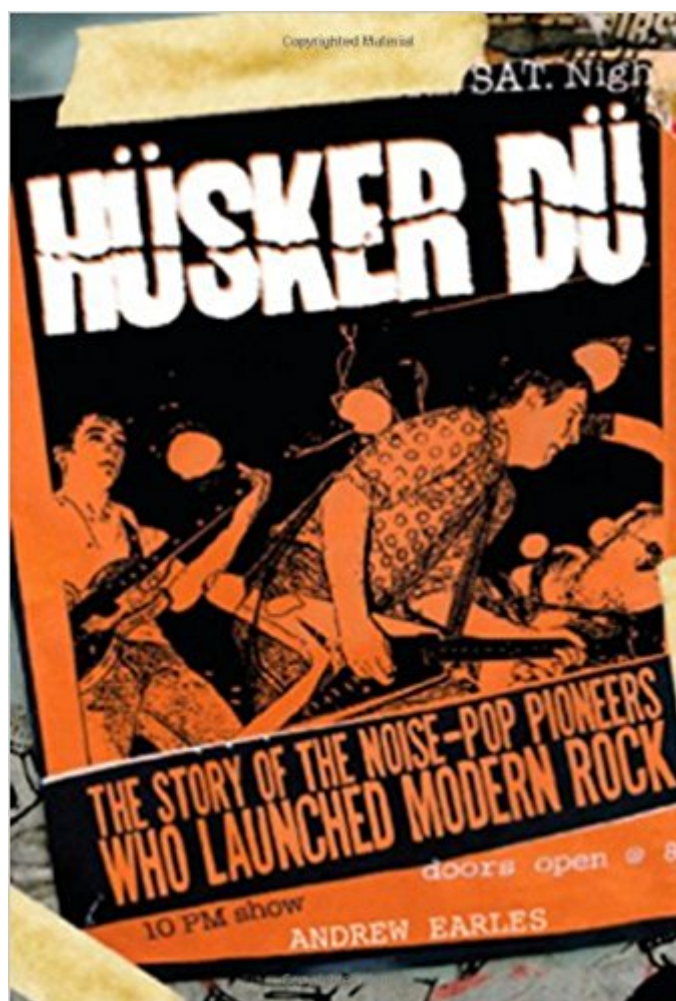


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Husker Du: The Story Of The Noise-Pop Pioneers Who Launched Modern Rock



Synopsis

Bob Mould, Grant Hart, and Greg Norton formed Hüsker Dü in 1979 as a wildly cathartic outfit fueled by a cocktail of anger, volume, and velocity. Here's the first book to dissect the trio that countless critics and musicians have cited as one of the most influential bands of the 1980s. Author Andrew Earles examines how Hüsker Dü became the first hardcore band to marry pop melodies with psychedelic influences and ear-shattering volume. Readers witness the band create the untouchable noise-pop of LPs like *New Day Rising*, *Flip Your Wig*, and *Candy Apple Grey*, not to mention the sprawling double-length *Zen Arcade*. Few bands from the original American indie movement did more to inform the alternative rock styles that breached the mainstream in the 1990s. Hüsker Dü truly were visionaries.

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Customer Reviews

Considered one of the most influential rock bands of the 1980s, the Minnesota-based Hüsker Dü helped to lay the groundwork that led to the ultimate success of such pop-punk groups as the Replacements, Sonic Youth, the Pixies, Soul Asylum, Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, and Green Day, among others. Earles offers biographical portraits of band members—guitarist Bob Mould, drummer Grant Hart, and bassist Greg Norton—and discusses the group's tuneful hard rock, or, as he describes it, “super-noisy songs.” Although they never achieved widespread mainstream success, Hüsker Dü were among the first underground rock bands to sign with a major label (Warner Brothers in 1986), which prompted more than a few fans to accuse them of selling out, an accusation Earles considers to have been “greatly

exaggerated. Charting their early days, nonstop touring, and defiant embrace of the DIY ethic, Earles carefully examines the band's output in thoughtful criticism of their work, including Land Speed Record, their seminal concept album Zen Arcade, and their Warner Brothers debut Candy Apple Grey. A must for all followers of contemporary rock. --June Sawyers

