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# Last Call Black 47



## Black 47: Last Call & Rise Up

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EMAIL

By **Bill Nevins**

These two 2014 albums by Black 47 consist of the band's final studio release, *Last Call*, and *Rise Up*, a selection of the hard-edged political songs that have defined this raucous Irish-themed ensemble for its two and a half decades of existence.

Together, these recordings are a most fitting closing bow and, in a way, an encore. Fans know that — despite leader/songwriter/playwright Larry Kirwan's declaration that the band's Nov. 15 extravaganza at the B.B. King Blues Club on Times Square was its last ever collective show — the boys will be back in one formation or another.

This *Local iQ* reporter attended that *Last Call* performance and can report it was Black 47's most spirited show. The ensemble was augmented by co-founder Chris Byrne (proprietor of Rocky Sullivan's Pub in Red Hook, Brooklyn, which boasts the best pint of Guinness in New York) and other performers who have lit up Black 47 albums and shows.

There was even a surprise guest rapping spot by Kirwan's son, Rory — “a chip off the old block,” his proud dad declared while blasting away on his trademark Stratocaster. The craic was mighty, as they say, and there wasn't a dry eye — nor a dry throat — in the house. (Nor at the after-parties, which were rumored to have lasted well into the following week!)

If you love Black 47, you will treasure these two albums. *Last Call* includes some of Larry Kirwan's finest writing yet — he saved the best for last — including tales of Irish slaves in the Caribbean, rebel unionists, soldiers, lovers, proud women and unrepentant poets. And more. *Rise Up* will have you on your feet, fist in the sky, ready for the next revolution — be it political, spiritual, economic or a combination of all three. The Brendan Behan tribute song is lovely and revealing, and worth the price of this album all by itself.



Black 47 is named for the horrid starvation of 1847 that drove so many Irish survivors to America and other lands. As such, this band has always stood defiantly for human rights and in defense of immigrants and all oppressed peoples. The group's bold attack on the disastrous American war policies in its album *Iraq* was both courageous and prophetic. Audiences caught up with Black 47's attitude, but it wasn't always that way. Kirwan had the guts to let our troops speak angrily and sadly through his songs long before most of us woke up to what was happening overseas.

Of course, we still need Black 47. As in Kirwan's lyrics about martyred Irish rebel chief Michael Collins, "Where the hell are they now when we need them the most?" Ah, they are still here, in these albums, in our memories. And, truth be told, I would bet you a case of Jamesons the boys of Black 47 will back on our stages again — under whatever *nom de guerre* — not in the far future. In the meantime, get these albums and enjoy. *Slainte!*

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