Sean Solomon // *The World Is Not Good Enough*

Sean Solomon had great expectations. But when his hopes for an abundant world crashed up against an unforgiving reality, he decided to feel nothing. For a time, the Los Angeles-born-and-raised singer/songwriter and cartoonist/animator gave into the void – an understandable impulse when the landscape is cluttered with social injustice and division, global atrocities, and devastating headlines. But artistic expression can be a release valve – a way to comprehend the world and build community, which is exactly what Sean does on his debut solo album, *The World Is Not Good Enough*, arriving spring 2026 via his new label home of ANTI- Records.

“These songs are almost coming from a place of childlike expectations,” Sean says of *The World Is Not Good Enough*, which features his own hand-drawn cover art in the vein of children’s author/illustrator Richard Scarry. “So many of my resentments towards the world and the people around me are because of these expectations I have of them. I tend to be sensitive. I want everything to be perfect and for people to be empathetic and thoughtful, and they just aren't. Every song has that overall theme that things aren't the way that they necessarily should be.”

Sean’s winking take on a Richard Scarry book cover mirrors the cognitive dissonance that pervades *The World Is Not Good Enough*, which seamlessly moves from bare-bones acoustic guitar to a Neutral Milk Hotel-esque cacophony of marching drums and horn blasts. Certain tracks, like "Finish Line” and the fingerpicked “Overdose” flow together like a gently trickling creek; others, like “Shooting Star” and “Postcard” break the emotional dam with a symphony of discordant sounds. “I was thinking about those books and how they show an idyllic version of the world,” Sean says. “I thought it was kind of funny — the contrast between the title and the images. Like, there's a dog walking a dog on the back cover, an elephant drinking out of a coffee cup with its snout. It was fun to study these children's books and think about what my version would be.”

Art has been Sean’s primary mode of processing his surroundings since early adolescence. After going viral with last year’s plaintive indie-folk entry “Car Crash,” which came with a self-directed and self-animated music video, Sean has been steadily reintroducing himself to audiences, some of whom might already know him from LA underground-rock staples Moaning and Moses Campbell. Animation heads might recognize his whimsical artwork from visuals collabs with Run the Jewels, Unknown Mortal Orchestra and Odd Future. Now, as a fully fledged solo artist, Sean has tied the disparate threads of his creativity together. What emerges is a finely drawn world where childlike innocence and existential questions collide into colorful confetti that is equal parts chaotic and wondrous. Each of the tracks on *The World Is Not Good Enough* come with their own animated visuals, which Sean integrates into his live shows via vintage TV sets and VHS.

Growing up in the San Fernando Valley, Sean felt especially drawn to both music and animation and immersed himself in episodes of *The Simpsons* and illustrated stories by graphic novelist

and *Ghost World* author Daniel Clowes. Meanwhile, Sean was an avid fan of seminal ‘90s and early 2000s punk and alternative acts such as Daniel Johnston, Elliott Smith and Nirvana, the latter of whom he admired for the way they preserved their artistic integrity in the face of global stardom. Adopting his own punk sensibility, Sean and his high school band, the folk-punk Moses Campbell, played all over LA, booking their own shows at coffee shops, houses, and famed DIY venue The Smell.

After high school, Sean enrolled at CalArts, where he studied experimental animation. While his profile quickly rose in that medium – Sean dropped out at 20 to begin art directing and pitching shows — he kept playing around town with Moses Campbell, which disbanded and reformed in the mid-2010s as the grunge-pop outfit Moaning. Across nearly a decade, Moaning signed to Sub Pop Records and released two critically acclaimed albums (2018’s self-titled and 2020’s *Uneasy Laughter*) before going on indefinite hiatus in 2023.

The transition came at the right moment. Sean had always envisioned himself as an auteur, an artistic polymath with overlapping mediums that are in constant conversation with each other. But the process-driven Sean did not rush the journey to launching his solo career. Writing and recording over the course of two years, Sean brought in a rotating cast of musicians to play on what would become *The World Is Not Good Enough*, which features fellow Sub Pop veteran and Sean’s former roommate Shannon Lay on backing vocals and guitar and producer Jarvis Taveniere (Whitney, Purple Mountains, Waxahatchee), who produced and stood in on bass and some percussion.

“I hadn’t heard anything that direct in a while,” says Taveniere of his first impressions while listening to Sean’s demos. “He’s really not beating around the bush lyrically. Working with Sean felt brotherly. We’re similar people; we can both lean into being neurotic or anxious, so it was fun to balance each other out. When he leans into his neurotic tendencies, I can be the fun guy and just try things out. He was somebody who had a tight vision but let me be playful while also staying sensitive to the material.”

Sean’s sincerity is immediately visible on a track like “Finish Line,” which finds the singer pondering the unforgiving starts and stops of turning art into commerce. A poignant chorus repeats the album’s title over muted midtempo percussion, weeping violin accents, and a soft, thrumming bass line. “Everyone in film, music, and art was essentially saying the same thing; it’s harder than it used to be to be an artist and feels impossible to survive as one,” Sean says of “Finish Line.” “I realized the dreams I had when I was a little kid didn’t even exist anymore. I had grown into this old jaded man, but deep down I was still a little kid that thought art could change the world.”

Later, Sean takes stock of his personal history on “Remember,” which comes with a video comprising clips taken from Sean’s family’s home movies. “Remember” asks us to consider that most people are not all good or all bad; they simply exist on a moral continuum. “My parents asked me to digitize our old family videos and I ended up cutting them up into a music video and the visuals I perform live with,” Sean explains. “I’ve noticed at shows people really connect with

this song and it reminds them of their own families. I think it's hard for most people to have empathy for their parents because they are supposed to serve this purpose in our lives where they take care of us and know what's right or wrong. So when we see them make mistakes or disappoint us there's this cognitive dissonance that contradicts our belief that our parents have all the answers. It's sad when it pushes families into not speaking to each other because negative memories normally overpower the good… But everyone has both sides to them. This song is about trying to remember the good."

As he confronts painful moments in his past, Sean arrives at the album's most moving and insightful place on the acoustic "Black Hole," which echoes the stripped-down, raw ache of The Microphones' *The Glow Pt. 2*.

"When I was 15 I went to a psych ward. I was doing too many drugs and finally they caught up with me," Sean explains of "Black Hole," which holds nothing back as he works to understand how a drug-related psychotic episode impacted his familial relationships as well as the one he has with himself. "This eventually led me to getting sober and focusing on music and art," Sean continues. "I haven't had an episode since, but I think about that moment all the time. It not only changed who I am as a person but also an artist."

Sean adds: I thought it was important to share my music with other people who have had similar experiences, share my inner world to maybe make people feel less alone, and hopefully destigmatize mental illness. I've always thought that if this many people in the world have these mental disorders, maybe they are just names for different types of being human."

Though Sean intentionally walks through the darkest tunnels of his past, it's all with the intention of finding light and community on the other side – to let anyone else who feels it all know that he's walking alongside them. "Something I love about comic books is how they are not regarded as something smart or sophisticated. You get some of the most honest and fucked up art being made in these things, because no one's paying attention," Sean says. "And I think that there's something really beautiful about how it's for everyone, like how bell hooks writes her books so everyone can understand them. Or how *The Simpsons* satirizes culture. I just think that's something I've been trying to do with my art — blending animation, comics, and music — to talk about sophisticated topics in a way that is enjoyable and for everyone."