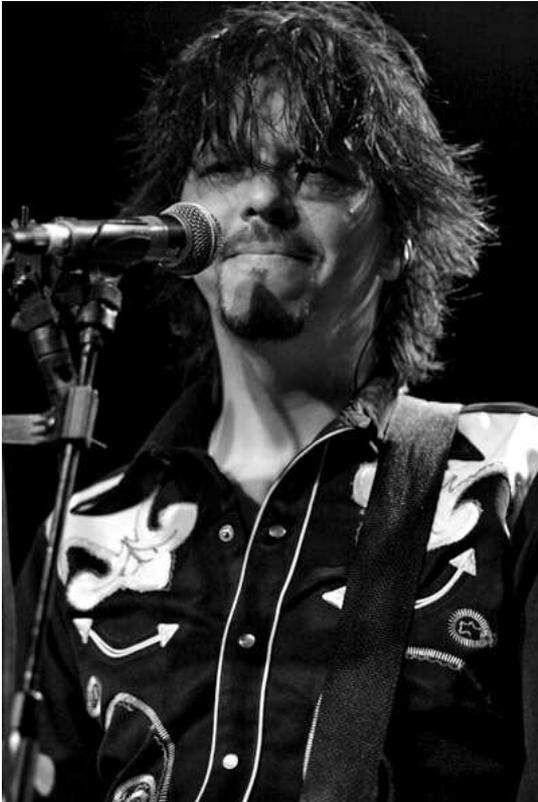


March 8th, 2010

## R.I.P. Mark Linkous Of Sparklehorse



Why do the weekends keep bringing absolutely awful news? Last weekend it was the death of Hall & Oates bassist **Tom “T-Bone” Wolk**. And on Saturday, March 6th, **Sparklehorse** main man and brilliant, unique songwriter **Mark Linkous** [took his own life](#) — having shot himself in the heart outside a friend’s home in Knoxville, Tennessee — after a long up-and-down battle with depression. He was 47. In addition to his fantastic work with Sparklehorse, Linkous collaborated with and produced numerous musicians, including Tom Waits and Daniel Johnston. He also teamed up with Danger Mouse last year for a project entitled *Dark Night of the Soul*. The album — which features contributions from David Lynch, Frank Black, Iggy Pop, the late Vic Chesnutt, and members of the Flaming Lips, the Shins, the Strokes, Super Furry Animals, and others — had been delayed for legal reasons, but just last week was said by Danger Mouse to be cleared for release soon. Linkous was also putting the wraps on a new Sparklehorse album at the time of his death.

Here’s part of an interview I did with Linkous at the beginning of 2007, while he was touring behind 2006’s *Dreamt for Light Years in the Belly of a Mountain*:

### **What is it that makes a show great for you?**

Umm, I think when it’s smaller places and the audience is really enthusiastic, and by that I mean when they’re really...when the applause is almost overwhelming sometimes, and then on the other hand, the slow, pretty songs when there’s dead silence...when you can get a room of 800 people to be absolutely silent, I think that makes for the best shows for me. When people are absolutely tuned in and attentive and not talking during the quiet songs.

### **Is it easy to lose yourself in the music when you’re up there playing?**

I lose myself when it goes well, and it usually goes well with this band. A majority of the time it seems like I’m up there for 15 minutes — you have that weird thing with time. Things have occasionally gone bad, and a lot of times in the past I’ve toured and haven’t been in such good shape with drinking or drugs or whatever, I was often on the edge of collapse all the time, and when it’s like that it seems like you’re up there for hours and days.

### **So you’re enjoying it more now than you used to?**

Yeah, I’m trying to because I really ... I think it was a combination of feeling guilty about making a living doing this and turning it into entertainment, I would never let it actually make me feel good. Doing the music in the first place, like almost all art, it was an outlet to keep my head from exploding, and then turning it into a traveling road show where you perform to people night after night after night ...it seemed like it corrupted everything. I just felt guilty about the whole thing.

**So you don't necessarily feel that way anymore?**

Yeah. Well, I mean, to an extent. It was really hard earlier doing that but now it's different now. It's not so hard, I guess, just because I've put out four albums now and I know the audience pretty much consists of allies of mine. They know what I've been through, most of them, they know what it's all about, so I don't feel embarrassed singing those songs in front of them because I feel like they're with me. And I talk to people every single night and they're like...this kid last night, he said to me that there's many times that your albums really made feelin' shitty not so bad.

**How do you feel when someone comes up to you and says something like that?**

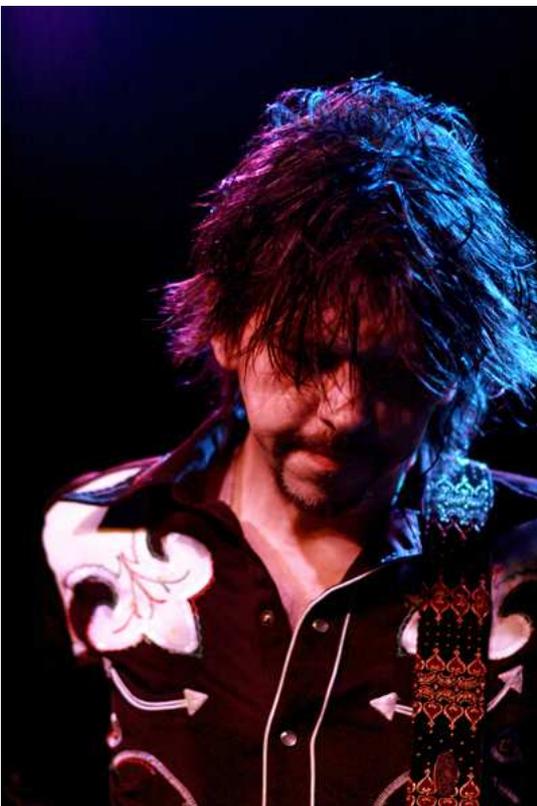
Umm, well, I dunno. It's really a huge thing every time anyone says that, I almost have to contain myself, I almost wanna just...it validates everything that I've done since day one with this music, and it's really almost overwhelming when people say that. I almost have to stop from blubbering.

**I know it took you a number of years to make this new album — at any point did you think it wouldn't ever get finished?**

Um yeah I did. I got so down on myself mentally that I thought, "Well, it's been five years and people have moved on..." — that [Sparklehorse] wasn't that great a thing to begin with. I really felt that for a while there in these last five years, but once I got this band together and we did this European tour it was just totally not that way. I didn't think anyone would come to these shows, I figured the venues would be half empty, and it hasn't been that way at all.

**It was just hard to step outside of it and have perspective on it all?**

I think where I live and the way I live, I'm so isolated. I'm pretty much a recluse. And maybe when you live that way it's easy to lose sight of what's reality. I dunno, I still like living in the country, walking around in the woods all day. I think I'll always live in the country but I'm trying harder to stop convincing myself of things that aren't true.



[Photos by Michael Alan Goldberg]