

In Memoriam: Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous

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MAGNET's Rocco DiCicco eulogizes [Sparklehorse's](#) Mark Linkous, the incredibly gifted and troubled singer/songwriter who committed suicide earlier this month. [Read the story](#) we did on Linkous in 2006.

Maybe it was the shocking and violent way he left this world. Or the realization that such a beautiful, poignant, stellar body of work was so prematurely concluding. Or the regret that you never got to see him perform live. Or just the sadness of such a singular artist deciding that he couldn't live another day. There were countless reasons why so many of us were deeply affected when we heard that Mark Linkous (a.k.a. Sparklehorse) had fatally shot himself in the heart March 6 outside a friend's home in Knoxville, Tenn. I'm sure that, like me, many of his fans across the world have been listening to his music non-stop over the last week and a half. While this is usually the best way to pay your respects and make peace with an artist's passing, in this case it only seems to make you feel the loss even more intensely. This is because you always catch something new, inventive and beautiful every time you listen to Linkous' music. And in the painful remembrance of his eccentric brilliance, it dawns on you that no one will ever make music quite like this again.

Linkous' career began with both huge promise as well as huge tragedy. His first tour was supporting Radiohead in 1996, after his astounding debut, *Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot*, caught the band's attention. But on the London stop of the tour, Linkous overdosed on a mix of alcohol, Valium and antidepressants in his hotel room. He collapsed with his legs pinned beneath him, remaining in that position for almost 14 hours. After his body was lifted up, his heart stopped for several minutes. He was treated at St Mary's Hospital in London, where much of the inspiration for his swirling, intimate second album, 1998's *Good Morning Spider*, came from. Masterly produced by Linkous, the album perfectly wove together his moving, dreamlike songs with his increasingly revolutionary sonic voice, drawn from the modern and vintage gear that he became such an obsessive collector of.

Three years after *Spider*, Linkous released his masterpiece, *It's A Wonderful Life*. One of the most compelling albums of the 21st century, it was also Linkous' personal favorite. From the beautiful strings/mellotron-laden "Gold Day" to the gripping and intimate "Apple Bed" to the pummeling rock of "King Of Nails," this was an album of unquestionable creativity, sonic innovation and boldy surrealist songwriting. It brought Linkous a whole new legion of devoted fans, as well as near-universal admiration from critics and musicians around the world. As a result, Linkous found himself keeping only the best of musical company. His collaborators became the most distinctive musical luminaries of his day: Tom Waits, PJ Harvey, Danger Mouse, the Flaming Lips and Thom Yorke, to name just a few. In Linkous, they saw a kindred musical spirit, a production genius, a soft-spoken Southern gentleman

and, most importantly, a pure and groundbreaking artist.

After several years of battling deep and all-but-handicapping depression, Linkous treated his fans to 2006's excellent *Dreamt For Light Years In The Belly Of A Mountain* and an international tour. He also continued working with and producing innovative music for others. His collaboration with Danger Mouse, *Dark Night Of The Soul*, is scheduled to be released this summer after a protracted legal dispute with Danger Mouse's record label.

In the end, maybe it wasn't that much of a surprise Linkous killed himself. And maybe the odd and violent way in which he left this world was expectedly unique. But it doesn't make the loss any less crushing. What we are left with is his brilliant music, which like so many great artists before him, may end up being discovered and revered by a larger public more than it was when he was here. And that is a good thing. A whole new group of people will connect with something unique, something that makes them feel like their hope, pain, love, hate, fear, insecurity and joy is understood. Because Linkous felt it, too. Whether he was whispering it in our ears or screaming it in a hail storm.