

◀A Tribute To Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous

Copyright ©2010 National Public Radio. For personal, noncommercial use only. See Terms of Use. For other uses, prior permission required.

Heard on Fresh Air from WHY?Y

text size **A A A**

March 8, 2010 - TERRY GROSS, host:

Singer and songwriter Mark Linkous shot himself in the heart on Saturday. He was 47. Linkous performed under the name Sparklehorse. Our rock critic Ken Tucker reviewed Sparklehorse's music and interviewed Linkous on our show, so we called Ken to talk about Linkous, and to choose a track to remember him by.

Hi, Ken. I know, you know, you've reviewed Sparklehorse on our show. Tell us what you think made Mark Linkous's music important, what you liked about it.

KEN TUCKER: What I liked about it was that he was a very sophisticated naïf. He was a very much a working-class autodidact, and he was very much a - kind of a working-class guy with a very poetic sensibility, who was drawn to artists like himself, who worked in isolation.

I remember when I interviewed him, he would cite influences such as William Blake. He set Blake's poem "London" to music quite beautifully. And he also - for someone who said that he wasted his life in high school not reading but drinking and smoking dope, he was very interested in certain literary people such as Breece Pancake, the Southern short story writer who, himself, committed suicide in 1979.

GROSS: Do you feel like you could hear his depression in his music?

TUCKER: Yes. I mean, with the provision that I always think it's dangerous to view a life through the artist's final act, I think it's almost inescapable. His first album contained a wonderful song called "Sad and Beautiful World," and his final project was a collaboration with the producer Danger Mouse. It was called "Dark Night of the Soul."

GROSS: What else stood out when you interviewed him?

TUCKER: I thought that the fact that he said that his chief influences - for a guy who was so drawn to the arty side of things; he collaborated with the Flaming Lips and Radiohead - was that he said he liked early Beatles music and early punk rock. And he said that - in particular, he said, I like really simple, short songs that sound as if you were hearing snatches of them beaming off satellites. And I thought that was a perfect description for the way he sang, in this sort of faint, scratchy voice that he very deliberately distorted, that became a very sort of whispery confiding voice on the softer songs - and on louder songs amplified into kind of - these kinds of yells of despair.

GROSS: Would you like to choose a song for us to hear?

TUCKER: Yes. I think the most fitting, and one of the most wonderful songs he ever wrote, is from his album called "Good Morning Spider," called "Sick of Goodbyes."

GROSS: OK, well, we'll play that. Ken, thanks very much.

TUCKER: Thank you.

GROSS: Ken Tucker is FRESH AIR's rock critic and editor-at-large for Entertainment Weekly.

Mark Linkous took his life Saturday. Here is "Sick of Goodbyes."

(Soundbite of song, "Sick of Goodbyes")

Mr. MARK LINKOUS (Musician): (Singing) If I could just keep my stupid mind together, then my thoughts would cross the land for you to see. No one sees you on a vampire planet. No one sees you like I do. Seconds click in which I'm changed to dust, withered roots of knots and hair and rust. No one sees you on a vampire planet. No one sees you like I do. I'm so sick of goodbyes, goodbyes. I'm so sick of goodbyes, goodbyes. Goodbye.

GROSS: That's Mark Linkous performing as Sparklehorse. Earlier, Ken mentioned the forthcoming album, "Dark Night of the Soul," which Linkous collaborated on with Danger Mouse and David Lynch. You can hear the entire album on our Web site, freshair.npr.org.

I'm Terry Gross.

Copyright © 2010 National Public Radio. All rights reserved. No quotes from the materials contained herein may be used in any media without attribution to National Public Radio. This transcript is provided for personal, noncommercial use only, pursuant to our Terms of Use. Any other use requires NPR's prior permission. Visit our permissions page for further information.