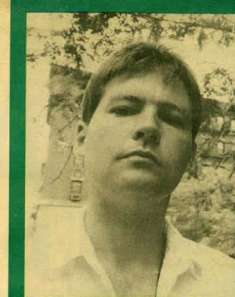


# IRISH VOICE

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**From a  
German  
Prison to  
New York  
City**

THE GERRY  
MCGEOUGH  
STORY

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## Signed On!



IRISH America's living musical legends, Black 47, were signed to a major, worldwide recording deal last week. The band responsible for what has been called 'Green Card Rock,' after slugging it out on the New York bar scene for years has finally seen the payoff and their major label debut is due in October, the first in a multi-record contract signed for an amount "in the mid-six figures." Still, the band (shown above, from left to right: Chris Byrne, Tommy Hamill, Larry Kirwan, Fred Parcells and Geoff Blythe) says they'll continue to play the Irish pub scene, at least for the time being.

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THE RAILS  
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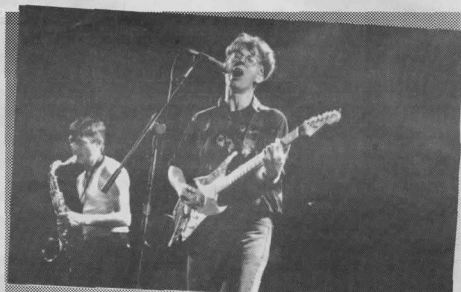
### Former Parade Chairman Beirne

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# Off The Record

With Brian Rohan



So does this mean that Black 47 will fly the coop from the local bar scene and forego their twice-weekly gig at Paddy Reilly's?

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said Kirwan. "Unless you're Madonna, you don't make money, because your royalties are eaten up by the cost of videos, recording, promotion and tour support."

"The way our contract is, we don't have a big advance, but we'll make money if we sell a lot of copies. So I guess you could say we're banking on success."

Kirwan said he learned the music business the hard way, when he was teamed with Pierce Turner in their band the Major Thinkers. That band's royalties were gobbled up, said he, by costs for studio time, tour support, etc. "Theoretically," said Kirwan, "we still owe CBS a lot of money."

The ink isn't fully completed yet, as Kirwan is busy trying to think up a couple of ridiculous rock-star riders to add to it, something akin to Eddie Van Halen's notorious demand that backstage at every gig there must be a huge bowl of M&M's, with all the green ones removed. This column convinced Kirwan that he wouldn't be very rock and roll without something like this.

One problem the band faced in getting the contract was the very specific political nature of a lot of their songs. At least two companies were squeamish about 47's unabashed Irish republican attitude, says Kirwan. One very foolish music business rep told them that they

would have problems because they'd never sell any records in Britain. Others were concerned that songs about green cards and Joe Doherty and bricks in the Bronx wouldn't translate easily to middle America. But Kirwan said that EMI reckoned that the band could have big crossover appeal, something obvious to anyone who's seen the demographically-mixed crowds seen at their gigs; yuppie and working class; Irish and Irish-American; whites and blacks.

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The record company will no doubt put on some tours, but they are sure to also stay busy on the local scene. One show which it was hoped they would be playing, the support slot for U2's Shea Stadium shows, definitely won't happen because the band are flying over to Tipperary for the huge Fele '92, but apparently U2's people are still interested and dates later in the summer and fall could be an option. For now, the band will be taking off from Reilly's for the entire month of August, so it's recommended you catch them in the next two weeks before they're off.

A FEW weeks back we were writing about the New Music Seminar, where bands come to be discovered. The seminar was about that yuppie conceit known as "networking." As with the currently-running Democratic national convention in New York City, or even livelier, next week's national convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in New Orleans, the Seminar was all about business, the business of music.

Crawling the city was hordes of moussed-up young men and women, attending "How-to..." conferences, meetings, and exhibitions. Wandering around the floor of the seminar were aspiring rock stars who looked like they hitch-hiked in from Ohio to stick up to industry types and pass out business cards. One of the bands from Ireland, The 4 Of Us, readily admitted to this column that they had hardly played a

The first album is already recorded, as produced by Ric Ocasek, (formerly of The Cars), and is due out in October, with a couple of videos, high-profile gigs, etc., to boot. Not bad for a band that started out working the pubs of Bainbridge and Gun Hill Road.

