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**BLACK 47 PLAYS HOBOKEN  
ZERO ARRESTED**

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**BLACK 47 PLAYS HOBOKEN; ZERO ARRESTED**  
 Frontman Larry Kirwan discusses *Last Call*, Irish Politics, and the arts scene in a town that made them infamous  
 by: [Christopher M. Halleron](#)

Like a crack flying column, the Irish-American mainstay *Black 47* made an almost clandestine incursion into Hoboken last night—and managed to successfully execute their mission before anyone was able to notify the local constabulary.

Riding strong on the vanguard of the Celtic rock movement, *Black 47* have certainly left their mark. Given their colorful history with the Hoboken authorities, the significance of the show at *Mulligan's* (159 First St.) was not lost on the band's lead singer, Larry Kirwan, who kicked off the show with "Green Suede Shoes"—a song that pokes fun at long-standing controversy.

"We're inextricably linked to Hoboken because of the closure of many bars in the town after an outdoor show that we did back in the summer of 1994."

**"...that was exactly 20 years ago—many pints under the bridge since then."** —Larry Kirwan, *Black 47*

Accounts differ on what actually went down that day, but Kirwan's version is that, "then-Chief of Police *Carmen LaBruno* grew alarmed when he saw the huge crowd who were—by the way—behaving themselves admirably. He 'suggested' that we stop the show... in my opinion that would have been madness—and I still stand by that, as the mood could have changed in moments."

The difference in opinion between Kirwan and LaBruno led to what became a lasting beef, as *Black 47* were essentially blacklisted from playing in Hoboken. "There was a to and fro between us in the days following in the New York daily newspapers—mostly over the size of the crowd, which apparently I underestimated. But that was exactly 20 years ago—many pints under the bridge since then."

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### Last Call

After many pints and crossing many bridges since its formation in 1989, Black 47 is currently marching along on a farewell tour, laying the pipes to rest following a finale at B.B. King's on November 15.

"It's going great," says Kirwan. "Quite emotional though, as many people are seeing us for the last time and want to relate the effect the band, a song or a CD has had on their lives. Then there are others we sent on the 'road to ruin,' as it were. It feels good to be going out on our own terms and while we're still making a difference to people."

Of course going out on one's own terms is hard to do these days—particularly in a town like Hoboken, which laments the steady decline of its live music scene. Despite some vigorous pockets of resistance, the creative lifeblood of this city—long renowned for its vibrant nightlife—is arguably being squeezed by the two-pronged attack of gentrification and overdevelopment.

"It's hard to fight the dollar," says Kirwan. "Odd though that Stephen Foster once lived in Hoboken too—back when it was a bleached-out bedroom community compared to his usual hang in the wild and wooly Five Points Manhattan immigrant slum." He adds, "If I were starting again I'd move to Detroit—you can buy a house for \$30K... and with internet you can create and be productive anywhere."

### The Irish

As headlines focus on the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade moving forward to allow gay participants, Hoboken is not without its own controversy when it comes to Irish-American celebrations. In addition to the reverberating kerfuffle of Black 47's last gig in town over two decades ago, more recently the Hoboken St. Patrick's Day Parade has been cancelled for the last three years running.

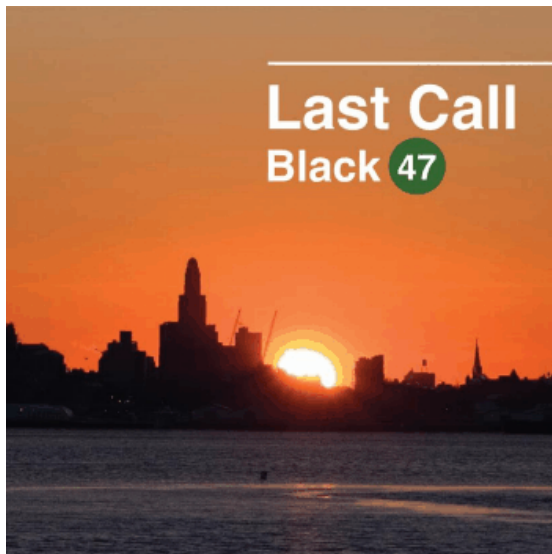
Kirwan, never one to shy away from the Irish-American political conversation, still sees a chance to overcome the issues. "I'd say unearth the town's Irish-American history and begin from there."

As for the complex nature of being an Irish-American in a post-Good Friday, post-decommissioning, post-9/11 era, Kirwan says the key is to stay informed.

"I would say few Americans know that nationalists have a majority on both Belfast and Derry councils—the two largest cities in the North of Ireland. It's only a matter of time and money. As my grandfather used to say—Ireland will be united when England remembers and Ireland forgets."

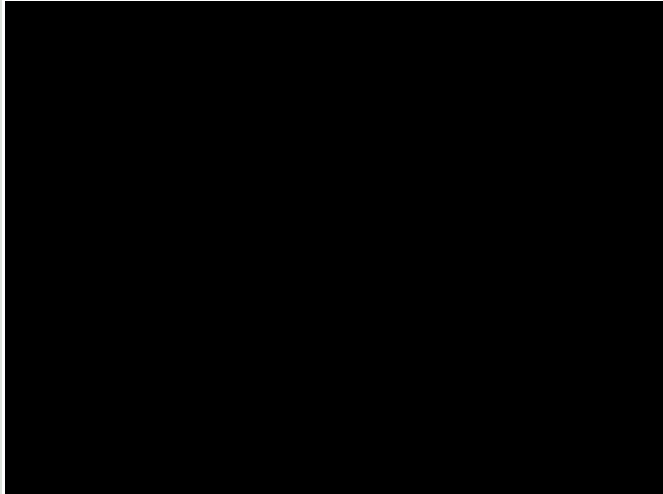
### Slán Abhaile

For those who missed last night's sortie, Black 47 will be back in Hoboken for the next two Thursday nights, playing McSwiggan's (110 First St.) on September 11 and The Village Pourhouse (205 First St.) on September 18. Shows start at 9:30 p.m., as part of the Smithwick's Sessions—sponsored by the Irish brewery.



The lads will be happy to see any and all familiar faces. Says Kirwan, "I'm hoping Chief LaBruno will be joining us at one of the free Hoboken gigs for a pint and some happy reminiscences."

VIDEO:



Black 47 "Green Suede Shoes"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2sPCiZPRzs>

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