

The Singer-Songwriter Known as Sparklehorse Is Dead at 47

By [BEN SISARIO](#)

Mark Linkous, a singer-songwriter whose music, released under the name Sparklehorse, was renowned in the indie-rock and alt-country worlds for its dark, allusive themes and fragile beauty, committed suicide on Saturday in Knoxville, Tenn. He was 47.

He shot himself in the heart in an alley outside a friend's home, said his manager, Shelby Meade. Lt. Greg Hoskins of the Knoxville Police Department confirmed that the police responded to a call at 1:20 p.m., and that Mr. Linkous was pronounced dead at the scene. According to his family, Mr. Linkous owned the gun that he used.

On four Sparklehorse albums released between 1995 and 2006, and in numerous collaborations, Mr. Linkous developed a style that sent sunny, Beatles-esque melodies through a filter of crackling, damaged folk-rock, and his songs were filled with entropic imagery. "Everything that's made is made to decay," he sang on Sparklehorse's debut album, "Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot" (Capitol) in a whispery tenor that had echoes of coal-country folk.

Born and raised in Virginia, Mr. Linkous began his musical career in punk bands, and in the 1980s he lived in New York and Los Angeles in pursuit of mainstream rock success as part of the band the Dancing Hoods. Disillusioned with the music business, he returned to Virginia and reinvented his sound as Sparklehorse, a name that applied to himself as well as the band he led.

Although never a commercial success, Sparklehorse's music found respect among critics and other musicians. Rolling Stone called its 1998 album "Good Morning Spider" "a homemade tour de force of psychedelic Appalachian folk slop," and the third Sparklehorse album, "It's a Wonderful Life," released in 2001, featured guest appearances by Tom Waits and PJ Harvey.

Mr. Linkous was also in demand as a producer, working with Daniel Johnston and Nina Persson, among others. He collaborated with Danger Mouse and the film director David Lynch on "Dark Night of the Soul," an album and photo book that was scheduled to come out last year but was delayed by legal entanglements; last week Danger Mouse announced that those problems had been worked out and that the album would be released soon.

Mr. Linkous had recently completed most of the work for a new Sparklehorse album and was in the process of moving to Knoxville and setting up a new studio to complete the album, said Ms. Meade, his manager.

His survivors include his wife, Teresa Linkous; his mother, Gloria Hughes Thacker; his father, Frederick Linkous; and three brothers, Matt, Paul and Daniel Linkous.