

	<h1>SPARKLEHORSE</h1> <p>Mark Linkous Interview Bec Hornsby 3RRR 2001</p> <p>home</p>
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Bec: Are you in Virginia at the Moment?

Mark: Yeah I'm in Virginia now.

Bec: I believe that's where you live these days?

Mark: Yeah.

Bec: You're about to commence a world tour of the new Sparklehorse record?

Mark: We've already been to England, Ireland, Scotland and Belgium.

Bec: Gosh! I hope Australia is going to be include in that.

Mark: Oh yeah I think it is. It's definitely been talked about playing there again. Yeah so I think Australia, Japan and New Zealand.

Bec: The new record 'It a Wonderful Life' was already released here on July 16 and I understand it only came out a few days ago in the states. Is that right?

Mark: Yeah, it just came out the day before yesterday.

Bec: What was the delay there?

Mark: We've sort of always done that so we could tour England and everywhere else and then come back here and it will still be fairly new. There's always been a new president to come in and run the record company so my manager has always been able to foresee shake-ups and how to avoid them.

Bec: Do you have a big launch planed?

Mark: A launch?

Bec: Yeah do you ever do those sorts of things like an album launch in ya hometown?

Mark: Oh I don't have a hometown really. Um, no not really. People don't really care about over here.

Bec: That's strange really because in the UK and also Europe I know your getting a bit of radio play and your also playing with bands as huge as Radiohead. In Australia the album has been received really well too.

Mark: Wow, I'm glad it's being appreciated.

Bec: You played most of the instruments yourself once again (on 'It's a Wonderful Life') apart from writing the songs and singing them you're on guitar and Wurlitzer and Casio. Some of these things I don't even know, what's an Optagan?

Mark: The Optagan is a keyboard that Mattel Toy Company made in the 70's sort one of those home entertainment organs. I don't know if they're that common in Australia as they are here but almost everyone has Wurlitzer or organ with a built in drum machine over here. The thing about the Optagan is that with these celluloid discs and each disc had a different style of music on it. And you put them in the organ and this little optical turntable and it plays a real band playing riffs of a pacific style. I had many of the Optagan discs so I successfully learnt how to copy them and then do really super low-resolution copies. Just kind of degrade the waveforms so it starts getting all these weird like kind of cool short wave radio sounds. Sorry I told you a lot more about that thing then what you probably want to hear.

Bec: No no no I'm very curious I wasn't short what it was at all.

Mark: They only made them for a couple years and then they (Mattel) lost millions of dollars on them. They really are arcade technology!

Bec: I'm amused that you managed to track one down in working order?

Mark: Oh yeah I've been looking for one for 15 years and I finally found one.

Bec: Did you have one when you were a kid?

Mark: No never had one. I first saw one about 15 years ago maybe and I would just find people that had them and sample them. Finally I got real lucky and found one for 10 dollars one day.

Bec: A side from yourself playing on 'It's a Wonderful Life' Scott Mine is back on drums this time around as on the previous record 'Good Morning Spider' and Sophia Michelitsianos. I believe Sophia is Australian.

Mark: Yes she is.

Bec: And She's playing on the record as well.

Mark: She's on all of them except the first one.

Bec: She has gorgeous backing vocals that's for sure.

Mark: Oh yeah, beautiful voice, beautiful girl.

Bec: Is she also your bass player?

Mark: Yeah she plays bass on a couple of tracks.

Bec: I also heard that you'd recorded some of her songs in the studio on your farm. Is that ever going to be released?

Mark: Probably not. We can never get her to put it out she won't like send it to anybody. I don't know.

Bec: She's too shy?

Mark: She does this great stuff I don't know if she's too shy or what, it's like pulling teeth to get it out. Her stuff is like so great.

Bec: Well, tell we'd be really interested to hear it.

Mark: Well a lot of people would love it, I'm still trying I'm not giving up on her yet. I'm trying to hook her up with Mick Harvey so they can do a record together.

Bec: Now that would be amazing. I guess its kind of hard though anything you produce yourself or any form of art. When you have a lot of people judging it can be quite horrifying.

Mark: I'm sure a lot of people find that haunting. I don't read reviews or anything. If I saw a bad review of my record it would freak me out.

Bec: I guess at the end of the day it doesn't matter what you do whether you're a writer or a painter or musician or whatever. There's always going to be a certain percentage of people that aren't going to like your stuff.

Mark: Yeah you always try to get better with each job not matter if you're a bricklayer or speedboat racer.

