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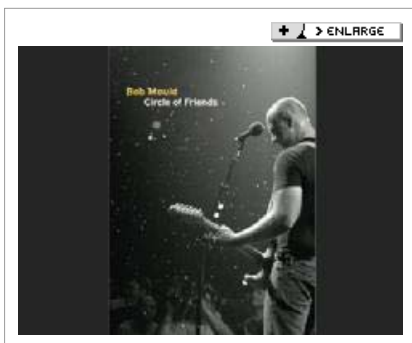
Godfather Of Alternative Rock To Visit SF

By Chuck Harrell

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OAKLAND, Calif. -- It isn't everyday you get to chat with someone who has had as much influence over modern/alternative rock as Bob Mould. As a member of tuneful '80s power punk trio Hüsker Dü, Mould helped shape the distinctive sound of 1990s alternative rock. His solo work took on a more melodic yet still explosive sound before Sugar briefly removed him from solo status from the early to mid '90s. Following Sugar's demise in '95, Mould has been making ground breaking music, working in a creative capacity with the WCW (yeah, *that* WCW) and writing theme songs for shows like "The Daily Show" on Comedy Central and TLC's "In A Fix."



His Oct. 16th appearance in San Francisco is in support of his recently released concert DVD "Circle of Friends" and isn't like most of the stops along the way. Not only will Mould deliver songs usually powered by the roar of an electric band stripped down to a solo acoustic guitar setting, but he will have a conversation and Q&A session with renowned music journalist Michael Azerrad, and a screening of clips from "Circle of Friends" (not to mention a chance to get copies of the DVD signed by Mould). Tickets are still available.

I had the pleasure of chatting with Bob just a few days prior to his Oct. 16th appearance at San Francisco's City Arts and Lecture Series at the Herbst Theater.

KTVU.com: Bob, thanks for taking the time to talk to us, I'm really excited to talk with you!

Bob Mould: Cool, great!

KTVU.com: Before we jump into talking about the San Francisco Lecture Series and the new DVD, let me ask you about a rumor I heard recently. In the film "Jerry McGuire", the bad guy, played by Jay Mohr, is a character named "Bob Sugar." I was told Cameron Crowe, in honor of you, took your first name and the name of the band you were in at the time (Sugar) and combined the two to come up with the character's name. Any truth to that rumor?

Bob Mould: (Short pause) I hear that (Cameron Crowe) is a fan, but I cannot verify that.

KTVU.com: Of course, I thought about it at the time and thought "Bob Sugar" was just enough of an unusual name and it kind of makes sense...I mean, I think that all your fans would like to think that's the case...

Bob Mould: Well, then let's say yes!

KTVU.com: (Laughing) Okay, we'll go with that!!

Bob Mould: Why disappoint? If it makes people feel good...

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KTVU.com: That's right!

Bob Mould: I would probably have to ask Cameron Crowe personally if that's the idea there, but the timing and the coincidence is not lost on any of us.

KTVU.com: Well, let's get to the first of several things I would like to talk about - "Circle of Friends." If memory serves me, this is the first live concert DVD or video of any sort you've put out in your stellar career - so why do it now? What made the project come together?

Bob Mould: It's a number of things that all conspired at the same time. When putting out Body of Song last year and rounding up people to play, when I saw the band that I was going to end up with: Brendan Canty (drums), Jason Narducy (bass, backing vocals) and Rich Morel (keyboards, backing vocals). We got together and played and we got together and talked about playing some of the older material that I hadn't touched in a band setting (the Hüsker stuff and the Sugar stuff) in a while. The short version is that the band sounded great, I was so thrilled with the way everybody was getting along and opening up that songbook for the first time and also (coincidentally) Brendan having done all the "Burn To Shine" DVDs, it was sort of one of those things that everything sort of lined up, and I thought this would be a really good time to shoot some rehearsal footage and shooting a show, shooting the DC show specifically, because that's where Brendan and Christoph Green and the crew live. It's just one of those things where you think about it and it all just turns out right.

