
Memories of Mark Linkous

By Hilary A. White on Tuesday, 9 March 2010

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Although on the other side of the world at the moment, I am distraught over the news of [Mark Linkous' death](#). When I was starting out in music journalism, I approached the man in Whelan's during a sound check, saying that I was a writing for an independent music magazine and could he meet for an interview. He said that that was no problem and we agreed to go for a coffee the morning after his first of two shows in Whelan's. I gave him a copy of *Dubliners* by James Joyce, and he told me that he loved *Ulysses* and that it had inspired the song 'Three Sisters' on *Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot*. 0 0

I can only describe him as one of those rare people who make you look at the world differently. He was softly spoken and warm, telling me all about his work with PJ Harvey, Tom Waits, Dangermouse, Radiohead, Daniel Johnston and many others, his aspirations to work with Bonnie Prince Billy and his struggle with depression. He also let on that he was very serious about his coffee, that he had forgotten how beautiful Irish girls were and that playing in Whelan's felt like coming home. He had also been a champion of Gemma Hayes and took great interest in Irish music in his early years.

I have savoured his music ever since *Good Morning Spider* which I bought on a whim one day in HMV years ago. Its predecessor *Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot*, and follow up *It's A Wondertul Life* are masterpieces. He could be as delicate as gossamer and violent as a tornado. Linkous created a world in his music that was dreamlike, distorted and achingly beautiful, but with a bruised frustration and anxiety. His lyrics dripped like melted butter, and evoked a dimension not dissimilar to a Tim Burton film. "I drank white liquor from the palm of a child who spoke in tongues", he sings on 'King Of Nails'.

He had recently said that his next album would be 'pure pop', something I was looking forward to. However, it was clear listening to last year's *Dark Night of The Soul*, produced with Danger Mouse, David Lynch and a host of rock royalty, that all was not well and Linkous' shadow behind the eyes had returned.

I have never shed tears over the death of an artist before, but I did today in a little internet cafe in

Pokhora in Nepal. On a 3-hour bus journey from Kathmandu to Pokhora just two days ago, I was hungover as fuck and wanted something soothing to accompany me on the bumpy ride. I listened to *It's A Wonderful Life*, from start to finish, for the first time in many years, and thought about how singular a man he was, and how gorgeously fragile his music was. 48 hours later, a friend emailed me with the news.

Life will carry on, new albums will win me over and music will continue to enchant me. But never like Sparklehorse does. Not in the way Linkous could. A sad and beautiful world indeed.
