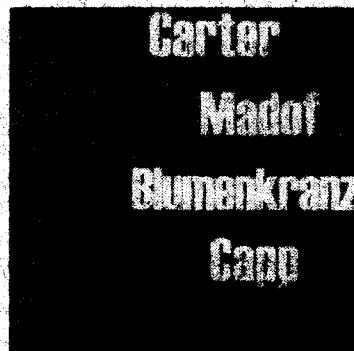


The Music Report



Roots

Black 47

On Fire

(Gadfly ★★★½)

One of our favorite bands — and not just because such tunes as “Our Lady of the Bronx” are set in our old neighborhood — continues to go strong on this live album that is, well, on fire.

This is the New York Irish group’s second live disc and first recording with Joseph Mulvanerty on pipes and bodhran in place of cofounder Chris Byrne, but the music remains a glorious, headlong cacophony of Celtic sounds, rock, rap, reggae and, in the case of “Those Saints,” a little Dixieland. That music gets an extra showcase here, and not just on the dizzying instrumental “Johnny Byrne’s Jig.” “Rockin’ the Bronx,” for one, is given new, metallic muscle as the group takes the opportunity to stretch out and tweak some arrangements.

If the sound is big and anthemic, it’s never bombastic or self-serious, as front man Larry Kirwan’s vividly cinematic songs balance revolutionary fervor with plain old fun. The album includes a stirring rendition of Peter Gabriel’s “Biko” and two of Kirwan’s best ballads, “Bobby Sands MP” and “American Wake,” an immigrant’s tale built on the poignant line “you can always go home, you just can’t stay.”

— Nick Cristiano