

## ILLINOIS TIMES

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VALPARAISO, IN  
FRIDAY 92,000  
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# Black 47 to bring messages to House of Blues

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Times Correspondent

## onstage

**Black 47**  
**When:** 9 p.m. Thursday  
**Where:** House of Blues,  
329 N. Dearborn St., Chicago  
**Tickets:** \$15, plus applicable  
processing fees  
**For more info:** Ticketmaster  
(312) 559-1212.

It's the busiest month of the year for Larry Kirwan and Chris Byrne, whose rollicking band of rowdy and streetwise Irish-American musicians fuse rock, rap, funk, reggae and ska, with both traditional Emerald Isle instrumentation and electrifying guitar licks.

The sextet, known as **Black 47**, are **Big Apple-based**, but are **heading for an 18-plus show at the House of Blues Thursday**.

The band, renowned for hosting a regular (and usually packed) long-running weekly Saturday night show at Connolly's, a nightclub on East 47th Street in Manhattan, consistently pushes the musical

envelope to the edge. Members wryly relate, in song, both ups and downs associated with the history and politics of the contemporary non-wealthy Irish immigrant experience. They do so via riveting riffs and evocative lyrics, served up loud and long for lots of alcohol-drenched brethren sympathetic with that position, having amassed a rabid cult following of

both celebrities and just plain folks during their decade together.

"People literally fly in from all over the world for that gig," said Kirwan, proud that the band's hard-earned star continues to rise, despite the fact it gets little radio support, not being an overtly commercial act. "It's a regular thing, at a big bar up in the old diamond district, so people come from all over, and we have a good time."

Lots of celebrities take in the show. "Yeah, but that's not what we're about, even though celebrities have always liked coming to our shows. We're about the songs and the music."

Things are going well for the band of late, despite varied concerns about the status of the

peace agreement in Northern Ireland. "We always felt that when a settlement would come, the U.S. government would be involved, so our purpose has been to go around the country, and inflame the youth, as it were," Kirwan says. "Or inform the youth."

"One of the ways we did that was to take the stories of different characters from Irish history, and incorporate those into songs. People like James Connelly, the Irish revolutionary socialist, and Michael Collins. Create songs about the various heroes, and give them back to the youth. It's important."

The members of the band expect that most of their generally outspoken supporters will attend a series of live record release

parties, marking both the High Holy St. Patrick's Day festivities and the new CD, in coming weeks.

Given the high concentration of sheer energy required to adequately showcase the melodic imagery and soaring grooves that Black 47 put forth while dishing up the colorful collection live, it's no wonder that they're a bit worn out after the show. The audience generally is, too, having fueled and fired their aesthetic imaginations along with the guys, who showcase their funky and catchy style with diverse instrumentation that includes Uilleann pipes, tin whistle, keyboards, horns, guitar, banjo, and whole lot of percussion.

Aside from unveiling material

on the disc, which also features such catchy titles as "Desperate," "Fallin' Off The Edge Of America," "Bobby Kennedy," and "Blood Is Thicker Than Water," fans expect the band to serve up such signature tracks as "Funky Ceili" and the hilarious "Maria's Wedding" at those shows.

Likewise, their vastly popular rendition of Phil Ochs' anti-war classic, "I Ain't Marchin' Anymore," as featured on National Public Radio's recent Bleeker Street CD and special, offers a glimpse at Greenwich Village in the '60s.

Kirwan and company are also among the featured artists on the soundtrack of Timothy Hutton's upcoming box office film, "Deterrence."