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[Grant Hart](#) - Hot Wax (Album)



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by [jayh](#) | Monday, February 8



Band break-ups are rarely pleasurable affairs. Amicable is usually the word band managers sell to the press like stale fish, but the splintering of creative forces is hardly agreeable.

When genuine alt-rock heroes **Husker Du** split in 1988, bad blood spilt from almost every corner. Grant Hart copped a fair bit of flack in no small measure due to his needle habits. As drummer, co-songwriter, and lead foil to guitarist Bob Mould - Hart represented the luscious, classicist, pop sensibility ying to Mould's intense, hardcore, Flying-V, icicle shard yang.

The post break up years were even less kind to Hart as he struggled to overcome some demons and the long shadow that was Husker Du's ongoing influence. Despite some minor success (*2541*, *All Of My Senses*) and almost wholesale disinterest (Nova Mob – his one off band never took despite the barnstorming and off-kilter *Last Days Of Pompeii*) Hart never really carved his name in the very forgiving, major label swamped alt-rock 90s like he should have.

By the same token he never really went away. He just beavered on with a battered guitar and a shrug of indifference. Which brings us to *Hot Wax*, his first album in over a decade and most consistent to date, which given his frustrating scattershot approach to song selection is reliably comforting. For an album recorded at Hotel2Tango by Howard Bilerman (Arcade Fire) and with key support from the Silver Mt. Zion crew there's not a crashing, bombastic, crescendo in sight. Colour me surprised and partially disappointed.

Instead, Hart sticks to his strengths – songs with massive choruses ('Schoolbuses Are For Children') quaint, tender not twee piano jaunts ('Barbara') thrashy acoustic pop ('Californian Zephyr') and Australian CD-only album highlights ('Khalid'). The latter a bit of everything all thrown together – with Farfisa to boot.

There's a glorious, shambolic ambience to Hart's music which means the occasional clunker will slip though – but his the joyous devil-may-care abandon means catchy as hell melodies spring up with certain regularity. Hart's earlier solo releases were hamstrung with under-recorded vocals that could oft be described as serviceable or an acquired taste.

In his Husker days the galloping wallop of Bob and Greg rendered any inadequacies irrelevant. But as a solo artist there were times when it appeared he was straining for notes that weren't actually there. *Hot Wax* remedies these quibbles with a stronger, middle-range style. You can't help but feel Hart is only just warming up, making up for some outside the spotlight. It's good to have him back.

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