

STEVE SAYS

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Grant Hart — Hot Wax



I'd never seen former Husker Du drummer, co-lyricist and singer Grant Hart perform solo, but planned to catch him at a night-time show during the South By Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas this past March. But a friend whose opinion I trust and value had

caught a daytime performance and wasn't impressed. And since there are a myriad of options at SXSW, I passed on Hart.

But I've just been listening to *Hot Wax*, Hart's first album in 10 years, and I now definitely want to see him when he comes to Toronto's Horseshoe Tavern on Dec. 14.

The nine-song, 34-minute disc was partially recorded by producer/engineer and former Arcade Fire drummer Howard Bilerman at his Hotel 2 Tango studio in Montreal as well as at Albatross studio by Mike Wisti in Hart's hometown of Minneapolis. Members of Montreal's Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Silver Mt. Zion as well as Wisti's band, Rank Strangers, contributed musically.

Opener "You're The Reflection Of The Moon On The Water" is a garage rock tune with repetitive lyrics that's taken up a notch with organ and hand claps. "Barbara," about an invisible woman that only Hart can see, is slower and gentler, but isn't a ballad. Trumpet and strings add depth to the song.

"Charles Hollis Jones," named after the renowned furniture designer who's referenced in the lyrics along with clients Tennessee Williams and Sylvester Stallone, is a psychedelic pop song with organ. A psych influence is also evident in "Narcissus, Narcissus," which rocks harder while still featuring what sounds like vibes, and "Sailor Jack."

"California Zephyr" features acoustic guitar and a chorus with a strong

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pop hook. Canadian singer/songwriter Basia Bulat contributes backing vocals to "My Regrets," which has a big, sprawling sound that's appropriate to close the album.

I wasn't expecting this much from *Hot Wax*, which was a pleasant surprise. Bob Mould continues to make impressive music, and I'm glad that his former Husker Du bandmate has returned to do the same. I'll give this an 8/10.

np Robbie Fulks — "Cigarette State" (live)

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