

Portland Mercury

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New Day Rising

Grant Hart Emerges from the Past

by [Ezra Ace Caraeff](#)

It's been nearly 22 years since, as legend has it, Hüsker Dü split up one night in Columbia, Missouri. And it's been about a decade since former Hüsker drummer Grant Hart released a solo recording—even longer if you're looking for one with any staying power. In all that time Hart's body has been decimated by countless bottles of methadone, and a seemingly endless war of words with former bandmate Bob Mould that's been far more destructive than any substance that's coursed its way through his bloodstream.

As the other post-Hüskers found decades of success—Bob Mould as a revered solo artist, Greg Norton as a chef—Hart aimlessly dissolved deep into the shadows. Labeled a punk rock Peter Green or a tabloid-free Pete Doherty, Hart's cursed life has seen everything from a false positive HIV test result to a career forever stained by the absolute worst recordings known to man (in which his drumming is condensed into a sound akin to a tin can being mercilessly kicked down a vacant hallway).

Hart went from an iconic musician to an overtly tragic character whose very existence seems to be trapped under the haze and disappointment of a permanent storm cloud. Logic dictates that there would be no possible way a new recording from Hart would be even tolerable, much less enjoyable. Yet as *Hot Wax* finds its way out from under Hart's cursed legacy, more people will come to see it as not only a vibrant collection of pop songs, but as what might be the best post-Hüsker solo recording since Mould's *Black Sheets of Rain*. The album is a jittery rekindling of Hart's raw rock 'n' roll youth, accentuated by his longtime flair for vulnerable lyrics and soft, raspy delivery—you'll never know how much you missed Hart's wounded voice until you hear this album.

Captured on tape by members of Godspeed You! Black Emperor at the Hotel2Tango studio in Montreal, Hart sounds infinitely relaxed and loose as he bashes out succinct rock numbers with a youthful finesse. While there are those that might comb the lyrics for more shots fired across the bow against Mould, Hart insists such things are mere fabrications of

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an overly eager media. "You can't blame two people that are living and let living," he says.

Suffering beneath the weight that afflicts so many musicians from venerated bands—constant questioning about reunion tours, old songs, and a past they can never quite shake—Hart has it all the worse, his well-documented fall from grace being something of a punk legend. But ultimately the 48-year-old is grateful for his Hüsker Dü days, for having fans who go as far as to name their child after him, and *Hot Wax* is without question his first real effort to carve out something more to his legacy than all that happened during tumultuous younger days, and to let go of his past.

And if there's any resentment still lingering in Hart's bones, it's not for his former frontman, but for Greg Ginn at SST Records. "If there's any boner that Hüsker Dü pulled, it's having committed ourselves to SST *after* moving to Warner Brothers," he explains. "If someone were to expose what has really taken place with the ownership of our master recordings... I wish that was the battle that people were writing about instead of the Mould/Hart ping-pong match."

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