

Peter Morén

The Last Tycoon

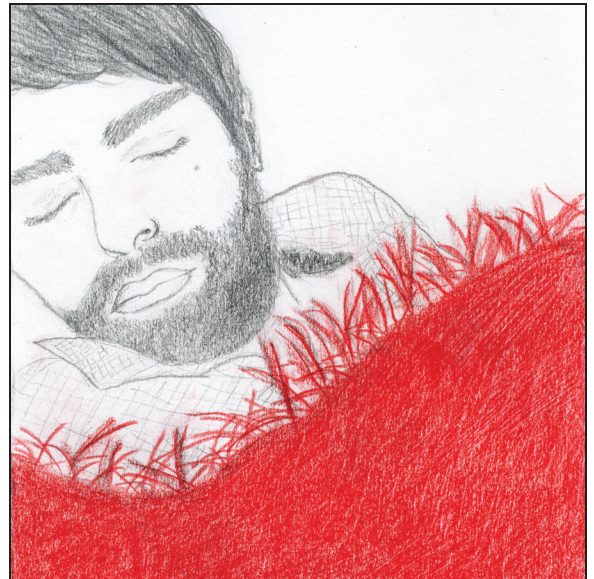
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A brief history of a full life:

Peter Morén was born and raised in a little village named Vika in a region of Sweden called Dalarna. At the time, Dalarna was a landscape full of horses, mopeds, ski slopes and ice hockey, but not much music. What little music there was consisted of heavy metal or traditional fiddle-based folk music, both of which had strong followings. Guided by his grandfather's tastes, Peter took to the latter – until he picked up his mother's out-of-tune guitar at the age of 10 to learn a few basic chords with the express aim of writing pop songs in English. Although his English was fairly rudimentary, he quickly progressed, taking cues from influences such as The Beatles, Byrds, Beach Boys, Kinks, and, for the sake of modernity, The Housemartins and A-Ha (this was 1986 after all). Soon after, he became a Dylanhead, bought a harmonica, and started performing covers at pizzerias and parties to the bewilderment of the local populace, who often wondered why such a young boy was interested in playing such old songs.

At 15, Peter moved south to attend high school in Västerås. Influenced by Ride, Teenage Fanclub, Stone Roses and other groups of that era, he formed a band with another new arrival in town, Björn Ytting. Later, they moved to Stockholm, where they met a drummer named John Eriksson. The rest, as they say, is history. After a long struggle in the musical trenches, three albums, loads of gigs, and numerous stints at the university and various day jobs, Peter Bjorn And John finally met well-deserved success with *Writer's Block*.

Yet, as a solo artist, Peter's pen has never rested. He's always writing songs- too many songs to fit inside the scope of just one band with three songwriters. So, in his spare time he recorded his new solo album - *The Last Tycoon*. In a way this is a throwback to his early days playing pizzerias with his acoustic guitar. The album is stripped down (Peter plays most of the instruments himself), and although there are certainly melodic pop songs, the album feeds more from a folk and singer-songwriter tradition than the eclecticism prevalent on PBJ's recordings. These songs came together at different times as well, which adds to the timeless allure of *The Last Tycoon*: old songs finally finding their proper place, others written during *Writer's Block*, and some coming even later. Although the direction this time around was low-key, the album still leaves plenty of room for strings, synthesizers, a musical saw, vibraphones, percussion, and even a drum machine or two. Musically, the album shares some kinship with Paul Simon,



Tim Hardin, Bert Jansch, Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, Yo La Tengo, Leonard Cohen, Brian Eno, John Cale, Caetano Veloso, Robyn Hitchcock and The Go-Betweens – to name a few.

The lyrics are reminiscent of past efforts, although more personal, filled with observations of everyday life, its problems and resolutions; memories of childhood are mixed with a sense of fulfillment, and the ever-present confusion that follows as we move through later stages of life – or, in Peter's words, "The usual lyrical psychobabble, but with a direct and honest approach."

The album's title comes from the Elia Kazan film of the same name – an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished final novel. The film, like the novel, deals with failure: a failed attempt to live the American dream, basically. The film's main character is married to his work, which leaves him unable to lead any form of romantic life. The film takes place at the end of the era where talkies began to supplant silent film.

Peter doesn't fancy himself a magnate or anything, nor is this a concept album. Rather, as Peter himself says, "We – that is, people working in the music business – are also living at the end of an era, as new forms of making and manufacturing music emerge. In these times, I sometimes feel out of place and old-fashioned, as my music tends to be. Also, one has to admit that the idea of failure is enticing. In the long term, success stories are boring. Flaws and mistakes are far more interesting, both personally and professionally. Failure may be the mother of all creativity and new solutions. Of course, we all want to be successful, but, as Emily Dickinson once said, 'Success is counted sweetest by those who never succeed. To comprehend a nectar requires sorest need.'"

Well, tycoon or not, failure or success, Peter's made a record that's beautiful and full of soul – and it's waiting for the world to listen.

The Press weighs in on Peter Bjorn and John's *Writer's Block*...

"Peter Morén, whose loopy presence suggested a Scandinavian spin on Gael Garcia Bernal's "Science Of Sleep" character, fluctuated between an affable yelp (best showcased on "Teen Love," one of the perf's older tracks) and a shambling conversational tone (the lifeblood of a diary-like "Paris 2004)."

– Variety

"...[*Writer's Block* is] full of elegantly crafted, low-fidelity Swedish pop that articulates those existential corners of love that most American fluff fails to capture."

– Details Magazine

"...they had stage presence and energy for miles and ran through their set on sheer exuberance."

- EW.com

"Peter Bjorn and John's songbook is too good to be cast aside after the buzz dies down."

- Prefix Magazine

And on Peter himself...

"Judging by the fervent ovation, fans hope this solo Tycoon takes the stage again very soon, too."

- SPIN.com

"Combined with the second-person lyrics, the song could fit alongside Cat Stevens' early-1970s catalogue - this is a fine thing."

- Pitchfork

"Review rating 8. With most songs containing drums and piano in addition to his vocals and guitar, Morén charmed the audience with not only his bright lyrics, but also the witty banter thrown in between each song, often explaining the subject in a manner only one using their second language can. Morén easily pleased the attendees, and in return, got the plaudits he deserved.

- It's A Trap.com



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