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Grant Hart has spent the past 10 years exploring other artistic outlets.



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February 12, 2010

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Former Husker Du drummer Grant Hart tells Jo Roberts what he's been up to for the past 10 years, and why the past should stay there.

FOR someone who has written some of the most wrenching songs of love and loss in the punk-pop canon — Diane, Pink Turns to Blue, Don't Want to Know if You Are Lonely, Never Talking to You Again — former Husker Du drummer turned solo artist Grant Hart is a surprisingly upbeat and playful interviewee.

"It's Thursday afternoon here. So it's Friday there? Ah! How's Friday going to be for me?" he says.

Speaking from his home in South St Paul, Minneapolis, Hart is excited about coming to Australia for the first time. Despite their immense popularity here, legendary Minneapolis trio Husker Du never made it this far south. Neither did Hart's next band, Nova Mob. And problems with record labels since then have ensured his subsequent solo releases — despite their considerable strengths — never received the support they needed to help him build the momentum to get here.

"I had this chain of record-label failures," says Hart, 48, of his 1989 album *Intolerance* and 1999 follow-up *Good News for Modern Man*, 10 years apart and each released by different labels. "What keeps the momentum going is the second and third albums."

So for much of the past 10 years, while still playing solo shows — just him, a guitar and an amp — Hart explored other creative outlets.

"I made some headway in the visual arts, exhibited with some people that aren't very well known but people that are influential in many ways," he says. "I've kind of settled in with a group of teachers who were more omni-dimensional than just musicians or just poets."

But finally, after yet another 10-year break between albums — "you noticed that, huh?" — Hart is making his debut Australia tour on the back of his third solo album *Hot Wax*.

Recorded in Montreal with members of *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*, *Silver Mt Zion* and *Rank Strangers*, *Hot Wax* is a brilliant collection of psychedelic, Beach Boys-infused pop-rock. But if set lists from his recent shows are anything to go by, Hart doesn't draw heavily from the new album, instead playing songs from his entire career — yes, even Husker Du.

The history of Husker Du is now a well-documented one; of a trio that burst from the US hardcore scene in 1979 and became one of the most important and influential bands of the time. It comprised Hart, singer-guitarist Bob Mould and bassist Greg Norton. Hart shared songwriting and singing duties with Mould, before tensions between them over songwriting and Hart's drug use ended the band in 1987.

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