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Black 47: Irish-American rockers to visit Tellus360 on its last tour



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Members of Black 47 pose for a photo, with Larry Kirwan at center.

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Posted: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 8:00 am | Updated: 8:34 am, Fri Feb 28, 2014.

JON FERGUSON | News Editor

Black 47, the Irish-American rock band, has decided to call it quits in November — almost 25 years to the day that it got its start in New York City.

Local fans will get the chance to celebrate the band's last go-round when it performs with opening act Ogham Stones Friday at Tellus360 in downtown Lancaster.

Larry Kirwan, Black 47's Irish-born leader, says the band mates decided about six months ago that it was time to put it to rest.

"It just seemed right," says Kirwan, 65, who sings, plays guitar and writes the band's songs. "Everybody felt good about it. We've done a lot with the band. We've been political. We've been whatever. We wanted to put a finish to it, a good finish to it — rather than have it fade away. Let's go out with a bang. Let's make it a final thing, where we stop, rather than trailing on."

As Kirwan says, Black 47 — which gets its name from the summer of 1847, the worst year of the Great Irish Famine — has always been a political band.

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As well as taking the Republican side in Irish politics, the band also became an outspoken foe of the second Iraq War, devoting an entire album, "Iraq" (2008), to the subject.

Musically, the band, which has released 13 albums, blends rock and Celtic music, adding a horn section to the mix. The band includes Kirwan; Geoffrey Blythe, saxophones and clarinet; Joe Burcaw, bass; Thomas Hamlin, drums; Joseph Mulvanerty, uilleann pipes, flute and bodran; and Fred Parcells, trombone and tin whistle.

The band will release its final album, fittingly titled "Last Call," on Tuesday. It features 13 new songs, all written by Kirwan.

"It's very band-oriented," Kirwan says of the album. "I decided to make it as much musical as storytelling, to really work on the brass arrangements in particular, the brass and pipe arrangements."

Kirwan, whose son graduated from Franklin & Marshall College, has many other outlets for his storytelling as he also is a novelist ("Rockin' the Bronx"), playwright ("Liverpool Fantasy") and

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memoirist ("Green Suede Shoes").

"Everybody should write some kind of memoir," he says, "because what it does for you is you set out to write something and you get hit by all these tangents that you'd totally forgotten about. It kind of reinvigorates your mind and it sends you down alleyways that you wouldn't have gone down, you wouldn't even have thought about. Something sparks and all of a sudden avenues of your memory open up."

Kirwan, who hosts a program called Celtic Crush on Sirius Satellite Radio, says he plans to continue his musical career after Black 47 packs up its gear for the final time, but he's not sure what shape it will take.

He does have a solo act called Rock and Read, during which he performs acoustic versions of Black 47 songs and reads from his written works.

Kirwan says he'll continue performing that show but but doesn't yet know how he'll scratch his songwriting itch without Black 47.

He says he'll figure that out when the time comes, which sort of mirrors Black 47's career strategy.


"We always went that way, from one gig to the next, one CD to the next," Kirwan says. "We always went under the Jim Morrison thing: 'The future's uncertain, the end is always near.'"

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The concert is 7 p.m. Friday at Tellus360, 24 E. King St. Tickets are \$20. For more information call 393-1660 or visit www.tellus360.com.

Jon Ferguson is a news editor. He can be reached at jferguson@lnpnews.com or (717) 291-8839.

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- 2/28 9 AM | Thee Wed
- 2/28 10 AM "Eat Well, Play Well"
- 2/28 10 AM Pennsylvania POP
- 2/28 10 AM Adoring You Art Exhibit
- 2/28 12 PM Twist and Shout
- 2/28 5 PM American Girl Doll Bingo

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2/28 7 PM Comic Book Artist Sergio...

2/28 7 PM The Trust Presents: Carla Leurs

This Week

28 Fri	1 Sat	2 Sun	3 Mon	4 Tue	5 Wed	6 Thu	All events
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3/01 9 AM The Costumes of Downton Abbey...

3/01 5 PM Spaghetti Disco Sweet Sixteen [BUY](#)

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