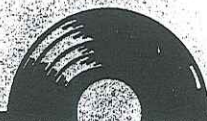


**ROCK**  
TIM DOWSON



**CLASSICAL**  
LIAM NADEN

## Wiry guitar pop and spooky acoustics

**Sparklehorse:** *Vivadixie-submarinetranmissionplot* Festival

The debut album from American outfit **Sparklehorse** is a gem. Singer Mark Linkous cites influences including **Mazzy Star**; **Guided by Voices** and the seminal Tom Waits album **Swordfish trombones**. The later may explain the albums lengthy title, *Vivadixie-submarine-tranmissionplot*.

Mixing wiry guitar pop with gentle and slightly spooky acoustic stuff, reminiscent of early Neil Young, Linkous and his cohorts have produced an unaffected and very charming bunch of tunes.

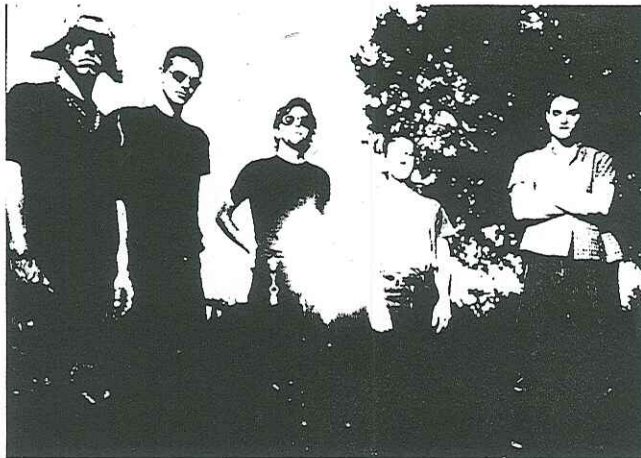
There is a vaguely surreal feel to the album. Many of the

tunes build on simple guitar riffs and add a range of interesting sounds including an answerphone message from mom, Hank Williams style slide guitar (the glorious "Sad & Beautiful World") or fuzzed vocals.

Some tunes like the tender "Most Beautiful Widow In Town" are stripped bare and sung with only an acoustic guitar.

Lyrics tend to be a stream of consciousness poetry aimed at creating a "feel." Horse references and imagery are a constant theme.

The album opener "Homecoming, Queen" manages to link the bard's lines "a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse" with an apology for



### *Sparklehorse... unaffected, charming bunch of tunes*

using up; "the last box of sparklers before they went bad, got wet or decayed" and present the bands name simultaneously.

Elsewhere keyboards are referred to as "horse's teeth" and the album closes with "Gasoline Horseys".

Somehow it all hangs together and works magnificently.

This is music that has been born, in the main, late at night or in the early hours. It is imbued with a luxurious tired-

ness that Linkous attributes to "that state of mind your brain is in at night or when you are maybe sleep deprived...when you've been up all night or when you've just woken up - that curtain of sleep is not all the way up yet. Sometimes creative thoughts flow a little more evenly then, there's not so many speed bumps."

While there are a couple of small speed bump melodic rockers (most notably "Rainmaker" and "Tears On

Fresh Fruit") the album is primarily understated and gentle.

With *Viva dixie...* **Sparklehorse** have created an album chock full of great tunes. It is a strong contender for the best 96 crown and it's well worth checking out.