KTVU.com: I was listening to a podcast with yourself and Brian Alvarez, which was mainly about your time spent in Creative with The WCW - but you were just beginning to work on the DVD and you made a comment that Rich Morel had said the footage he had seen was like "Budokan" - which was lost a bit on Brian, but being a huge Cheap Trick fan, I knew exactly what he meant. But what made it like "Budokan-like," just out of curiosity?

Bob Mould: I think Rich just thought it was like, "What a rock show!"

KTVU.com: Cool!

Bob Mould: When I mentioned it to (Brian) Alvarez, he's not the world's biggest music fan, I guess, so it was sort of lost on him but when Rich said it, I think he was just so excited to be watching this thing that he was a part of and it was this big...ROCK sounding thing and he was just like, "Dude, this is like Budokan, it's like...all hits and all crazy." I think that's all he meant by it.

KTVU.com: Now, is this going to be one of those DVDs you need a killer sound system to listen to or is my little built-in Sony Trinitron speaker system going to be able to replicate the beauty of this live performance?

Bob Mould: Ahhh...If you know someone whose got a 16x9 screen and a killer surround system that's into [rock music](#), you should really listen to it and watch it at least once that way! And then you can watch it at home!

KTVU.com: Is there other Hüsker, Sugar or Bob Mould stuff on video somewhere that could see the light of day as a result of this project?

Bob Mould: I'm sure there's stuff around, with Hüsker stuff, there'd probably be zero chance of getting everybody on the same page to do something, even if it did exist. Ah, Sugar, there was a lot of footage shot over the three years of that band, you know, from day one through the last tours. And, ah, you know, it's funny, I'm not the world's biggest "go backwards" kind of guy...you know, I've got the DVD that I'm out with now and an album in February. I've been writing a lot this summer beyond the upcoming album, so, if I had people I could assign to these tasks maybe it would get done, but left up to me specifically, I don't see any kind of retrospective DVDs coming out.

KTVU.com: Talk a little bit about the new album you just mentioned -- does the album have a title and what type of album can fans expect?

Bob Mould: Well, the album, coming up in February of '08, is called "District Line" -- I'm guessing you saw the artwork was inserted with the DVD.

KTVU.com: (Feeling really stupid): Uh, well, I haven't actually picked up the DVD yet, I was planning on picking it up on the 16th when you are here in San Francisco.

Bob Mould: Uh, ok, well, that's the record that's coming up in February on "Anti" and it's called "District Line," you'll see the artwork when you get the DVD on Tuesday. It's, you know, a continuation of "Body of Song," it's myself and Brendan is playing drums, and Amy Domingues is back on cello for a couple of songs and it's just a continuation in that stylistically, it's what you'd expect to come after "Body of Song." Ten songs, 40 minutes, pretty concise songwriting. I don't think there's any big curve balls on it. It's a good solid record, I'm real happy with it.

KTVU.com: You did take a little break from music to work in Creative with The WCW and you mention in the Brian Alvarez interview we spoke about a few minutes ago that you were at the "go" position or what's called "at gorilla." I have no clue what either of those terms mean, can you explain what those two things are in layman's terms for me?

Bob Mould: In the wrestling business from a production stand point (or the "Creative" standpoint) there's a table set up right behind the curtain, and it's the last private position before the talent go public on the ramp. In the wrestling business it's referred to as the

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"gorilla" position, and I think it's named that because in the old WWF days, in the north east when it was just a regional territory, Gorilla Monsoon, who was a wrestler and then commentator (and I think also part owner of the company at the time), sat at the table and gave last minute direction to the talent as they went out. And basically it's the last stop before you go live. And it's a position I think, in the WWE right now, Vince McMahon himself sits at "go" position with a couple of people assisting him. And with WCW with the live television aspect it was kind of a complex position to be in.

KTVU.com: One thing I've wondered about since you have written theme songs for shows like "The Daily Show" or the TLC show "In A Fix", why didn't The WCW say "Hey, we've got one of the most prolific, talented songwriters under our roof, let's have him write some music for us?" or were they just oblivious to who you were coming in?

Bob Mould: I wasn't hired for that job, nor would I have offered those services. I was there as part of the Creative team as far as crafting a show and working as a liaison between talent and production. And I had no interest in writing music for them. There were people there who knew my musical history. There were people who knew it really well and there were people who just heard the buzz about it, but I was there to work on the creative team.

