

Features

Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse: An Appreciation

by [Melanie Love](#)

Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse took his own life on March 6, 2010. He was forty-seven.

The loss of a musician is a strangely potent thing. We connect with our favorite bands and singers in a way that's sometimes impossible to do with other people: they let us immediately and entirely into their souls, into the hidden parts of themselves that we're only lucky to share or even glimpse in our friends and loves. I've had friends for nearly a decade who have never said anything so intimate or striking to me as "Please don't take my sunshine away" or "Someday I will treat you good." I have no real claim to Linkous – I saw him live once but of course never knew him; but there's still a part of me that mourns his loss and wonders how it all could have been different. Wonders how such a beautiful mind could feel such pain.



I discovered Sparklehorse in 2006 with *Dreamt For Light Years In The Belly Of A Mountain*, a record that is as stark and laid bare as it is rich and emotive. His songs are like origami: delicate and lovely and creased, made up of layers and care. And that disc came at a perfect time for me, when I was devouring music and falling in love every day with something new. There was something special about Sparklehorse, though, something difficult to ignore. The instrumentation was raw and fuzzy, the lyrics were gorgeously surreal. You could hear Linkous' heart in his throat when he sang, drawing something beautiful and interconnected out of our messed-up little world.

Words are a rare gift; it takes sheer courage to mold something new and whole out of blank paper or air. Linkous had that in spades. He had a vision of life that was cracked but elegant. A voice that was flawed but evocative. But above all, he could make something wonderful out of suffering.

Some of the most incredible art has come out of suffering: Van Gogh's roiled starscapes, John Lennon wailing "Mother," Freddie Mercury near death belting out "The Show Must Go On." Sparklehorse released a quartet of albums, each more brilliant than the next: [Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot](#) (1995); *Good Morning Spider* (1999); *It's A Wonderful Life* (2001); *Dreamt For Light Years In The Belly Of A Mountain* (2006). And now, that music is his legacy. Even when not viewed through the lens of his untimely death, those albums are still incredible – the gorgeous innocence of "Some Sweet Day;" the moody swirls of "Eyepennies;" "Someday I Will Treat You Good," which is one of my favorites by any artist for its energy and intimacy.

Music fans are left to wonder where Linkous would have headed next; his manager confirmed that a new Sparklehorse album was nearly completed. But as another person, attempting to navigate the same horrible/wonderful struggles, I think it was privilege enough to simply have been invited into Linkous' world. Sometimes, the only thing that makes life's hardships bearable is having something or someone to turn to, whether it's faith or a friend or a slice of music from someone who's felt the same and lived to tell about it. We may not have had enough time with Mark Linkous, but thankfully, the music and his memory will endure.