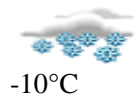


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## Grant Hart: Total confrontation

By Mark Lepage, Special to The Gazette December 14, 2009 [Be the first to post a comment](#)

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# Grant Hart brings his solo tour to Casa del Popolo tonight. His latest album is Hot Wax, much of it recorded in Montreal.

**Photograph by: granthart.com,**

It's been awhile. Grant Hart is on the phone from Minneapolis, where his cat, Inquie, is making a racket playing with packing peanuts. In a half hour or so, Hart's road manager will arrive to pack him away for a solo tour that hits Casa del Popolo Tuesday night.

A decade has passed between the excellent solo album Good News for Modern Man and his latest, Hot Wax – much of it recorded in Montreal's Hotel 2 Tango studio with members of Godspeed You! Black Emperor. And so Hart has a connection to the city, and a winningly perceptive take on its music scene.

“One thing I've noticed – I obviously have a certain circle in Montreal, the Casa, etc. – but Montreal seems to almost be devoid of an audience. Everybody is a performer. You have a lot of harsh criticism going on – friends about friends.”

Which he might recognize from his old band, the elemental Husker Du.

He had stepped back from the “record-tour-record-tour-design t-shirt-record treadmill” to work on other people's projects, on his painting and visual art and “trying to figure out if there's a life beyond music.”

Is there?

“Uh, ya.”

Hart spent part of the time “doing gigs and hanging out with Patti Smith.” One of the new songs, You're the Reflection of the Moon on the Water, might have ended up with her.

“She was working on a covers album at one time, and I had aspirations of that song being a contribution to it. But some things you keep for yourself.”

His pop songwriting sensibility has been described as a cross of '60s and baroque, which draws a laugh, and provides for a genuine range on Hot Wax, from churning rocker to lovely, poised pop to torch song. It is handmade, human, and seems to exist outside of either macro or micro trends. He maintains what was once referred to as “wide-eyed sincerity” when he was one-half of the fiercest songwriting tandem on the planet.

The list of quality bands whose sensibility and very existence owe a large karmic cheque to Husker Du, for their intensity, for expanding the sonic, thematic and artistic range of punk, and for their elemental ferocity, would roll off this page.

They were genuine iconoclasts among the aspirant conformists, from the complement/tension between Hart's melodicism and Bob Mould's severity, right down to their look: bassist Greg Norton with the handlebar mustache, Mould with the un-athletic frame, and Hart, once called “the hippie” in the group for his Pink Floyd-length hair and barefoot drumming.

He is “damn happy I put my time into it when I put my time into it. Some people may forget how long that band actually lasted” – which was from 1979 to not very long after a Spectrum gig here in October '87 when their roar belied the fact they were virtually breaking up onstage.

Hart would go on to form another band, Nova Mob, disbanded after he tired of “pouring a bunch of Husker-earned money into babysitting a unit that wasn't providing for itself and refused to go through the changes necessary to do so.

“I shouldn't have ever allowed it to be as democratic as it was. I ended up being the provider of a lot of other people's socialist utopia.”

Now, having spent time “a lot of time clarifying the legal situation with the (Husker) back catalogue,” life is simpler. He's

a democracy, or utopia, of one, up there solo with his Gibson ES-125 and no set list. There never is one.

“It’s totally confrontational between me and the music and the audience. If they’re a good, listening audience, they provide a chance for me to get quieter and – well, more beautiful.

“If they’re chatty or just there because they liked the poster, then they get blasted into silence.”

**Grant Hart** plays *Casa del Popolo*, 4873 St. Laurent Blvd., Tuesday night at 9. Tickets are \$12 at the door. Click [here](#) to listen to samples of songs from Hart's album *Hot Wax*.

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