These were lonely gigs back then, when the initial reaction to the band's rap/reggae/Celtic punk sound was generally unfavorable. They were hissed at, and bar owners who admitted they liked some of what they heard had to get rid of them because the punters just weren't ready for them. Now you can barely squeeze into one of their shows.

"We're pretty happy," said Kirwan. "We held out for a long time and turned away several deals till we got the right one."

The right one, said he, was one that allowed the band the maximum of creative control but yet kept the members in pocket money.

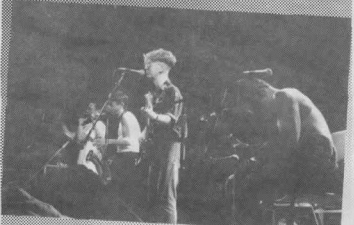
Seven albums sounds like a lot, but that's actually par for the course for the music business, which tries to snare up young bands into long-term

contracts while the band is still young. If the

first album does very well, the company will keep you for more, possibly even the full seven. In this case they will have more than made their money off you, as you'll be doing professional, presumably well-selling albums at a price you agreed on when you were supposed to have been young, foolish and starving. On the other hand, if the first record or two bombs, then the company can drop you on the spot. Although they are somewhat obliged to fulfill the money end of things, they don't have to release any more albums at all.

For that reason a band's debut is incredibly important. Black 47 decided, when they were settling the contract terms, to forego a large advance in favor of the company's promise to invest more in the promotion of the band. This way, the first album is hopefully going a better chance, making way for more in the future.

"Most bands don't make any money,"



THE BAND AT A GIG IN SAN FRANCISCO (L TO R) FRED PARCELLS, GEOF BLYTHE, LARRY KIRWAN AND CHRIS BYRNE (NOT PICTURED) TOMMY HAMMILL.

single gig together before they had their first album recorded. This is not unusual in today's pop world, where image is everything and a snappy video is more important than actually being able to put on a good show.

While this was going on however, Black 47 were doing the rock and roll thing the way it was intended: slogging it out in the bars, building up a loyal fan base, actually doing a bit of work.

Last week came the payoff: The New York-based band has a worldwide multi-record contract with a major label. While the ink is not yet dry (as was reported in the New York Post), the deal is by and large set. SBK, a division of the giant EMI record label, has hitched up the band for seven albums, to be released worldwide. Presumably because he owes too many people too much money, bandleader Larry Kirwan wouldn't give us the exact number, but he said the total was "somewhere in the mid-six figures."

AS we told you last week, if you're near New York this weekend there's no excuse not to check out **Richard Thompson** in Central Park this Saturday. It's a FREE, open-air concert at the Park's SummerStage (at Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd Street), starting at 3p.m. Thompson gives an incredible show, as he's one of the best living guitar players and a brilliantly haunting folk/rock writer. For more information on SummerStage shows call (212)360-CPSS.

MORE summertime delights can be found at the Bronx Riviera, a.k.a. **Orchard Beach**. A weekend day-trip is highly recommended for the liveliest boardwalk scene anywhere, with live Latino bands on their own summer stage. Hardly anybody goes in the water, as the real fun is with the merengue dances on the boardwalk. Also good for this spicy sort of thing is Brooklyn's Coney Island boardwalk.

LEYDON's restaurant in Chelsea, one of the brightest new Irish joints in town, will be celebrating its first anniversary next Thursday. Some cool summer jazz on the piano will be accompanied by a comp buffet and a good party all night. At 362 W. 23rd St. Phone — (212) 989-3500.

OTHER hot and sticky summer things: Best time in town is to be had Sundays at The Phoenix on 204th Street in the Bronx, where there's a free barbecue in their backyard garden area (4-7p.m.), with music from **Morning Star** (5-9p.m.) and **Gorman and O'Keane** (starting at 3p.m.). Who cares if you have work on Monday morning? ... And if you're lucky enough to be unemployed on Tuesday mornings too, check out **Reggae Night Mondays at Possibilities**, just up the road on 204th Street. This Monday **Vision** will serving up da reggae riddims, man.

LIKE THE CURE