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## Black 47's Last Call

Posted by Kevin Gleeson on May 31, 2014 at 9:30pm [View Blog](#)



**W**hen I first thought about reviewing the last recorded work by a band, I questioned the futility. Why? If they are over, there must be a reason. Yet some infernal sadness tugs at my musical heartstrings, with questions like "Who were these guys?" "Were they good?" and "Will we be missing them?"

So I put on Black 47's "Last Call." And listened. Again. And again. First, I'm hearing Springsteen, then Lennon. Direct musical phrasing and vocal duplicity. Again I ask why? For a few hours at work. At home. On drives to central Pennsylvania from NYC, I listened over and over. Not even listening. Seeking. But what? Answers. To what?

I don't know what milestone I had passed when it struck me. Party band. Good musicians. Good times. Collected. For the Irish. By the

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Irish. I realize I over thought this CD. Black 47 is not an obsessed and frustrated composer seeking audience and brilliance. These boys have fired the furnace of many a feis. They've kicked their heels up in the sawdust of many a Bronx bar and kept time to reel and rocker alike. I hear the patron's shrieking and the maids giggling. And yes, I smell the pints and the fags burning.

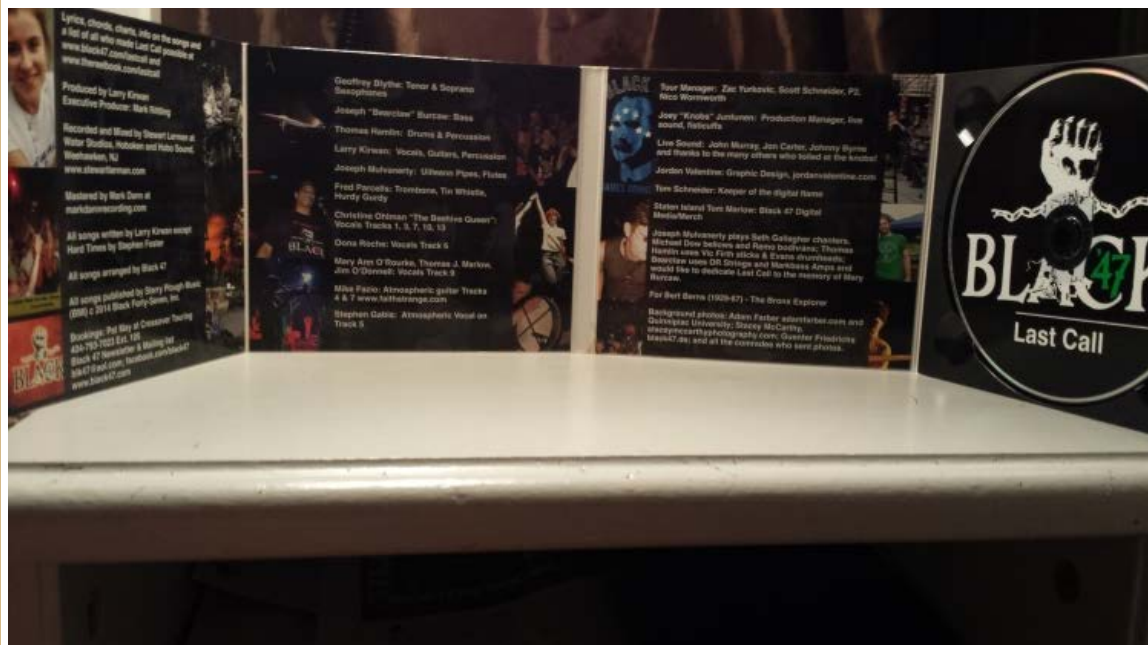


photo by Zac Yu

What surprised me, musically, is how American they sound. Like Southside Johnnie or the E Street Band. How deliberate and exacting. Almost in tribute to the originals. Does there need to be a reason? Why can't an Irish band sound completely American? Down to the horns? Why not? I have spent years playing with tribute bands that didn't reflect my culture. Black47 is more than a band. It's a culture. They have a brave and loyal following. They will, I'm sure, be sorely missed.

All (but one) of the songs were written by Larry Kirwan, guitarist, vocalist and percussionist -- and principle hell-raiser who has surrounded himself with great players of both both traditional and modern styles. Together, they explore Irish themes with American tone reminiscent of the '80s and '90s.

Notable tracks include the tongue-in-cheek "Salsa O'Keefe," spirited "Shanty Irish Baby," and "Queen of Coney Island." Great attention is paid to Irish themes in "Dublin Days" and "Johnny Comes a Courtin'." It is hard to tell which side of the Atlantic this was recorded on.



