

Angela Faye Martin's 'Home' was a last stop for producer Mark Linkous

Singer recounts making her album 'Pictures from Home'

By [Wayne Bledsoe](#)

Posted April 28, 2010 at 2:16 p.m., updated April 29, 2010 at 10:31 a.m.

[1 Comment](#)



Angela Faye Martin with Mark Linkous during the time the two were working on Martin's album "Pictures from Home."



Angela Faye Martin with Mark Linkous during the time the two were working on Martin's album "Pictures from Home."

KNOXVILLE — Angela Faye Martin's new album, "Pictures from Home," has special significance in at least two ways: It's the first album by a talented artist and it's the last full production from fellow artist and producer Mark Linkous. Linkous was best known for his group Sparklehorse and was beloved by fellow artists and critics. He committed suicide in Knoxville on March 6.

Linkous' hallmarks are all over the disc — a love of rough textures, musical tension and moody drama.

But Linkous was more than a producer on the disc, Linkous and his wife, Teresa, and Martin and Martin's husband, Brent, became friends. Apart from working on the album, the two couples had dinners together and explored abandoned houses.

Angela Faye Martin

Opening for: Mitch Easter, Tim Lee 3

When: 10 p.m. Saturday, May 1

Where: Barley's Taproom & Pizzeria, 200 E. Jackson Ave.

Cost: \$5

"He really loved to do that," says Martin. "And we live in a 120-year-old house and he liked to spend nights here because, he said, he 'liked the weird odors.' He was very different from anyone I've ever met in music."

Martin's musical journey began while she was a girl in Atlanta. Growing up in an atmosphere of parental instability, she dropped out of high school in the ninth grade. In her early 20s, she worked in bookstores and became what she calls "a coffeehouse urchin."

"Eventually, after playing my terrible self-absorbed songs in coffeehouses, I literally left

music. I fell out of love with Atlanta's music scene, and I don't think it was exactly in love with me either!"

Martin eventually landed a job working on forest and river protection through the Wilderness Society and Georgia Forest Watch.

"I really had a decent career, but there was a complete and total void in my life," says Martin. "My husband (who also worked in conservation) was thinking of taking a job in Western North Carolina, so I said, 'OK, I think I left my muse up there on a backpacking trip. Can I go get it?' " she laughs. "And I did find it again. Work was scarce so that was good for songwriting."

The couple ended up in tiny community of Cowee, N.C., in the Nantahala National Forest, where Brent took the job running the office of Wilderness Society. One of the people the couple met was Sandy Jackson, an aging environmentalist, music fan and misfit.

"He kept saying, 'You've got to meet my friend, Mark Linkous,' " says Martin.

The Martins didn't connect the name with Sparklehorse until just before they actually did meet in 2008. Linkous, as it turned out, lived in nearby Hayesville, N.C., and agreed to produce two of Martin's songs at his Static King Studio. That turned into a full album.

Martin says Linkous was strange in a good way, funny and had very definite ideas of how music should be.

"There was a love of order in this project, but there's definitely not a love of perfection," says Martin. "It's got some vocal flats on there that I tried to redo, but he was so in love with the imperfection of that that he wouldn't budge on correcting those. I didn't have any vocal ego in the first place, but what little I did have, he buried for me."

She said Linkous definitely had a self-destructive bent. He chain smoked unfiltered Camel cigarettes and disdained the healthy meals his wife would pack for him.

"He'd burn through 12 hours on nothing but a honeybun and Cheerwine," says Martin.

And he also loved firearms and weaponry.

She says Linkous was always concerned about her taking the 40-mile trip from his studio back to Cowee. The route was little traveled and didn't have cell phone service.

"He wouldn't let me leave unless he thought I was properly armed," says Martin.

One night he insisted she take his grandfather's truncheon because Martin wouldn't carry a gun.

Martin says that Linkous, who had been subject to depression, once discussed the topic with her and related how a therapist told him that the malady probably didn't exist in prehistoric man because, to survive, tribes of people took care of each other. She believes Linkous' move to Knoxville was a sign that he was ready to integrate more into society.

"He'd hidden out in the mountains long enough, and I think he wanted a tribe," says Martin. "I think that was part of his survival plan. I think the hermitage part of his life was over and he was transitioning into learning how to be a part of a group."

She does say that she knew Linkous was frustrated and having personal problems.

"I just think it was a fork in the road. Go down this road of frustration, act in the moment. ... He went down the wrong fork that afternoon and that was just the result. Even somebody that's having good things happen to them can have that bad of a day — and there was a firearm available."

Martin takes a lot of good memories from her friendship and working relationship with Linkous and she says it's a shame that more people didn't have the chance to know Linkous and work with him at the studio he planned to open in Knoxville.

"It would've provided that many more people with the opportunity I had."