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Black 47 to take the stage for the last time at South Buffalo Irish Festival

Black 47 says goodbye with stop at South Buffalo festival



Black 47 performs Saturday evening in the South Buffalo Irish Festival.

By **Anne Neville** | News Staff Reporter | @AnneNeville1
on September 4, 2014 - 12:01 AM

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A year ago, after an invigorating performance for an exuberant crowd at the South Buffalo Irish Festival, Larry Kirwan, the lead singer of the popular Irish rock band Black 47, had an unusual thought:

Maybe it was time to wrap it up.

A year later, with the band headed back to the South Buffalo Irish Festival on Saturday near the end of its yearlong “Last Call” farewell tour, Kirwan recalled his thought process.

That night a year ago, he said, “The band sounded so great. On the way back I had that feeling you get after a good gig, and they’re all good gigs, but there was something about this one, about South Buffalo. It’s a bastion of Irishness, and yet here Black 47 is a rock band with the big brass sound, and everyone loves it.”

As he mused on the show, Kirwan said his thoughts turned to the future. “I always wondered how Black 47 would end, because I could never see an end in sight for it. We were always on to the next album or on to the next gig, or the next controversy or whatever. But on the way back I was thinking, maybe this is the way it should happen, it should go out with us just feeling really great about the whole thing.”

Kirwan thought about his plan for a while before speaking to the other band members, three of whom – Geoffrey Blythe, Fred Parcels and Thomas Hamlin – had been with him since the first gig, on Nov. 15, 1989, when they played some music before and after a speech in the Bronx by political activist Bernadette Devlin McAliskey.

“I let it sit for a month or two but the feeling just got stronger,” Kirwan said. “Finally I just said, ‘Listen, this is what I’m thinking. We could have an endless end or we could name an end.’ ”

By setting the date a year ahead of time, Kirwan said, “That would give everyone in the band a chance to make arrangements, and we could get the word out and anybody who wanted to see the band a last time, or many last times, or who had never seen the band, could actually take that year to do so. When I broke this to the band, everyone said, yes, that seems reasonable.”

“We’re calling it standing down,” Kirwan said with a chuckle. “We’re disbanding. Nobody is retiring.”

So, of course, the first thing they did was cut a new album, “Last Call.” Inspired by his research into the history of Irish music, Kirwan wrote the songs in a monthlong frenzy of creative work. A song titled “The Night the Showbands Died” refers to the shocking 1975 massacre of five people, including three members of the popular Miami Showband, by loyalist paramilitaries and off-duty British soldiers as they were heading back to Dublin from a show in the north of Ireland. Other songs are a tribute to Bertrand Russell Berns, who discovered Van Morrison. “I wanted that New York effervescent pop sound,” said Kirwan. “We really wanted to make this a great album, because it’s going to be the last original one.”

Kirwan will continue his writing projects, solo performances and writing. His musical, “Hard Times,” inspired by Stephen Foster and the 1863 draft riots in New York City, is headed for Broadway. That play reconnects Foster with his onetime home in the notorious Five Points

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Sat. 9/6: Colbie Caillat

Sun. 9/7: Lorde

Sun. 9/7: Kellie Pickler

Tue. 9/9: Man or Astro-Man?

Wed. 9/10: Greensky Bluegrass

Thu. 9/11: Niagara Falls Blues Festival

Thu. 9/11: Heffron Drive

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Thu. 9/11: Far West

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TRENDING STORIES

THIS WEEK

1. Black 47 to take the stage for the last time at South Buffalo Irish Festival
2. The summer that was: A quiz
3. Savoy Brown: The British blues brothers
4. Hallwalls welcomes back free jazz legend Fred van Hove
5. Retro-indie arrives: Bad Suns, good kids

MOST COMMENTED

- 340** Letter: Violent crime is falling as gun ownership rises
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- 146** Letters air rift between Williamsville teachers, superintendent
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neighborhood of Manhattan, adds new music with Irish and African-American inflections and, Kirwan said, "shoots it forward into today."

Like all of Black 47's work, the unlikely fusion sounds irresistible.

The South Buffalo Irish Festival opens at 11 a.m. Saturday in Cazenovia Park and runs until fireworks end the evening. Admission is free. There will be free children's games and activities, including a rock-climbing wall, laser tag, face-painting and more, a beer tent and food vendors, including Brick Oven Bistro, the Blackthorn, Conlon's, Imperial Pizza, Big Tim's Fries, KupKates, Potter's Field, Francesca's and Abbott Pizza, as well as food sold by supporters of South Buffalo Football.


The South Buffalo Rugby team will open its season with a game starting at 1 p.m. behind the casino.

A wide variety of Irish and Celtic bands appear all day on a fast-paced schedule. The Blarney Bunch will play starting at 11 a.m., Cosain at 12:05 p.m., Crikwater at 1:10 p.m.; Kill The Clock at 2:15 p.m., Forthlin Road from Saratoga at 2:50 p.m., Aye Karou at 3:55 p.m., Jack Mahones at 4:30 p.m., Anthems at 5:35 p.m., McCarthyizm at 6:05 p.m., and the Rince Na Tiarna dancers from 7:20 to 7:40 p.m. Black 47 takes the stage for the final time in Buffalo from 7:45 to 9 p.m., followed by the Clann Na Cara dancers until 9:25 p.m. Barleyjuice, from Philadelphia, will perform from 9:30 to 10:45 p.m., and fireworks will end the evening.

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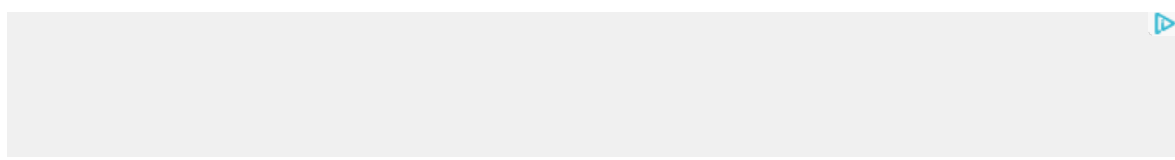
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