

# Rock 'n' reelers going for brogue

**DAN  
AQUILANTE**



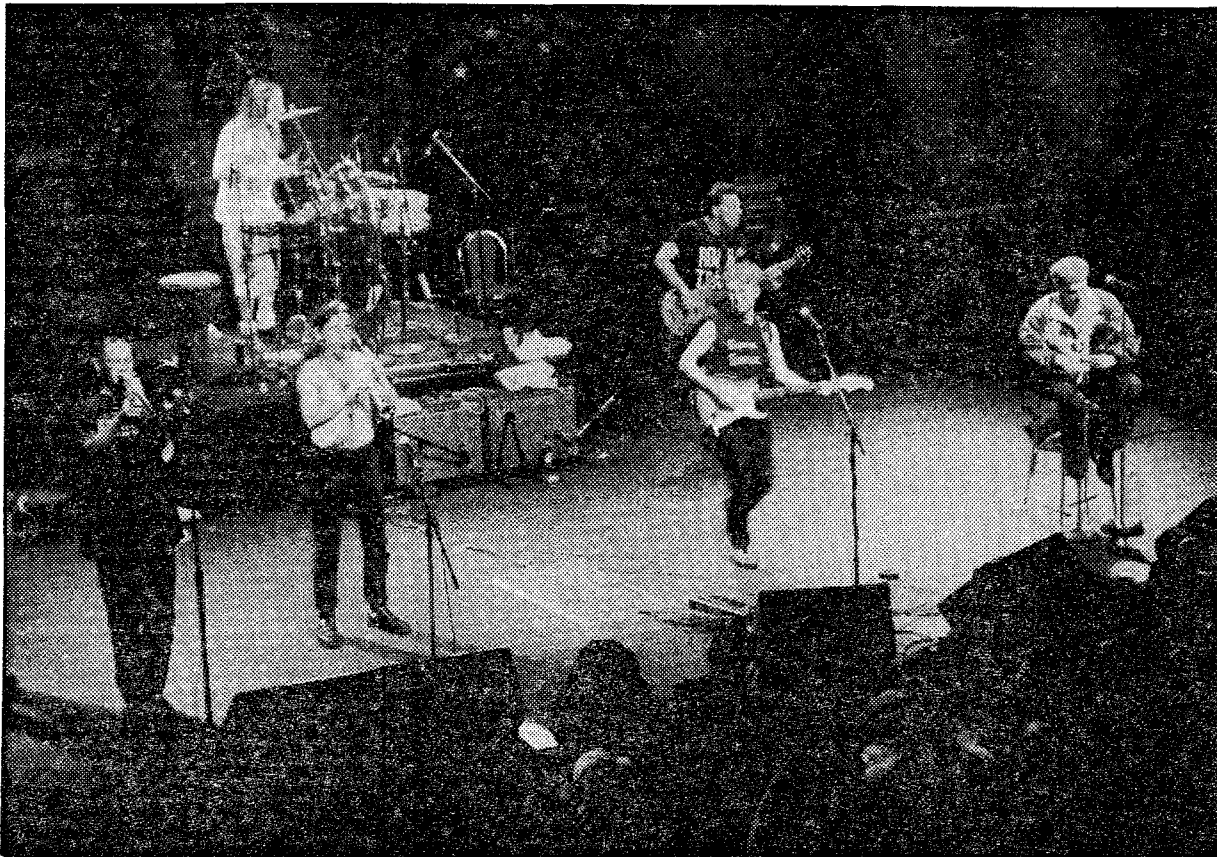
It was St. Patrick's Day and like most of the sold-out Ritz crowd I wore green, drank way too many pints of Guinness, and had the pleasure of hearing Black 47 again.

I don't need a special occasion to drink Guinness or take in this fantastic band — although I could do without all that green. See, Black 47 is New York's top local group, a hometown secret that we citizens of Skyscraper Park are gonna have to share with the world next week when they make their major-label debut, on SBK Records.

Fronted by rail-thin songwriter Larry Kirwan, Black 47 has fused rock 'n' roll with traditional Irish reels, jigs and airs, creating something special — arrangements that are musically unique, yoked with lyrics that convey the power and glories in the struggle of life.

Somebody living in Dogtown, U.S.A., might not feel that tide of life pulling at them as strongly as one does here, but the themes are universal since carrot-topped Kirwan draws his stories from his own life and history and delivers them with humor, sensitivity and spirited anger.

The show opened with "James Connolly," a song about the turn of the century Irish union orga-



New York Post: Joe DeMaria

**THE JIG IS UP:** On St. Pat's, Black 47 cranked up their soulful Irish tunes at the Ritz.

nizer who died for the cause of the labor movement.

From the start of that tune, Kirwan fired the lyrics with vein-bulging passion as he worked a distorted electric guitar riff to the band's melody. He sang about Connolly's love of life as he wrestled with his inability to live on his

knees at the feet of the "Bosses and their screws."

With his fist raised above his head and the entire house returning the salute, Kirwan sang "Hold onto your rifles boys, don't give up your dream." Yeah, Kirwan is a revolutionary, but thank God there are still a few of 'em left.

Later in the show, as if Connolly's ghost reminded him of the struggle happening now at The Post, Kirwan urged the Ritz crowd to help editor Pete Hamill save the paper from its bosses and screws.

As Kirwan had clicked with the fans, so did the band. Everyone in the six-piece group gets high

## ROCK review

marks for a memorable performance.

Chris Byrne, a NYPD cop who accents the rock with his uilleann pipe, was excellent through the evening, but he really hit his stride on "40 Shades of Blue," a traditional Irish number Kirwan has reworked.

I've always liked the drumming and percussions by Thomas Hamlin. Between his Japanese Samurai look (complete with the sideburns and top-knot) and the African drum on which he pounds reggae rhythms, he extends a sense of spiritual freedom through drumming that the Grateful Dead's Micky Hart talks about in his book "Planet Drum."

The band didn't play one of my favorite songs, "Desperate," but did manage to fit in just about everything else. Crowd favorites included "Funky Ceili/Bridies Song" and "Maria's Wedding," two tunes about Kirwan's ex-girlfriends.

In "Maria's Wedding" as the girl stands on the alter about to marry another guy, drunken Kirwan pleads with her not to go through with it, promising that he'll leave the band and even get a, a, a . . . job. In the stuttered pause as Kirwan attempts to say the dirty word — job — the house howled and screamed, "No, don't do it!"

Larry, I was one of the howlers. I'd never want to see you have to leave the guys in the band and get a, a, a . . . well, you know.

Black 47 will play Paddy Reilly's (Second Avenue at 28th Street) tomorrow and next Wednesday.