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[It Only Took Twenty Years...](#)



His album, "[Intolerance](#)," sounds as fresh to me today as it did in 1990, when my sister first gave me a copy. From the opening track, "All of My Senses" to the poignant last words of "She Can See the Angels Coming," I was riveted. Listened to it over and over and over, along with Nova Mob's "[Last Days of Pompeii](#)," and couldn't get enough.

My sister lived in the Twin Cities in those days, and she got to see [Grant Hart](#) play as a soloist, and as the lead singer/drummer in Nova Mob on numerous occasions. Stranded in New England, I couldn't even get to the one show I heard of, in Providence at the now defunct Living Room. If only I could have gotten a babysitter that night, but no such luck. I was so envious of my sister having such ready access to those shows. Not only that, but sometimes she even got to talk to him. Hot damn!

So, "Tell him!" I said. "Tell him that I, a classically trained musician, am mightily impressed with his work!"

I don't think she ever had enough conversation time to share that with him, but...

I guess I forgot to mention that Grant played ALL the instruments and sang ALL the vocals on "Intolerance." Keys, guitars, drums, voice, sound effects...the sheer versatility and skill blew me away.

I bought his other CDs as soon as I heard of them. Sadly, I don't own every single one he

did since the break-up of Husker Du, but I do have most of them. And it had been a very long time indeed since the release of "Good News for Modern Man," about nine years, actually, when a random e-mail landed in my inbox, announcing concerts in the Greater Boston area. I usually give such things a cursory glance and hit delete, but something prompted me to read this one, and there, way down at the bottom...Grant Hart at the Middle East? Oh, sweet Jesus! When? And the tickets are how much? NINE DOLLARS????? You never saw a person head for the ticketmaster site faster than I did that morning. And then it slowly dawned on me: if he's touring, there must be a NEW ALBUM.

Indeed, there was. [Hot Wax](#) is fabulous. I can't seem to get enough of the opening track, "You're the Reflection of the Moon on the Water."

But I digress.

We have fast-forwarded from 1990 to 2010, twenty years since I first heard "Intolerance" and "Last Days of Pompeii." Grant Hart is coming to the Middle East in Cambridge, and I have tickets in hand, and a head full of all the music of his that I own. I am ready for him on Monday night. More than ready, after twenty very long years!

He is not touring with a band. It's just Himself with an electric guitar, and maybe a few distortion/overdrive pedals. (I'm guessing here, as I'm not much of a gearhead). When he arrives, I recognize him instantly, but other folks don't seem to. He just walks in quietly with his guitar case, eyes twinkling as he passes. I'm not sure exactly what to expect, but am certain it will be interesting.

Within minutes, I've changed that opinion. Interesting, my arse! I cannot take my eyes off him. He draws me closer and closer to the stage, into a sea of people, and that's no mean feat: I generally avoid being hemmed in by crowds like the plague. But in this case, I don't see them. There is only this man, and this astounding music, and the poetry.

He plays and sings hard for a full hour and a half, performing at least 20 songs. So many favorites are going by, one after the other. And towards the end of the performance, I add up the time, and realize: Twenty years. My God, I have been waiting for this night for twenty years! And then, as the evening draws to a close, I feel driven to share that thought with him. I MUST let him know...

As these things go, if you miss your moment, it's gone. If it's meant to happen, it will happen.

He passes by me and in a second he will be in the thick of the crowd, and I won't have the nerve to follow. And so I speak.

"Grant!"

He hears me, and whirls 'round on the instant, shining a beatific smile on me.

Furthermore, though we have never met before, he is looking at me as if he knows me, and has known me for a very long time. There's that twinkle in his eyes, brows raised inquiringly. He is not tall, and I am more or less nose to nose with him.

I lean towards him and say it: "I've been waiting to hear you play live for twenty years!"

The smile gets broader and he laughs, and replies, "Well, it's about f*cking time!"

Then I'm laughing, too, and what do I say in return? "Yes, Grant. Yes it is."

I tell him we have a friend in common back in the Twin Cities, whereupon he inquires if I smoke. There's a pack of cigarettes in his hand, and he's in the process of shaking one loose. I'm not a smoker and tell him so, at which point he takes my hand and starts moving towards the exit door. "Come with me anyway!" he says, and my head is reeling. A quick hello is turning into an opportunity for a more in-depth conversation. He is acting as if I'm an old and dear friend, and I am utterly at ease with him.

We are halfway to the door, and I am telling him I'll be happy to walk out with him, but just as we are halfway to his destination, he is waylaid by someone who wants CDs.

He offers an apologetic shrug and a smile, and says, "I'm sorry, but I guess I have to deal with commerce now."

"That's all right," I say, feeling lucky to have spent as much time with him as I have. "I've got to go now anyway, but--Grant, thank you so much! It was beautiful."

And I'm caught in a bear-hug that lasts awhile, and we say goodbye.

I hope that someday, some way, we might have a chance to resume that conversation, but even if we don't, at least he knows what the music has meant to me all this time. What it will continue to mean.

"What's left is all that remains to be seen." ~Grant Hart~

Posted by mad angel at [8:37 PM](#) 

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