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Preview: Grant Hart

Posted by [James Renner](#) on Nov 25th, 2009 and filed under [Music](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#). You can leave a response or trackback to this entry



Grant Hart

The recent wave of reunited bands has seen many of indie rock's brightest stars of the 80's and 90's return to the stage, often with renewed vitality. Dinosaur Jr's two post-comeback albums can stand shoulder to shoulder with any other release in their catalog. My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields is still causing eardrums to bleed like its 1991. However, one name that seems unlikely to grace festival lineups anytime soon is Minneapolis hardcore legends Husker Du, but that doesn't mean that its principals aren't still going

strong.

In the band's post breakup years, guitarist Bob Mould might have seen more of the spotlight but working quietly under the radar, albeit more sporadically, has been the band's drummer, [Grant Hart](#). Switching mainly to guitar, the 90s saw Hart keeping busy both with solo albums and as leader of the band Nova Mob. However, since 1999's Good News for Modern Man, Hart has been largely absent from the music world. So perhaps today with so many other 80s and 90s underground rock icons reclaiming lost glory, the timing is right for Grant Hart to make his own return to the stage. On December 22, Cleveland audiences will have a rare chance to check in with this punk hero as he wraps up his first tour in several years with a solo acoustic performance at the Grog Shop.

Indeed, fans might have forgotten that it was Hart's catchy, melodic, and introspective compositions on classic 1980s Husker Du releases such as Zen Arcade, Flip Your Wig and Candy Apple Grey that were often the tonic to Mould's more stinging punk raveups. Tracks like 1986's "Don't Want to Know If You Are Lonely" (used to brilliant effect in the 2009 coming of age film Adventureland) were responsible for broadening the definition of what hardcore could sound like and in the process influenced a generation of bands to wear their hearts more prominently on their sleeves, without losing any of their intensity.

Hot Wax (Con d'Or/MVD) is Grant Hart's newest solo album, released this past October. It is his first collection of new material in 10 years, a long gap even by his own standards. It was well worth the wait. Hart's past solo efforts have tended towards an acoustic singer/songwriter approach or by expanding on Hart's classic Husker Du sound with power pop flourishes. On Hot Wax, Hart redefines himself with a gorgeous collection of fully fleshed out songs whose characters' lives fall between the margins of society.

Recorded in Montreal with members of post-rock bands Godspeed You Black Emperor and A Silver Mount Zion, Hot Wax finds both Hart and his new band mates challenging themselves to explore new horizons in their well-established sounds. Hart hasn't sounded so invigorated in years, with songs like "You're the Reflection of the Moon On the Water", an organ driven Nuggets style garage rock burner that sounds like Doug Sahm collaborating with the Modern Lovers. Elsewhere, Hart channels Sgt. Pepper era Paul McCartney on the song "Barbara" whose repetitive and simple melody is aided by perfectly fitting string and horn arrangements to create a lush and layered piano driven pop masterpiece. Elsewhere on the album, he tackles rockabilly and Greek mythology on "Narcissus, Narcissus" and glorious power pop on the railroad epic "California Zephyr." Hot Wax is not only a welcome return for one of rock's most unsung heroes, but one of the best albums released this year.

Grant Hart will perform songs from Hot Wax as well as tracks from his legendary career at the Grog Shop on Tuesday, Dec. 22 at 9pm. Tickets are \$8, Champion Jeff Benko opens.

- Michael N. Jordan



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