KTVU.com: I want to change the subject a little here, you are a very health conscious guy, I read your blog, I've followed your career for a long time and I know you were once a smoker. Some friends of mine and I were talking the other day -- and smoking is such a hot button issue in California, but the issue of being a singer and a smoker came up. Now, we mentioned Cheap Trick earlier and I know for years Robin Zander was a heavy smoker I'm not sure if he still is, but he can still sing his butt off night after night. Was there ever a time you were concerned smoking would end your performing career? Or did you just stop smoking because you felt "this is just not good for me?"

Bob Mould: It was the latter. It was just more for overall health reasons. I never really thought about it at the time. I'm sure that in the early days the combination of smoking two packs a day plus drinking heavily plus yelling all the time at the top of my lungs did no favors for my voice. You know, Robin Zander must be genetically gifted because it catches up to you at one point or another. You know, everything catches up with all of us, and as I get older I'm very happy that I made the choice, probably close to 10 years ago now, to stop smoking. And my voice, I think, has held up better because of it. I don't know if it sounds different or sounds better, but I feel better, so it's easier to sing.

KTVU.com: I love "See A Little Light" and it was probably the song that I first heard by you, and I have always loved the song, but I was surprised when I saw on your blog (boblog.com) that you have decided to allow TIAA CREF to use that song in a series of promos. What prompted that?

Bob Mould: An ad agency in Boston that represents TIAA CREF approached me very respectfully and politely just to feel out some interest. They had actually gotten a hold of me months prior about interest in a different company's campaign. They went in a different direction with that campaign, came back a second time with TIAA CREF wanting "See A Little Light" which is a pretty valuable song to me. And it took a little while to get to an agreement, and it was fun to re-record the song, that was the nice part to make this faithful reproduction that actually when I was done with it I thought sounded a little bit better than the original. Just in terms of the production.

KTVU.com: When you say that song is valuable to you, in what respect do you mean that?

Bob Mould: You know, as far as recognizable Bob Mould songs it's probably in the top 5. It's not a song I would assign secondary usage to lightly.

KTVU.com: Is the re-recording available commercially or is it just used for the commercial?

Bob Mould: It's just used for the commercial, there is one version that is :34 and one version that is :64 . It was constructed specifically for the usage itself.

KTVU.com: How's that iPhone treating you?

Bob Mould: iPhone's pretty good, the Google Maps feature has been very handy this week because I've been on the road...it's quite nice not to have a GPS but to just sort of do the mapping ahead of time and be able to look down and see where I am.

KTVU.com: Well, is there anything you want to add to our chat about the DVD or the upcoming show in San Francisco?

Bob Mould: Well, yeah, sure, you know, I think the DVD is a really great piece for a couple of reasons. One, for the longtime fan, it really puts a nice bow on all that work and sort of ties it all together and it's the first, authorized live concert video that I've ever put together. And I think for people who have maybe heard about me and maybe heard a song or two in passing (but aren't fans of the whole catalog) this is a really great entry point for people. And I think they could go through the DVD and get a feel for what period they might be interested in. I'm really, really happy with it.

KTVU.com: And the event in San Francisco?

Bob Mould: Regarding the show coming up, the thrust of the San Francisco event on Tuesday is the Question and Answer part, you know, the lecture part, because it is part of the City Arts Lecture Series. Michael Azerrad who will be speaking with me and steering

the conversation is a well-known writer in our profession, he wrote that book "Our Band Could Be Your Life" which is a very well regarded piece of work. And we'll be having a fairly long conversation about pieces of my career I guess. I think we're showing a little bit of the DVD and I'm doing a truncated solo, acoustic performance so it's a little different than the other shows on this trip that I'm doing right now. And I think they've made some kind of provisions for signing copies of the DVD after the show.

KTVU.com: Well, I am looking forward to it, this is a big honor to have spoken with you and thank you, Bob Mould, for taking time out to talk with KTVU.COM!

Bob Mould: It's been great! Thank you, Chuck. Have a good day!

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