Bec: Getting back to the record 'It's a Wonderful Life' You've got an amazing bunch of people playing on the album. People like P.J Harvey, Nina Person, Tom Waits which I though was incredible which it's almost impossible for him to contribute a track to a compilation yet alone co-write a song with someone.

Mark: Yeah.

Bec: That must have been a blast?

Mark: Oh yeah. He's been a big hero of mine and an inspiration for a long time. That was a great thing.

Bec: So how did you hook up with him?

Mark: Oh, I had heard that his kids said that he liked like my first album from his stereo. I don't know because they wanted it or they were sick of hearing it. **Pauses** Probably they were sick of hearing it. But I sent him a new copy a long with a letter and we've been kind of talking every since for the last couple of years. And that (Track) 'Dog Door' was kind of an experiment because I had recorded a lot of 20 songs and erased most of them. But I really liked the way 'Dog Door' sounded but I couldn't write a melody-lyrics and stuff for it. It's not really a pop song like verse chorus verse chorus, which all my songs kind of are, they can be deconstructed Bread songs. But I really liked the track and I was like "Man I'll send you this and see if you can do anything with it". He called me and said "Come on out". So I flew up there and we put the vocals down and it was done. He also played piano on the hidden track right on the very end of the album.

Bec: What then about P.J Harvey. How did that collaboration arise?

Mark: We opened for her somewhere I just asked her if she wanted to play on my next record because I knew I didn't want to do it all alone at home. So I just started asking people and most of everyone said yeah. But I love Polly's stuff she's fantastic.

Bec: The other interesting collaboration I thought was the Adrain Uttey. He's from Portishead is that correct?

Mark: Right

Bec: I thought that was a great matching of artist.

Mark: Oh yeah, I've always been a big Portishead fan and John Parish who plays with P.J Harvey, We were talking about recording I just asked John "Do you know any of the Portishead people? I'd love to have anyone from them involved" and he just happened to see Adrian at a pub that night and asked Adrian. And Adrian just said "Yeah I'll be there".

Bec: So have you returned the favour to Portishead yet and done anything with them?

Mark: I've done a little bit with them, I don't know if it's gonna be exactly Portishead, but we've recorded just for fun.

Bec: Well, you have sort of recorded lots of different bits and pieces for a lot of people. I remember that group you had with Vic Chessnut and The Saturday City Steaks. Are you ever gonna do anything with that again because that was years ago now?

Mark: I don't know. We've never really talked about it. Vic lives so far away it like 15 hours to drive to Vic's house. I'm sure we'll be doing something together sometime soon. David Larry and I are going to start doing a record here soon. Obviously non-cracker music.

Bec: One of the more interesting collaborations of that I know you've done in the past was Susanna Hoffs lead singer of The Bangles. I know that was a few years ago, but you always pick some pretty interesting people to work with and that was one that really surprised me. I wouldn't have thought that would've been something you'd do. But it sounds great the stuff you did with her.

Mark: At the time I was washing dishes at a restaurant and not enjoying it that much. My friend who was going to be the producer said that she was wanted to do this big comeback album and really wanted it to be quite Mazzy Star. So that's pretty much why I did it.

Bec: I also wanted to ask you about the films you've made for the tracks on 'It's a Wonderful Life'. All the tracks that appear on the album you've made like mini/short films. I thought that was quite a massive project to take on considering that there are 11 tracks on the album in total?

Mark: Yeah, but a lot of songs aren't on the album are in the film and some of the songs that are on the album aren't in the film.

Bec: And you have people like Jonathon from Mercury Rev who did the film clip for 'Sea of Teeth' and also Jason from Granddaddy who did 'More Yellow Birds'.

Mark: Well it started out just being rocker friends. It sort of developed unintentionally to where it became a lot of serious documentary styled filmmakers like Braydon King, Grant Gee who did the Radiohead movie, the Brothers Quay who has done some great stuff. Also Guy Madden who's films look like they've been buried in a fire and arty and like a hundred years old. So it's gonna come out really nice. All the films I've seen so far are really beautiful.

Bec: I've they're going to get played at Sundance, are they going to get played anywhere else internationally or commercially released?

Mark: I don't know, it's going to be in some film festivals or something but I know they'll try to release it somehow commercially

Bec: You also wrote the score for a documentary for Jem Cohen who did the 'King of Nails' clip for you. Her documentary was on a town in Sicily near the Mount Etna volcano last year. Is that something you'd like to do more of writing film scores?

Mark: No I kind of tried it and gave up. I kept getting these sort of vague directions that 'so and so' wants music for their film and I kind of bust ass to do it and then never hear from them again. I sort of gave up on that.