

## Soul Survivor: Dark Night Of The Soul

### Danger Mouse talks about delayed project

Interview Posted by ClashMusic Tue, 06/07/2010

Tweet 2

Like 0

0



Destined for 'great lost album' status, record company wrangles postponed the intended release of the intriguing Danger Mouse/Sparklehorse/David Lynch collaborative album 'Dark Night Of The Soul' last year. It now finally officially

sees the light of day, but takes on an even gloomier hue after one of its main protagonists and a guest star committed suicide in the interim. Danger Mouse gets dark with us...

It doesn't take a genius record label veteran to realise that fucking with Brian Burton, AKA Danger Mouse, isn't the wisest idea. But having neared Radiohead in challenging post-Millennial notions of record releasing methods via bootlegastic Beatles/Jay-Z mash-up 'The Grey Album', Burton must have felt a twinge of déjà vu about the difficulties that beset 'Dark Night Of The Soul'. EMI cease-and-desist antics attempted to shoot down 'The Grey Album' over copyright issues back in 2004. Five years later, the same label kyboshed 'Dark Night Of the Soul'

Thrown into musical purgatory, the response bore trademark Burton cheek: a lush book-enclosed package was sold online replete with blank CD-R, featuring the knowing legend 'Enclosed CD-R contains no music, use it as you will'. The album - a downcast modern rock descent voiced by guest stars from Iggy Pop to Julian Casablancas - found its way into the file-sharing world. We probably don't have to draw a diagram involving download-happy fans to explain what happened next and, perhaps inevitably, original books have commanded three-figure sums on eBay.

Sadly, before label disagreements could be resolved to allow 'Dark Night Of The Soul' its overdue label-approved release, tragedy struck: both Sparklehorse architect Mark Linkous and Vic Chesnutt, who appears on album track 'Grim Augury', took their own lives within a matter of months of each other. The rawness of Linkous' passing still understandably evident in Burton's speech, predominantly still referring to his departed friend in current tense, his voice almost cracks on more than one occasion during our conversation.

"Mark was always a very dark person in general. He had a lot of demons. We were really close and so I knew a lot of things that were going on and we talked a lot. That state was always there from the time I met him and followed him for quite a while. So when I found out what happened it wasn't completely shocking, but it was obviously really sad and had an impact on me. I guess a lot of artists as people have a real dark element to what they do. The same with Vic [Chesnutt]. I didn't know Vic very well, but he's tried to do that kind of thing before. Once somebody has that in their disposition you know there's always that possibility. Obviously I knew it was a pretty dark album when it was done. Two of the people on the album are dead and how those things happened does add a little to the darkness of it. But so far I can still listen to it. I still enjoy hearing it, hearing all the singers. I've had to go back to it recently, so it's been okay."

---



### Inception

Though the release process of 'Dark Night...' has alone served to make the record feel a long time in the offing, its genesis stretches back further, in fact, to 'The Grey Album'. Linkous was sent a copy by his manager and called Burton up, eventually enlisting his production services on what turned out to be the final Sparklehorse album before his death, 2006's 'Dreamt For Light Years In The Belly Of A Mountain'. One song didn't fit Linkous's faraway depressed-Neil-Young register, however. And that sparked the idea that eventually became 'Dark Night Of The Soul', the song itself morphing into 'Just War', voiced on the album by Super Furry Animals' eccentric Gruff Rhys. Indeed, Linkous only sings on one track, 'Daddy's Gone', alongside previous collaborator Nina Persson of The Cardigans.

"There was a really cool song that I thought should have been on the last Sparklehorse album," Burton recalls. "But the range of the song didn't fit Mark's style of singing. It had to fit the Sparklehorse feel and what it takes for him to sing over the top of a song. We came up with the idea that somebody else could sing it, but not necessarily on that album. The whole point of 'Dark Night...' was we could do a bunch of music together but Mark wouldn't worry about the singing. I don't think he could have sung over the top of any of the songs we did, except obviously the one with Nina. Mark and I working together was actually tricky. The two of us have different processes. We'd spend almost a week sometimes on one song and that's not usually the way I work. So I adjusted a little bit to the way he worked."

Unfortunately, according to Burton, a lack of Linkous lyrics may also mean that the Sparklehorse album he was working on prior to his suicide is never completed. "He had played me some demos. It sounds amazing. But he never completed the vocals. Vocals were always real difficult for him to do personally. I never watched him cut vocals. He always did them in a room by himself."

### Suspended

Legal stipulations prevent Burton from expanding on the spat that delayed 'Dark Night...' for a year. And he's still unsure what the label made of the aforementioned blank CD-R tactics - "I don't know," he admits. "I wasn't doing very much talking to anybody personally at the label back then. The way it all happened wasn't ideal, but we tried to keep looking at the positives of how it all came together." Relations between artist and paymaster have thawed a little since, but the multimedia bent of 'Dark Night...' provided some distraction during the frustration of being unable to get it to record store shelves.

Burton originally wrote to David Lynch asking if he would be interested in adding a 'visual dimension' to the album. The influential film director was enticed and delivered an array of sumptuous accompanying art broadly mirroring his warped cinematic take on America. Stranger still, he contributed vocals to two songs: 'Star Eyes (I Can't Catch It)' and the closing title track.

Now, with plans afoot to follow the July 12th release of 'Dark Night...' with a repeat of gallery exhibitions of Lynch's artwork circa the record's unofficial unleashing, Burton can finally turn his full attention to future projects. After a

plethora of production work in the past few years, though, he's about to take another trip off-piste.

"I haven't really been producing for anybody for a while now, so we'll see," he begins, cryptically. "I've got another project but I can't really talk about it right now. It will surprise people but I don't know how it's all going to come about yet."

And after such a tumultuous time, the fact that the now-mastered version of 'Dark Night Of The Soul' is no longer heading toward the lost album annals is a satisfying conclusion for Burton.

"The versions that were out there were not very good quality," he admits. "I know Mark always cringed at that. He's very much an audiophile. It's just good to have it out the way it's supposed to sound."

Words by Adam Anonymous