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**BAD RELIGION** Success Sermon!



# LIVE RIFFS

## BLACK 47

**A** biting wind is blowing down Second Avenue in New York. It stops just at the door of Paddy Reilly's; a small bar at the corner of 28th Street. The Saturday night crowd escape the bluster to dance and jig their way to the best "Funky Ceili" band around—Black 47.

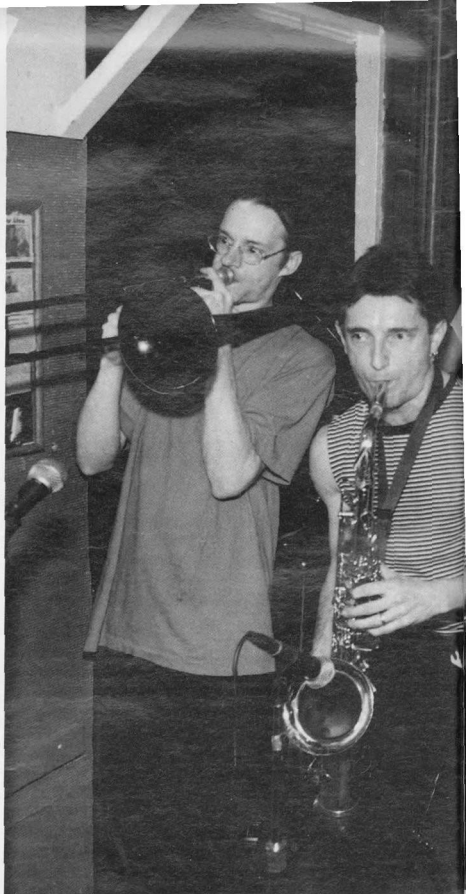
A mass of almost one hundred people are squeezed inside the little pub, and after two hours of rock, punk, reggae and everything else, are near frenzy. Chris Byrne puts aside his uilleann pipes and takes his mike to stand in front of the stage. Larry Kirwan, his electric guitar whining and groaning, tears into the classic "I Fought The Law." The crowd goes wild. It's a favorite.

Byrne is belting out the lyrics... "I fought the law and-a the law won." And with plenty of booze flowing through veins, the chant goes up: "I fucked the law and the-a la la."

One man leans over the partition, his face contorted with some private rage as he shouts along with Byrne. Another, his eyes closed and head thrown back, seems to be just screaming. A young woman, in tight mini-skirt and four inch stilettoes, is dancing in front of the stage. Somewhere between sleep and stupor, she is trying to mimic his lip movements so intently she is staring at Byrne. He, with shades, responds, jutting his torso forward. She teeters and loses her balance. Diving for him, she tackles him at the waist. It's a beautiful moment as Byrne crashes to the floor. Shapely legs shoot into the air, a flash of white knickers, squeals of laughter and Byrne is pinned beneath the delighted fan. Struggling to find the mike, he is still laughing.

Over a year later, Black 47 are still playing with the same commitment and energy. Having slowly added to the original lineup of Kirwan and Byrne (plus drum machine), they have evolved a sound that is still wild and exciting but at the same time has become a wonderfully textured and complex complement of trombone, uilleann pipes, saxophone, tin whistle, alto sax, bongoes, electric guitar, percussion, and of course, drum machine.

It's late on a uncomfortably humid summer evening on a Thursday night and it's raining, but the boys are playing at the slightly larger Wetlands downtown. Byrne thumps out a low penetrating bodhran beat; Thomas Hamlin pounds his giant bongo; Kirwan's guitar purrs, emitting a deep wail; then Geoffrey Blythe's sax and Fred Parcell's' trombone



explode, filling the rhythm. Suddenly Kirwan stands with raised fist, the crowd responds immediately with the same clenched gesture.

"My name is John Connolly, I didn't come here to die,

But to fight for the rights of the working man, the farmer too.

Protect the Proletariat from the bosses and the screws.

So hold onto your rifles boys, don't give up the dream,

A republic for the working class, economic liberty."

Certainly not the stuff of ordinary pop/rock songs, yet the loyal and devoted crowd sings to the maximum about the "rights of man and



International Revolution," stamping and grinding out their frustrations to the jumping beat.

This is one side of Black 47; an acute awareness of the abuses and exploitation that are meted out to the working class. The other side is their biting wit which exposes the absurdity inherent in the mores that such an oppressive system sustains.

But back to the music: "Funky Cell!" begins like a reel or a jig, with uilleann pipes and tin whistle giving it a traditional air. But very quickly this is shattered by the shrieking voice of Kirwan and his wailing guitar.

"(She said) I'm two months late, and it's not the rent,  
(And) I'd have to be telling her Da.

So we drove the Morris Minor to Cork,  
The awl fella said: "You got two choices -  
Castration or a one-way ticket to New York."

Fiddle-dee-deedle-dee-diddle-dee-dee...high kicks and leaps as the crowd nearly implodes from the frantic pace of the song and, of course, laugh at the funny bits, as well. Rave on...—Malcolm Adams