

## Crazy Horse

Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous finds there's life after near-death.



SPARKLEHORSE FRONTMAN Mark Linkous is in admirably high spirits for someone who was recently declared clinically dead. Four months after an accident that nearly cost him his legs, he's rolling his wheelchair around a San Francisco Denny's as he recounts a recent spat with a heckler. "We were opening for Cracker and this guy kept shouting at us to play some music," Linkous recalls. "I challenged him to come up onstage, but what was I going to do? Run over his toes repeatedly? Kick him in the shins?" The night before, he had taken on another wise guy at the Fillmore, a place he claims is haunted. "It has that spooky smell," he says.

What's truly haunted is Sparklehorse's music. The evocative *vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot* is crawling with musical ghosts—bittersweet country melodies, sparkling Big Star quotes, and a lyrical sense that's equal parts Frank Black and Neil Young. Recorded mostly at Linkous's Virginia farmhouse studio, the album rattles and clanks with what he calls "sounds that make my heart feel beautiful and sad."

If the rollicking radio contender "Someday I Will Treat You Good" doesn't seem to fit with Linkous's melancholy wonder, it's because it was actually penned during his days with a forgettable NYC pop band called the Dancing Hoods. He left after a nervous breakdown pitched him back to Virginia, and eventually some homemade tapes made it into Capitol's hands with the help of Linkous's old friend, David Lowery of Cracker. Then, just after the album's release, came the accident.

Jet-lagged after a show in London, Linkous crossed Valium with his prescription antidepressants and passed out on a hotel bathroom floor. "My legs were pinned under me, accumulating toxic fluids for 14 hours," Linkous explains solemnly. "The doctors said I went into cardiac arrest until electroshock brought me back to life." As for near-death visions, Linkous can't even remember flying to England. "I could have been abducted by aliens for all I know."

He'll always have to wear braces on his ankles, although he expects to walk again in a year. But those strangely thick eyeglasses Linkous wears on stage serve no therapeutic purpose. "I saw an ad of some model making a statement with these high-fashion welding goggles," he says. "And I thought, if she can wear them, why can't I?" SIA MICHEL

Mark Linkous on a wing and a chair.