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# Interview: Grant Hart

The local legend of Hüsker Dü fame is back with his first solo LP in 10 years.



PHOTO COURTESY GRANT HART

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BY JAY BOLLER



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**WHAT:** Grant Hart (CD release show)

**WHEN:** Thursday, Oct. 15, 8 p.m.

**WHERE:** Seventh Street Entry, 701 First Ave. N.

**TICKETS:** \$8

When touring bands come through Minneapolis, one thing is inevitable. At some point during their show – regardless of venue, but especially at First Avenue – they’ll make a crack about Prince. Ha. Ha. Ha. We get it. We’re barraged by it and it’s not funny. We’re emblazoned as Princetown, U.S.A., for good cause, because the man is a legend. But we’ve got other musical legends, too. And Grant Hart, former drummer/singer/songwriter of the ever-important punk group Hüsker Dü, is certainly one of them.

Hart’s saga with Hüsker Dü is well documented. Throughout the '80s, the band revolutionized indie rock and was victim to ramped-in-fighting and drugs. In the end, they opted to burn out rather than fade away, leaving both a healthy number of classic records and “what ifs.”

Post-Hüsker Dü, Grant Hart has been anything but wallowing. He’s released five solo efforts and two LPs with his former band Nova Mob in the past 22 years. It’s been a full decade since a Hart release, but he’s set to drop his latest solo offering “Hot Wax” tonight at the 7th Street Entry. Partially recorded in Montreal with the epic post-everything Godspeed You! Black Emperor, expect a dense affair that’s been honed and tweaked to perfection over the years.

Hart was good enough to speak with A&E the week before his CD release party for “Hot Wax” and the conversation spanned the spectrum from cooking to Giorno Poetry Systems.

#### **What’s the past decade been like for you and how has it influenced “Hot Wax?”**

Basically the last two years I’ve been waiting with baited breath for the release of the record and I’ve tried to ... you don’t go out and tour the week before your record comes out, you know what I mean? You use it as a co-promotional kinda thing. So, your gigs – the price for them is not set at a low period. You want the guarantees to be set when the new record is out and things are hot and the like.

#### **You said working with Godspeed You! Black Emperor on the record produced a hybrid sound. Describe that.**

When I would normally resort to, say, a bank of distorted guitars, layering of guitars or keyboards, Thierry Amar and the Godspeeds’ string section’s four young ladies – they’re credited on the record – would step in. It’s a lushness provided by – and it’s not a multi-track lushness; it’s something that happens live. You know, a string section, a whole chord that’s coming out of a group of persons, one note per person or two notes per person contributing to this arranged architecture of the music.

#### **Was that experience exciting? New?**

It was the first opportunity since going back to more academic music like high school orchestra and Minnesota Youth Symphony days where you have this huge group effort that makes a band seem like very few people. There’s something about the intent when it’s that many people. Everybody has to play passionately but still mesh together as part of a whole thing. It takes a certain amount of restraint that has a payoff just like other kinds of restraint.

Whether it’s cooking, where you’re waiting ‘til you just gotta have a taste of what you’ve been cooking. Something where the buildup to the moment, whether it’s cooking, sex, travel ... you don’t waste the experience with flying off the handle right away, eating the ingredients of the meal while you’re driving home from the grocer. You wait until it’s put into the pot, cooked, seasoned correctly, brought at the right temperature and then – baaa!

#### **How has being a gay musician changed over the years?**

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I'm so a-typically homosexual that I don't really think I'm societized gay. I look at something like Lavender and I go, I never want to be one of these people.

I guess I grew up with the ability to not have to wear any of the labels that could apply to me. Or let's say that I rejected all of them, pretty much, except for punk rocker. There were so many different lifestyles that could be represented in that, but also it specified what I'm gonna take from people, what I'm gonna listen to. It infers a political attitude, or at least it did when I was 17.

**In retrospect, how well do you feel the written legacies of Hüsker Dü and The Replacements — the most famous Minneapolis bands — holds up to what happened on the ground?**

I feel they're fairly accurate. I think any time that any attention is focused on the most of something, in this case the most famous or most influential ... I think really part of the thing with those two bands is, Hüsker Dü and The Replacements aren't famous or influential; we're famous for being influential.

And individually or collectively, whether those bands had the most talent, the most perseverance, the most hard work, the most imaginative ideas or the most talented people working on the sidelines — each one of those bands fired on all cylinders. Each one of those bands had good artwork behind them.

**You get this question a lot, but is there any way you and Bob Mould can bury the hatchet and make music together again?**

I think the best way to bury the hatchet is to not make any music. [Laughs]

**How do you feel when people my age say that your old band is their favorite band?**

I feel damn lucky. It kinda reinforces a lot of my hopes and also proves wrong a lot of my dreads.

**Biggest career regret?**

[Hart describes attempting to get to a show in Manhattan for a Giorno Poetry Systems gig days after Hüsker Dü's demise]

I'd stopped driving in South Bend, Indiana, went into the back of the car and fell asleep. I woke up with this guy [the driver] literally destroying the engine of the car. So the guy fries my engine, I end up getting to the show too late, made it to the after party, but ... the whole departure from Hüsker Dü would have been looked at completely differently.

**What did people spin that into?**

That I had been fired from Hüsker Dü. That was the word on the street.

**Happiest memory of your career?**

When I meet kids that tell me, "My mom and dad met at a Hüsker Dü concert; that's why they named me Grant." Here's someone, total strangers, who decided to name their kid after me. Much like the press thing, it's totally based on somebody else's manifestation of who I am and their respect for me. But to think someone would do that on such an auspicious occasion is pretty touching.

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