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With Du over, Hart has solo act down

By Jim Sullivan

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Mention Husker Du, the pioneering post-punk band of the '80s, and most fans immediately think of Bob Mould. The group's singer-guitarist has had quite a visible career since the band's 1987 breakup.

Less so, Grant Hart.

Hart, who comes to the Middle East on Monday for a solo show - just voice and guitar - was the Minneapolis-based Husker Du's drummer-singer and shared the songwriting with Mould. He's made solo records and two with the band Nova Mob. But there was a decade-long gap between releases, which ended late last year with his terrific psychedelic-garage-pop record "Hot Wax."



The Herald spoke with Hart, 48, by phone from his home in South St. Paul, Minn.

That was a long stretch between discs. People wondered where you were.

I've played Cambridge at least once every 18 months. But I started sneaking things into my life that I sacrificed very early on. It was the idea of having a hobby that fed the other side of my brain. When you live off your creativity, every day you wake up with a blank canvas. To balance it out, I took on some projects where something had to be put together in order for it to operate. Much of my time has been spent with automotive restoration. I wanted to be able to let my hands do the work, instead of my mind and a dictating machine.

It's unusual for someone to step off the music industry merry-go-round like that.

It's something that's not going to be co-opted into my pop life. I was learning to leave the house with a destination that wasn't career-related. To this day, I have difficulty traveling over 100 miles without there being a gig at the other end.

Is there a connection between your life as a musician and your non-musical life?

I still find ways to incorporate friction and tension into about everything I do. I'm an iconoclast by nature. But I try to be a gentleman.

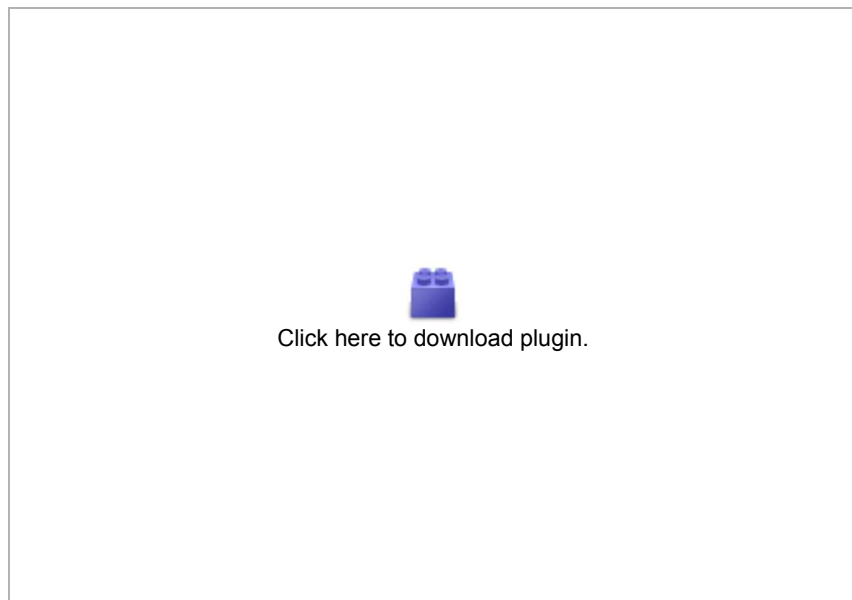
On the new record you've got organ, trumpet and strings. The band Godspeed You! Black Emperor help out, too. But live, it's just you.

The songs have origins in me with one instrument. Everything else embellishes it. There's a lot of costumes in my trunk. In the studio I can be painstakingly looking for a precise blend of instruments. Live, it's stripped-down and pumped-up.

You and Bob Mould had a pretty noisy fallout. With all the reunions of '80s bands, is there a possibility of that with Husker Du?


It's such a complicated issue. I'm fairly paranoid. I already went through one breakup of Husker Du and from the way that worked out, it's not something I would embrace repeating. There's a perception that I've re-entered music again and people think the drumroll is already sounding for that event. But, where people think the biggest hurdle would be getting Grant and Bob together in the same room, another relationship that's not being put into the math is with (bassist) Greg (Norton). Greg has distanced himself from music. I love the guy, but I don't think there's much he's done in the last 20 years that would make him deserving of being involved in a reunion. And there's something to be said for the bands that don't reunite.

Grant Hart, with Mike Gent and Ian Adams, at the Middle East, Cambridge, Monday. Tickets: \$9 advance; \$10 at door; 617-864-3278.



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