Taking their name from a popular Danish children's board game, Bob Mould, Grant Hart, and Greg Norton formed Husker Du in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1979 as a wildly cathartic outfit fueled by a cocktail of volume and velocity. Author Andrew Earles examines how Husker Du became the first hardcore band to marry pop melodies with psychedelic influences and ear-shattering volume, and in the process become one of the most influential rock bands of the 1980s indie underground. Earles also explores how the Twin Cities music scene, the creative and competitive dynamic between Mould and Hart, and their personal lives all contributed to the band's incredible canon and messy demise. Few bands from the American indie movement did more than Husker Du to inform the alternative rock styles that breached the mainstream in the 1990s. Here, finally, is the story behind their brilliance. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is fantastic for the hard-core Husker Du fan for sure, and someone who is very into the technical sides of the band's inner makings, etc. Grant Hart and Greg Norton add their perspective quite a bit respectively. Bob Mould apparently had nothing to do with this book but the author uses magazine/fanzine interviews for sources and it seems to work fine. There is much talk about the history of Minneapolis music scene which I found interesting. Also, the author talks about Husker Du's huge influence on the '90's breaking of punk (Nirvana, etc). My only gripe was when it came down to talking specifics about bands the Husker's influenced (and believe me , it does get specific) I felt the author could have talked a bit more about the influence the Husker's subliminally had over the D.C. punk scene (whether D.C. would admit to it or not) . Going even further, I felt the author could have dug deeper into the Annapolis punk scene with bands like Moss Icon and The Hated. The Hated (a fantastic band together from '85'-91') were so heavily influenced by Husker Du that you'd think you are actually listening to Husker Du. The Hated (and Moss Icon) have been fully credited in some circles for starting the 'emo' movement and I just felt the author should have addressed this whether he agreed or not. Overall this book is a great read for people who have been waiting a LONGGGG time for any book to arrive about a great band that has found it's way to be concreted into rock/punk history.

I wish I could give Andrew Earles' book on Husker Du a higher rating than three stars, because when it is enjoyable, it is thoroughly enjoyable. But unfortunately this book is riddled with factual errors, typos, an inconsistent tone, and an overall "rushed" feeling. I wonder if Earles was trying to get his book out before Bob Mould's memoirs, which as of this writing are still in the works, but will surely cover a lot of the same material. What makes the book worth reading is the fact that it is the first full-length Husker Du biography. There has been a lot written about the Huskers over the years, but there's never been a book like this. The new and insightful interviews with two-thirds of the band, Grant Hart and Greg Norton, are truly a joy and very welcome. The behind-the-scenes look at the Minneapolis punk scene, and the early alternative rock scene, of the 1980s is also fun to read about, even if there's not much in these areas that haven't been covered in other writings. Now for the bad stuff. I can overlook a typo or two, or a factual error here or there. But there are so many throughout the book, it gets to be too much to ignore. Off the top of my head, Earles refers to all the early punk/New Wave bands that were signed to Sire Records, and at least twice claims Blondie were signed to Sire. This is just not true, as Blondie was on the New York indie Private Stock, and later Chrysalis, but never on Sire. Candy Apple Grey is mentioned as having been recorded in September 1986, but released in March 1986; it's clear the first date should be 1985. While these typos are in and of themselves not a big deal, when the almost exact same paragraph about Sire shows up a chapter later, you wonder if there was any fact-checking going on here at all. And speaking of repeated sentences and paragraphs, there are a lot throughout the book. It's as if Earles was copying and pasting facts together to form his chapters, and didn't realize he had used a few of them more than once. It's really frustrating, disrupting the reader's enjoyment of the book. My other big problem with the book is a very inconsistent tone from beginning to end. In the introduction, Earles states that the commonly held notion that Hart's drug use caused the breakup of Husker Du is false. But when it comes time for the breakup, he does not give a solid reason for the breakup. There are several negative things going on within the band at the time--their manager's suicide, Warner Brothers pressuring Mould and Hart to use an outside producer--but ultimately there's a lot of talk about Hart's drug use in this time. The reader is left to assume that yes, this actually was a major factor in the breakup--probably THE major factor, given the amount of coverage--but the reader is left confused, given Earles' earlier statement. Another example of wishy-washiness concerns the band's final studio LP, Warehouse: Songs and Stories. Earles spends most of the chapter more-or-less calling the album a subpar effort, with his most charitable statement being that it's "hardly an embarrassment." But when it comes time for Earles to go over

