

## Sparklehorse Emerges Slowly

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PHOTO: PETE STARHAM

By James Keast

It took a Mouse to get Mark Linkous out of the house. The Sparklehorse auteur had been fairly prolific since his 1995 debut — three albums in six years — but another five have passed since he dropped *It's A Wonderful Life*. He faced down *Danger* to finish *Dreamt For Light Years In the Belly Of A Mountain*, in the form of hip-hop producer Brian Burton, aka Danger Mouse.

"I was fucked up in my head, depressed," Linkous reveals in his slow Virginia drawl. "I like playing and coming up with songs, but I lost interest in recording. That probably accounted for a good three years."

Two unusual pairings helped Linkous get back to the Southern gothic vibe of ghostly, haunted musings he excels at — a session with pop experimenter Christian Fennesz, then Danger Mouse came to call at his North Carolina studio. "The ideas I had in my head, the kind of music that I wanted to make, I think Brian was keen on helping me get there," says Linkous on the tenuous connection between his creaky, backporch vibe and the producer behind Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy."

The push was just what Linkous needed — though he continued to play (a lot), his tenuous mental state allowed no perspective on what he was doing. "There are good and bad aspects of having your own studio. Obsessing over a song for an indefinite period of time is one thing I'm capable of — doing it for so long I couldn't pay my rent anymore."

Though only four tracks with Danger Mouse appear on the final product, it was the push Linkous needed, and now he enthuses about hooking up again with the collaboration-minded producer. "We're supposed to start a proper full-on collaboration [this month]. I hope to meld even further and bring my pop thing into more of a hip-hop world. I don't know what we're going to call it: DangerHorse or SparkleMouse, something like that."