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- [All About Jazz](#)(30)
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- [Lyrics](#)(4)
- [Music A-Z](#)(24)
- [New Releases](#)(75)
- [Quizzes & Trivia](#)(2)
- [Album](#)(112)
- [Around the World](#)(147)
- [Book Club](#)(57)
- [Canada](#)(370)
- [Celebrity Doppelganger](#)(13)
- [Clash of the Cover Songs](#)(45)
- [Coming Out Stories](#)(20)
- [Concerts and Tours](#)(2340)
- [Count Five](#)(65)
- [Country](#)(45)
- [Electronic](#)(277)
- [Exclusive](#)(2651)
- [Free MP3 Download of the Day](#)(925)
- [Grammy Awards](#)(87)
- [Guest Blogger](#)(62)
- [Holy Hell](#)(664)
- [I Fought the Law](#)(33)
- [I Freakin' Love This Song](#)(238)
- [Jazz](#)(16)
- [Laugh, Rage, Cry](#)(6)
- [Movies](#)(177)
- [Music Appreciation](#)(55)
- [New Music](#)(321)
- [News](#)(5126)
- [Politics as Usual](#)(22)
- [Pop Culture](#)(43)
- [Potent Quotables](#)(632)
- [R.I.P.](#)(195)
- [Road Report](#)(21)
- [Rock Almanac](#)(366)
- [Rock Hall](#)(29)
- [RPM](#)(25)
- [Schwag Hag](#)(37)
- [Songs](#)(203)

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- [Twisted Tales](#)(129)
- [UK](#)(663)
- [Video](#)(966)
- [Video of the Day](#)(726)
- [Wacked News](#)(190)
- [What's That Song?](#)(83)

[SXSW 2010: Grant Hart](#)

- Posted on Mar 7th 2010 12:35PM by [Donna Rodgers](#)
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Grant Hart just returned from a two-week, five-city tour of Australia and New Zealand. As Hart was ailing with a sore throat, his manager, Craig Grossman of Green Room Music Source, assisted in answering our questions.

Grant is probably best known for his work with [Hüsker Dü](#) in the '80s. How and why did he decide to go solo?

Like many artists I know, Grant is constantly reinventing and perfecting his art. He spent the last few years [from about 2005 to the release of his 2009 album 'Hot Wax'] making art that really had nothing to do with making a living or with public consumption. He got to enjoy some time and activities that he had put aside early in life. He says that he wanted to make enough different sounds on 'Hot Wax,' to find "the drum sound for each song, not a drum sound for all songs," because that's the beauty of a solo act. There is no need to pretend you're a band if you're a soloist. Grant managed to make the album a full-band sound, a fully ranged album that has been well

received. The last album was recorded in Montreal, and Grant likes to say he used this period to find out what he should be doing instead of completing the work quickly, that it was a period of investigation instead of conclusion.

Where does he like to play?

Grant loves to play all over the world. He has a great core following on the coasts. We had a great time in Australia and New Zealand. I think maybe next time we will allow more time to get from East Australia -- Brisbane and Sydney -- to Perth.

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Melodic, expansive, varied. Not hardcore high velocity, like Hüsker.

What are his musical influences?

Grant is best known as a singer/songwriter/troubadour perspectives. He is influenced by [Dylan](#), the [Beatles](#) -- the classics of modern music -- and performers like the [Stooges](#). They're always good. He never embraced the hardcore punk idiom. It wasn't him. He could listen to this music, play it and like it, but he didn't want to write it. He said he didn't want to write music that's hard, fast and short. He's more of a storyteller. When Hüsker Dü started to play with less high velocity towards the end, it paved the way and opened the door for Grant to write more of the compositions he favors. Before Hüsker Dü disbanded, Grant and [Bob \[Mould\]](#) were writing songs with equal parity.

How was the band name chosen?

Yes, you are right, his parents provided the name. His first name is Grantzberg. By the time Grant arrived at today, he was part of Hüsker Dü (that name, it's Swedish, I believe, means "Do you remember?"), the Swallows and Nova Mob -- a new mob.

What's in his festival survival kit?

All healthy items. Good, clean food and lots of cranberry juice. Grant loves cranberry juice. It's like pure energy.

What about Grant's last [SXSW](#) experiences?

Because our group has showcases, he is involved in those as well as his own. He loves SXSW. After last year's SXSW, he went to San Francisco and stayed at the Eagle Tavern, the place he sings about in 'California Zephyr.' He always enjoys SXSW; we all do. It's evolved into a great, great festival.

Does he get into any mischief when on tour? Does he have any vices?

Grant really doesn't have any vices these days and doesn't get into too much trouble. He tells stories about touring with a group and having to be the "bad guy" by going to wake people up, pull them out of their rooms or making sure they got where they were supposed to go. That was really stressful. When we were in Christchurch, New Zealand, we were both in the same hotel, but I didn't know which room he was in. For a few minutes, I didn't know how to find him. But he was there, naturally.

What are his musical guilty pleasures?

Grant listens to everything; his musical and artistic range is extensive. I don't think he would ever feel guilty about telling anyone that he listens to everything and gets inspiration from a vast range of places. He is an established painter as well.

Beatles or [Stones](#)?

The Beatles. For many years, Grant and Bob Mould were compared to [McCartney/Lennon](#).

What about the reports through the years of fighting between Grant and Bob Mould?

Grant will tell you that they have both forgiven each other. They have a live-and-let-live relationship, although their lawyers are still pretty angry about many things. There are some longstanding arguments with SST, their old label, and SST seems to have profited from the perception that they are so disunited that [former Hüsker Dü

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Hot Wax to secure the rights to his catalog, to bring his stuff back. All the Hüsker albums are still active sellers, and fans in Australia and New Zealand would like to have some stuff re-released.

What's the craziest/creepiest/scariest experience he's ever had?

There was an experience in a little town outside of Green Bay, Wisconsin -- and this falls into the crazy category because I don't understand why it happened. Grant was saying something onstage about another band, it was all OK, when the promoter seemed to take exception and started in on Grant. No lasting problems, but strange.

The scariest experience he's ever had was the false HIV-positive test. He was told by a doctor in 1986 that he was HIV-positive. The diagnosis caused him to be very concerned about his own wants, and he abolished his musical partnership with Hüsker Dü. He says he seemed to develop all the symptoms. He was frightened and depressed. Seeing another doctor in 1988 for another medical test, the doctor found no HIV at all, and even told Grant how low his cholesterol is! Grant reclaimed his life.

Anything else? What is Grant working on now?

He's recording a modern version of John Milton's 'Paradise Lost.' I don't know what form we will release this in. I can't wait for people to hear it.

Donna Rodgers is a contributor from Seed.com. Learn how you can contribute [here](#).

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