

STEVE SAYS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2009

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Grant Hart's still hot, on wax and on stage

Grant Hart's *Hot Wax*, which came out a couple of months ago, surprised me by how [good](#) it was — considering it was his first album in 10 years. And now I can say the same thing about his performance in support of the disc.

But first, I should also pay respect to opening act Massey Harris, composed of veteran Toronto musicians Scott Bradshaw and



Gord Cumming. Bradshaw's acoustic and Cumming's sublime slide guitar blend wonderfully, and Cumming's backing vocals similarly complement Bradshaw's leads.

The duo's set featured both Bradshaw originals, including the terrific "Way Beyond The Nicotine," and well-chosen covers that included Fred Eaglesmith's "Little Buffalo," Bob Dylan's "Something's Burning, Baby" and Willie P. Bennett's "Job Disorder."

A much bigger crowd witnessed Bradshaw (as part of Groovy Religion) open for Hart (as part of Husker Du) 22 years ago, but the 100-or-so people that came out to the gig showed warm appreciation for Massey Harris.



Hart, looking positively Parisian with a black beret and thin moustache, took the stage at 11:15 p.m. and played until almost 1 a.m. While he's best known as a drummer for his time in

Husker Du, Hart has played guitar with Nova Mob and as a solo artist — and he handled his Gibson hollow body electric guitar (adorned with a Canadian flag decal) pretty well.

Hart's set covered his whole career, including the most recent chapter with *Hot Wax's* "You're The Reflection Of The Moon On The Water," "Barbara," "I Knew All About You Since Then," "Narcissus, Narcissus" and "My Regrets." There were other solo songs (including my favourite, the brilliant "2541"), and Nova Mob's "The Last Days Of Pompeii" drew some whoops from a few fans up front.

But it was the large number of Husker Du songs that probably elicited the biggest responses. "Never Talking To You" and "The Girl Who Lives On Heaven Hill" were good, but "Charity, Chastity, Prudence And Hope" really showcased Hart's gift for writing rocking yet melodic songs. The 27-song main set also featured Husker Du's "Back From Somewhere," "Turn On The News" and a great "Green Eyes."

Hart had taken requests near the end of his set, and did again after stepping off the stage for less than a minute and returning for an encore of four Husker Du songs.

"It's Not Funny Anymore" was followed by "Keep Hangin' On," but it was the third song that really hit home for me. "Diane," which depicts a brutal rape and murder, might lack the shock value it had when it first appeared on 1983's *Metal Circus* and doesn't have the visceral force of Husker Du's version, but it's still very powerful. Things ended on a more upbeat note with "Flexible Flyer," which left the audience wanting more.

Although Hart looks a bit pale and thin, and maybe even slightly sickly, his set was much longer than when former Husker Du bandmate (and nemesis) Bob Mould [performed](#) at Toronto's Mod Club a few months ago. And he seemed in good spirits and was friendly when I briefly talked to him, so hopefully all is well.

Sure, it would have been better to hear full band versions of most of these songs. And I was disappointed that my request for "Books About UFOs" fell by the wayside. But apart from those very minor quibbles, I'm sure that the members of the too-small audience would agree that they definitely got a good bang for their buck.



POSTED BY STEVE MCLEAN AT 5:01 PM 

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