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## Black 47

### Rise Up

Review by G. W. Hill

This album is a collection of Black 47 political songs. The group have always been big on doing political songs, so there are plenty from which to choose. These are remixes and rarities, though. So, while I've reviewed some of these songs before, I think these versions are all different from the ones I've originally reviewed. That said, I'm going to include the original review at the end of the track review for the versions here, so you can compare and contrast. As to the full package, with Black 47 closing up shop, this is a fitting compilation.



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## Track by Track Review

### Patriot Game

The earliest political song from Black 47, this is a bit stripped back in arrangement. It's still got their classic Celtic rock vibe.

### Sam Hall

This is a bit of rethinking of an early Black 47 rocker. It works quite well in this new format. I love the musical arrangement and the vocal performance has some great anger to it.

### James Connolly

This has always been one of my favorite Black 47 songs. This feels like a remix and doesn't work as well as the original as far as I'm concerned. It's still good, but I definitely prefer the original version. The lyrical message of this song is now even more relevant than when it originally came out. Here's what I said about *Fire of Freedom's* original version of this piece, "another strong rocker, this one has jazzish overtones."

### Change

I love the horns and reggae vibe on this cut. It's a great tune. In might be my favorite here in a lot of ways. There is definitely a bit of a Dixieland element later, too.

### San Patricio Brigade

This is a fun Celtic rocker with a historic slice of lyrical magic. I love just about everything about this piece. It's a killer rocker.

### The Big Fella

The opening on this is an acapella, rather operatic female vocal. It isn't the kind of thing I really like, so it kind of leaves me a little less than impressed. As it powers out into a powerful Black 47 arrangement, though, this really works very well. When those vocals come across the musical arrangement later, it's more effective. They drop it back to mellower sounds for one section of Kirwan's vocals. Then it powers back out from there. In some ways, this song, despite that introduction, is one of the best numbers here.

### For What It's Worth

I love this cover. When you are going to cover a song, you need to make it your own. Black 47 definitely does that here. If you'd never heard the original, you'd think this was a Black 47 song. The powerhouse female vocals really add a lot to this.

### Stars and Stripes

This is definitely a classic Black 47 sound. It has every thing you expect from this band including a great message. When I reviewed the album *Iraq*, I had this to say about the version of this tune that's



on that disc, "raw and punky, Black 47 stir things up from the start with this number. It's a new classic, angry and defiant. The lyrics hold despair but also determination. We get plenty of traditional Irish music amidst the rocking background, but isn't that what Black 47 are really all about?"

### **Bobby Sands MP**

It seems like this one has it all. Mellow sections are heard. More rocking ones are included. It even gets some of those operatic female vocals and a parental advisory for the lyrics. It's a strong cut that's one of the most complex numbers here.

### **The Day They Set Jim Larkin Free**

Another with a fairly complex arrangement, I like this one a lot, too. It really gets very jazzy mid-track, but overall this is definitely Black 47.

### **Bobby Kennedy**

There's a bit of an Irish rap on this. That was pretty common in the band at one time. There are also a lot of jazzy elements, and this has a bit of space rock element.

### **Downtown Baghdad Blues**

A helicopter sound is heard at the start of this. We're brought into a pretty standard (but quite strong) Black 47 tune from there. The original version of this song was on the album *Iraq*. I said this about it in the review of that album, "The sound of a chopper plays prominently on the intro here. The band launch into a mid-tempo rocker with lots of Celtic instrumentation amidst. Kirwen's vocals are fast paced, part spoken, part shouted throughout much of the track."

### **Black 47**

There's a trippy sort of space rock introduction that makes up the first minute or so here. Then it launches out into the song proper. This is definitely another of my all time favorite songs from the band. It gets another batch of that operatic vocal delivery in the middle of it. It has quite a bit of variety in the mix. When I reviewed *Fire of Freedom*, I said this about that version, "this slow rock track has lots of leanings to it, jazz, R&B and blues, among others."

### **Joe Hill's Last Will**

This is an acapella reading of the real will of a gentleman named Joe Hill before he was executed.

### **US of A 2014**

I love the hard rocking sound that opens this. It works to a more stripped back arrangement from there. This rocker has some jazz and more in the mix. It has a real classic Black 47 vibe but with a modern twist.



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