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ARTIST STATEMENT:

I've spent a large part of my adult life as a professional songwriter. This is how most people know me. Many don't know that as a little boy, before I ever learned to play the guitar, before I began writing my first songs, I spent hours on end, both at home and at school, with 11"x17" sheets of paper in front of me and a No. 2 pencil in my hand. My parents had a print of Hieronymus Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights hanging in the den, and the time I spent staring at that Renaissance acid trip led me to create landscapes of my own, populated with humanoids with pancakes for heads, subterranean carnivorous caterpillar monsters and cartoonish birds with bulging eyes and loads of attitude. I invented animals and alien species, including a race of mischievous and endearing creatures that resembled bunches of grapes with eye stalks, arms and legs. There were recurring characters, heroes, villains and rebels, most of whom had unique and outlandish personalities. And my drawings told their stories.

The act of creating these bizarre worlds was extremely fulfilling. It was meditative and served as an outlet for ideas that were often difficult to express verbally. Not to say that I was overly quiet as a child. I enjoyed being the center of attention and relished the opportunity to make a spectacle of myself. This was the side of my personality that led me to become a songwriter and take the stage with a guitar slung over my shoulder and a setlist that drew inspiration from Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and The Pogues. But I found it necessary to balance my more outgoing side with inwardly-focused time spent immersed in my artwork.

While my career was focused on music for many years, the visual art was always there. The characters that had roamed the surreal landscapes of my early drawings and paintings would find life in the stories of my songs. I've been praised as a songwriter for my ability to create vivid imagery with my lyrics, almost as though I were painting pictures with words. I often spent time painting between albums or tours. And whether I was writing songs or painting, for me it's always about the stories. So I guess when it comes down to it, that's what I am. A storyteller.