

PETER OREN

Anthropocene

ABOUT THIS RECORD

Indiana-born, everywhere-based singer-songwriter Peter Oren possesses a remarkable singing voice, low and deep and richly textured: as solid as a glacier, as big as a mountain. Similar in its baritone gravel to Bill Callahan, a hero of his, it rumbles in your conscience, a righteous sound that marks him as an artist for our tumultuous times, when sanity seems absent from popular discussions. His voice is ideally suited to confront a topic as large and as ominous as the Anthropocene Age.

That term is relatively new, reportedly coined in the 1960s but popularized only in the new century to designate a new epoch in the earth's history, when man has exerted a permanent—and, many would argue, an incredibly deleterious—change in the environment. Sea levels are rising, plants and animals facing mass extinctions; it may be humanity's final epoch, which makes it a massive and daunting subject for a lone singer-songwriter to address, let alone a young musician making his second full-length record. But Oren has both the singing voice and the songwriting voice to put it all into perspective. The songs on *Anthropocene*, his first album for Western Vinyl, are direct and poetic, outraged and measured, taking in the entire fucked-up world from his fixed point of view.

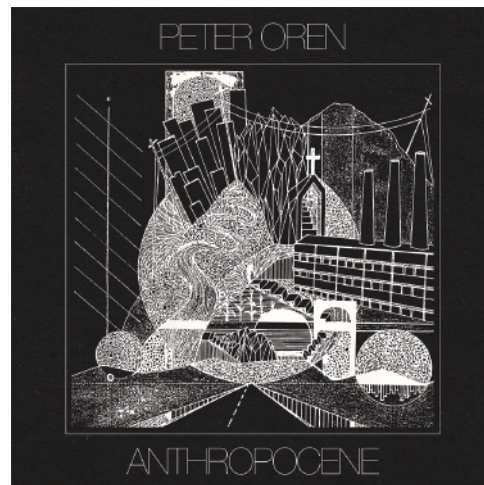
Art and activism are inseparable on these ten songs, each bolstering the other. "There's no separating art from reality," says Oren. "The reality is that our politics are guided by our emotions, and music has the capacity to demonstrate those emotions, at least on an individual level. And if you can talk to someone on an individual level, you might be able to have a more useful conversation than if you're talking to a roomful of people."

Oren hails from Columbus, Indiana, a city famed for its midcentury modern architecture (and as the hometown of our current vice president). Yet, as he notes on the sober "Falling Water," the town is "named for a murderer and a misnomer"—not a brave explorer but a greedy exploiter. "What do you do when you're from a place that's named after a genocidal figure?" he asks, not quite rhetorically. "It's a difficult thing to come to terms with: the long history of segregation that is by a long stretch not over." He began putting his thoughts down in poetry while a high school student, later picking up a guitar and setting his verses to music.

"It was a form of therapy, a way to process whatever a teenager's trying to figure out. And there's a lot to figure out with politics. I've always had a tendency to be critical of what's going on, and when I got pulled into the Occupy movement, I had my ideas about the world questioned." As soon as he could, he left Columbus to travel the world: drifting along American highways in his trusty pick-up truck, folk and hip-hop albums his only company on the road. Along the way he kept his eyes and ears open for new experiences, new inspirations, new songs to excavate out of the earth like fossils. "I always go 'cause I ain't learned to stay," he sings on "Burden of Proof," a song full of vivid highway imagery.

"I was trying to capture what it's like traveling around the country, sleeping at rest stops, and harboring disdain for the both the evangelical tendencies of the Bible Belt and the commodification embedded in pop country music. Songs feel like a process of discovery more than creation. Most of the time I'm just trying to understand how I feel, trying to figure out if there's some nuance or shape that I can give a feel. I feel best about the world when I'm writing a song or when I'm playing a song and I can tell people are really listening to it."

Oren attracted the attention of Ken Coomer, the drummer for Wilco and a producer in Nashville. Together, the duo assembled a backing band featuring some of the city's finest session musicians, including keyboard player Michael Webb (John Fogerty), singer Maureen Murphy (Zac Brown Band), and guitarists Sam Wilson (Sons of Bill) and Laur Joamets (Sturgill Simpson). On *Anthropocene* they provide stately backing for Oren's songs, with drips of pedal steel and quivers of strings subtly reinforcing his observations about the state of the world. "Throw Down" bristles with energy and resolve, penned for "the people on the far, far left," Oren says, "the anarchists and the rioters. There's not often a voice that's trying to understand those people or defend those positions."



TRACK LIST

01 Burden Of Proof	3:15
02 Anthropocene	3:24
03 Falling Water	3:19
04 Chain Of Command	3:04
05 Throw Down	4:02
06 Canary In A Coal Mine	3:39
07 New Gardens	3:17
08 Pictures From Spain	2:45
09 River And Stone	2:54
10 Welcome / Goodbye	2:09

MORE INFO

- Album was recorded/produced with Ken Coomer (Wilco)
- Session players for new record included Laur Joamets (Sturgill Simpson), Michael Web (Fogerty), Maureen Murphy (Zach Brown Band)
- US press campaign by The Syndicate
- UK press campaign by Dog Day Press



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