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BLURTING WITH... Grant Hart

Dec 15, 2009

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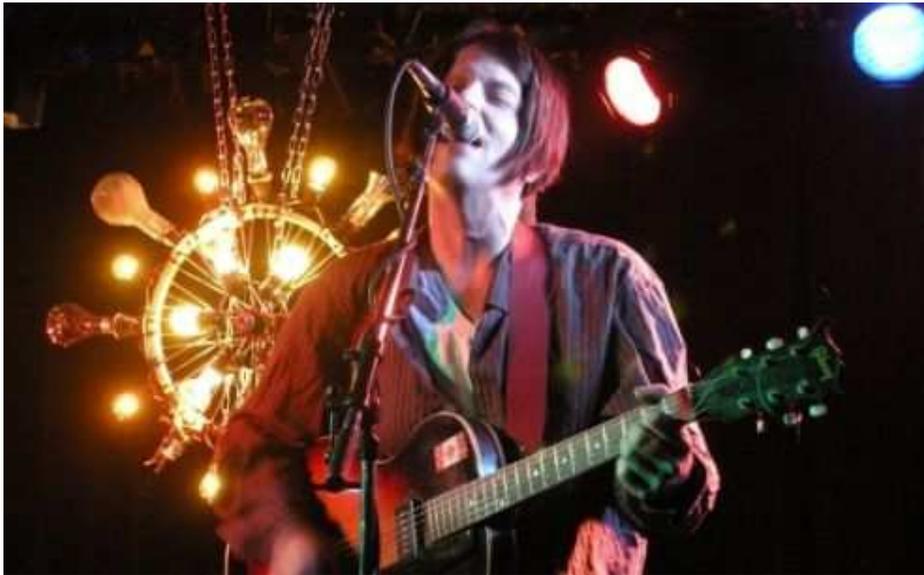


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The Daily Dose

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"Pairing me and Bob Mould would be easiest [for a Husker Du reunion]. I don't think either of us would be interested in playing with Greg Norton."

BY HAL BIENSTOCK

During an era where seemingly every alternative band from the 1980s reformed, Husker Du has remained noticeably absent from the reunion gravy train. In 2009, calls for the band to get back together grew louder than ever thanks to the return of Grant Hart - who wrote many of the Husker Du's most beloved songs - and of course Bob Mould's Husker Du-focused set with No Age at the All Tomorrow's Parties festival and a solo tour which found Mould dipping further into the Husker catalog than he has in a long time.

Hart's latest solo album, *Hot Wax* (Con D'or Records) is his first in 10 years, yet it fits perfectly into the continuum of his career, offering the same mix of punk and '60s-style garage rock that defined his songs in Husker Du and as a solo artist. Hart, it should be said, is criminally overlooked at times, a situation that *Hot Wax* should handily rectify.

We talked with Hart about the album, his relationship with Mould and the prospects of a Husker Du reunion.

BLURT: You've been out of the spotlight for a long time. What got you writing and touring again?



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HART: I've done a few projects here and there. And half of this album was recorded five years ago. I started working on it at this place in Montreal, but it gradually became tougher and tougher to get studio time there. I decided to finish it in Minneapolis, and once I made that decision, it was only four months until we completed it. It's sort of two different records in that sense.

I think a lot of people assumed the break was because of your troubles [with addiction], which have been well chronicled.

The chronicling has gotten to the point where the chronicling is more trouble than the troubles were.

What do you mean?

I went through a period of addiction that was shorter lived than the topicality of it has been. The years surrounding the end of Husker Du were troubled times, but I put them behind me with the demise of that band. Now, I constantly read about things that happened 20 years ago. It's often described as a many-year struggle with addiction. It's something that a lot of the media fixate on. But I guess I understand it. It's sex drugs and rock and roll, right?

So, you've been clean for a long time?

[My addiction problems] were drawing to a close at the time Husker Du broke up. One of the things that made it possible for me to make those changes was removing that band and influence from my life. When the band broke up, there were certain people whose interest it was in to broadcast those facts of my private life far and wide.

Why would anyone do that?

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My Web Poll

Neko Case is a "Guest Programmer" on the cable network channel Turner Classic Movies (TCM) this week. Her picks included Woody Allen ("Radio Days"), Elia Kazan ("A Face in the Crowd") and others. We think we could have more fun with this format though. If you could program your local cable channel, who would you ask as a guest?

- Caleb Followill
- Wayne Coyne
- Devendra Banhart
- John Darnielle

There are two of us that contributed greatly to the output of that band. It's not people from my camp who kept making it an issue. It was brought up as a means of hobbling me artistically.

What do you think when you look back at your time in Husker Du?

I'm not going to complain about having shared a band with Bob. I cannot think of a guitar player I would have rather played with. When I look back at Husker Du, we had nine years where we completely fucked with people's minds. I look at that band and it's hard for me to deny being proud and satisfied.

After bands like the Pixies, Dinosaur Jr. and My Bloody Valentine got back together, people look at Husker Du as the last big 80s alternative band that they want to see reunite. Is there still a lot of bitterness there between you and Bob?

When people compare us to the Pixies, I say we never needed to be influenced by the Pixies. We influenced the Pixies. If they chose to celebrate their midlife crisis by milking the cash cow, that's fine. Should Husker Du make that decision, and I recognize that's a slim chance, I'd like to think we'd do it for a cause greater than financial remuneration.

And remember, if we were to take the reunion route, it would have to be three of us for it to be valid. Pairing me and Bob would be easiest. I don't think either of us would be interested in playing with Greg [Norton].

Why not?

Greg was never our peer. One of worst things that ever happened to the band was when someone told him he should write songs too. He wasn't a songwriter, but how do you tell a guy that? How do you tell someone "Your songs suck." That was one of the frustrations that led to the band being devalued in our hearts. And once it ceases to be fun, it's merely lucrative.

- Tegan and Sara
- Jay Reatard
- Ed Droste
- Karen O
- Thurston Moore

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The breakup of the band is one of worst things that happened to Bob or me. But we couldn't read the future. There was nothing sadder than being around in 1992 or 1993 and watching people like Smashing Pumpkins or Stone Temple Pilots make millions and millions of dollars. That was when the vacuum we created was really obvious.

And you also had an evolution of attitudes then, so someone like Frank Black who would be eventually bigger in terms of record sales than Husker Du had been, would look back and fool themselves into thinking they were more important or more influential. Maybe more people heard you, but you're not more influential than that which influenced you.

Do you ever feel like your contributions to Husker Du are overlooked?

This isn't thrown out as a condemnation of Bob, but I think that my fans know my material better than a lot of Bob's fans know his material. The reason I say that is every time I've gone to see a Bob Mould concert, someone has yelled out the name of one of my songs. When I'm out touring, I maybe hear that one out of five concerts.

The last couple of years of Husker Du proved this, but the larger your audience is the more dumb elements it's going to encompass. Bob's fans who never heard Husker Du, but heard Sugar first have more of a "Grant sucks" kind of attitude. I think with the popularity of *Copper Blue*, Bob ended up with a bunch of cowboys for listeners. If Bob and I were as competitive as our fans are, we would have never gotten past *Land Speed Record*.

I'm surprised to hear that you go to Bob Mould shows.

The only times they've ever been uncomfortable is because of the effect I would have on the people immediately adjacent to me. I don't like going to a show and being watched unless it's my show.

I think the world is better off [with Bob and I having separate careers]. They get more music this way, and if anyone wants the old records they're still out there.



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