

DIRTY LINEN

BALTIMORE, MD

BI-MONTHLY 13,200

AUG-SEP 2000

Black 47 *Trouble in the Land* [Shanachie 5741 (2000)] What a wonderful disc. There's simply nothing like Black 47, a group of six New Yorkers with mostly Irish roots, for enthusiasm and infectiousness. Intertwining Irish melodies — and the occasional ska beat — with classic rock arrangement, the band is expert at creating marvelous moods and romping dance tunes. And in case you didn't know, Black 47 has been doing this for a decade, making legends of themselves in New York pubs before coming to wider attention in recent years. This is the fifth album, though, and probably their most mature, both musically and lyrically. The musical styles shift. And the lyrics offer so much imagery you can sometimes feel you're listening to a novel. There's the slap at right-wing racism in the title song, a hilarious ode to coming of age in "I Got Laid on James Joyce's Grave," a wry look at lost passion and love in "Bodhráns on the Rain," and a fairly captivating tribute to Bobby Kennedy. What makes Black 47 and their latest collection of songs so worthwhile is their continuing ability to accurately portray, in astonishingly quick slices of sound, those moments when we mark our time, remember the important things, and think about what could have been. Sometimes dour, often ironic, their songs — and the fresh production they receive — have a timeless feel that cries out for a wider audience. *Trouble in the Land*? Maybe. But one thing is clear — their land is our land. (ES)