



47 REASONS: Fiesty Black 47's new CD, "Fire of Freedom," is out, and it's a sure-fire winner. Chris Byrne (left), Geoff Blythe and Larry Kirwan are three of 47's talented crew.

Back into the Black

**DAN
AQUILANTE**



YOU'RE probably thinking: "Doesn't this guy have something else to write about besides Black 47?" Last week was a review of their top Saint Pat's Day concert. Today, more ink — this time praising the rock group's new album.

The band's major-label debut, "Fire of Freedom," in stores today, is a tribute to talent, hard work and the karmic notion that good things eventually happen to good people.

If you own the band's '91 self-titled independent CD, then lots of the latest CD won't be so new to you. But in spite of the familiarity (8 of 14 songs are from that earlier CD) there's a freshness and polish on "Fire of Freedom," as if Black 47 is rediscovering its own music.

"Rockin' the Bronx," one of the re-recorded songs, is now a brasher rap-brag chronicling the band's history — victories and defeats included. Trombonist Geoff Blythe gives "The Bronx" bottom while lead singer Larry Kirwan's ragged electric guitar slashes at bandmate Chris Byrne's sweet uilleann pipe work. The duel emphasizes the bitter-sweet combination that's confused by the rap. It's the bumblebee thing — there's no reason it should fly, but it does.

Like so many of the songs on the album, the title track, "Fire of Freedom," is about human dignity gained through perseverance and action. Set to a reggae beat, the song is reminiscent of Bob Marley's protest classic "Get Up, Stand Up."

The ability to capture that kind of idea in a song is why Black 47 is so important.

I admire Kirwan and the band because they have a point of view, a distinct voice, and they understand an old-fashioned con-

"FIRE OF FREEDOM"

Black 47

★ ★ ★ ★
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cept most of us have forgotten. It was popular in America back in Revolutionary times: Things can be accomplished and change can take place if individuals act together.

"Fire of Freedom" might sound way too serious for a pop record, but the political statements made are tempered with wonderful melodies and lively narratives tapped from Kirwan's life in the States.

At times, such as on the tune "Banks of the Hudson," Kirwan and company make me think of Springsteen in the early years. There are plenty of influences to spot from Tom Waits to the Chieftains to the James Brown horn section, but ultimately this band is musically unique and lyrically inspiring.