering one of his songs.

Despite these musings, Wilde doesn't think he will make a fortune with his music because "you just get jaded after 10 years."

Time will tell if he is simply being modest or not. One thing about Peter Wilde is certain, however; he is content as a musician and doesn't plan on money, or anything else, getting in the way of his happiness.

This Saturday come celebrate
the Chinese New Year!

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SCANDALS