the band's discography, the Warehouse entry claims that the album is "underrated" and "essential for fans." And while we're talking about the discography section, which could have used more facts and less opinions (The Living End is "odd"? Really? Odd?), Earles at first says he will not be detailing the three members' post-Husker Du recordings, but then actually devotes as much time to Bob Mould, Grant Hart, Nova Mob and Sugar recordings as he did the Husker Du albums! If it seems like I'm picking on stuff near the end of the book, it's because this is the stuff that is fresh in my mind, having just completed the book. The rest of it is equally inconsistent and riddled with errors. I have already spent too much time listing it all. But one other thing that sticks out is that early on, he paints the Huskers as under-appreciated and not given their due in rock history. I can't agree with this; every rock critic loves Husker Du and places high emphasis on their influence and importance to a lot of rock, indie, metal and punk that followed...including Earles in this book! He cites their influence on a wide range of artists from Slayer and Metallica, to Robert Palmer, and the more obvious influences like Pixies, Nirvana, Green Day, etc. I don't regret buying the book, because I enjoyed reading what Greg and Grant had to say, and I did learn a few things along the way. But beware, this book is in serious need of some editors: a copy editor, and a regular editor to help shape up the book's overall tone and narrative flow.

This is a solid book, but ultimately a frustrating one. First, the good: Earles admirably achieves his aim of refusing to provide more grist to the mill of salacious gossip and speculation that has surrounded this band since their breakup. He also provides a welcome corrective account of the early days of the Minneapolis punk & new wave scene, in which we see the band having to work extremely hard to get people in that scene to take them seriously; this fact is often glossed over in the retrospective accounts that paint an ideal image of a music community that was accepting and nurturing from the get-go. And Earles does a remarkably good job of negotiating his way through Mould's lack of participation in the project; this isn't a Bob-bashing book, but neither does it sugarcoat how difficult it must've been for Grant and Greg to contend with his ferocious drive and massively defensive ego. On the whole, then, this is mandatory reading for anyone interested in Husker Du, whether a longtime fanatic (like me) or a young newbie. Now, the bad. The editing (as others have noted) is frequently appalling: particular quotes and sentences are repeated verbatim throughout the book; and the bizarre narrative structure, in which earlier material is unnecessarily recapped dozens of pages later, makes for jarring reading (this isn't Earles's fault so much as his editor's, who should be taken outside and given forty lashes for these egregious lapses). But more than these formal matters, the book suffers from an over-emphasis on the band's formative and

SST years, all of which have been covered to a significant extent in previous writings, most notably in Azerrad's book. Like Azerrad, Earles unfortunately underrates the Huskers' major label albums, and thus dispenses with them in relatively few pages (I got the sensation while reading that section of watching Earles press the fast-forward button on a remote to get through the part of the band's story that he doesn't like that much). The story of the band's grappling with the unfamiliar environment and demands of major label life in the mid-'80s still needs to be told, and it's frustrating to watch Earles drop little tidbits about dealings with label people, recording sessions, etc., only to rush right past without exploring their implications for the band's creative and professional lives. In this major respect, the book as a whole ends up feeling kind of unfinished. Nonetheless, any fan of the band will find plenty here worth reading, and even the most hardcore devotee will be surprised by some of the anecdotes that Earles has gathered. But many readers will likely end up feeling that the book could've provided a fuller picture of the band's creative and professional trajectory straight through to its unfortunate end.

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