George Harrison reminded us that "All things must pass" and so they do. And so has Black 47. A glimpse of their website, [www.Black47.com](http://www.Black47.com), reveals a strong fan connection. To the many who have enjoyed them for the past 25 years, "Last Call" is a sound effort and a fitting tribute.

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Started by The Wild Geese in Irish in the News. Last reply by Tom McGrath May 31.  
 32 Replies 4 Likes
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Started by Gerry Regan in Uncategorized. Last reply by Kieron Punch Jun 2.  
 4 Replies 0 Likes
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Started by The Wild Geese in Wild Geese Announcements. Last reply by Fran Reddy Jun 11.  
 169 Replies 8 Likes

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Comment by [Charles G O' Brien](#) on June 3, 2014 at 6:49pm

Nice article, fair play. I remember the first time Black 47 really hit me was in when I was living in Atlanta, I had heard them in Ireland in passing and not been moved, but when I heard Iraq when I was in Atlanta, it somehow hit home powerfully!



Comment by [Kevin Gleeson](#) on June 3, 2014 at 8:56pm

Thank you Mr. O'Briens for your appreciable thoughts.



Comment by [bill keeler](#) on June 5, 2014 at 7:24am

i've seen them live several times. "great irish/american rock n rollers". and this from someone who just saw springsteen for the 192nd time.

p.s. i recommend kirwan's published books



Comment by [Kevin Gleeson](#) on June 5, 2014 at 12:35pm

Awesome Bill!!!



Comment by [Charles G O' Brien](#) on June 5, 2014 at 12:52pm

I have a signed copy of Rockin the Bronx, a rollicking read. Larry Kirwan contributed an interview for a documentary I presented on Tg4 a few years back. I just got the vast bulk of funding for a new documentary on Indiegogo called "A Captain Unafraid." Here is a youtube link to the one with Larry in it! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rEdaZipKGA>



Comment by [bill keeler](#) on June 6, 2014 at 10:11am

do any of you know mike neville? he's a playwright based in milwaukee and has had some off Broadway runs of his work

speaking of milwaukee, the largest irish festival in the world(our claim) is coming up august 14-17.



Comment by [Tommy Dullaghan](#) on June 8, 2014 at 7:31am

Kevin , enjoyed your article. Been following Black 47 since the days in Norwood in the Bronx. Best Irish Rock band. Larry Kirwan is one of the nicest guys you'll meet and always has time for a pint :) it will be sad not seeing them play anymore but as you cited " all good things must come to an end" and it's time. thanks Tommy D



Comment by [Kevin Gleeson](#) on June 8, 2014 at 8:17am

Fantastic responses. I have a son in Milwaukee who never misses the festival. I always get detailed reports and literature. Hope to catch it one day soon. Thanks for video links and good luck with the indievid. Always sing loud and often for Larry.



Comment by [bill keeler](#) on June 9, 2014 at 5:55am

kevin, my son bill (32) is an attorney in milwaukee. maybe they know each other. he spent his junior year of undergrad working in the Dail.

i've never missed a minute of mcfest. i think this is the 33rd year. you really should grace us with your presence.

i'm from milwaukee but have been in Bethesda, MD for 20 years.



Comment by [bill keeler](#) on June 9, 2014 at 11:20am

just saw the entertainment lineup for mcfest. black 47 Saturday night. i'll be there.



Started by Belinda Evangelista in Wild Geese Announcements. Last reply by Rose Maurer May 21.  
6 Replies 5 Likes



### Easter Traditions in Ireland

Started by The Wild Geese in Religion. Last reply by The Wild Geese Mar 31, 2013.  
5 Replies 2 Likes



### Famine Irish in Chicago

Started by Mary Egan in Genealogy. Last reply by Mary Egan May 19.  
18 Replies 3 Likes



### The Irish in Mining around the World

Started by Belinda Evangelista in Uncategorized. Last reply by Kathy Lujan 7 hours ago.  
7 Replies 3 Likes



### Mothering Sunday celebrated in Ireland falls on the 4th Sunday in Lent on the 30th of March this year.

Started by Belinda Evangelista in Uncategorized Mar 4, 2013.  
0 Replies 3 Likes



### Rhode Island's Irish

Started by Ray McKenna in Wild Geese Announcements. Last reply by Ray McKenna Apr 1.  
20 Replies 4 Likes

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Added by Ryan O'Rourke

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Added by Ryan O'Rourke

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Added by Ryan O'Rourke

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