

BLACK 47

★★★★

Last Call

(OWN LABEL) www.black47.com

Oh, the irony! After deciding to call time after twenty-five years, Larry Kirwan's gang of New York-based musical renegades have produced their best album in a decade and, quite possibly, one of the best of their career.

Last Call, despite its title, sounds bold, confident and ballsy, with Kirwan as ever the motormouth Dubliner leading from the front. His self-aggrandising tales of his wilder days ('Culchie Prince') rub shoulders with songs chronicling the contemporary Irish-American experience ('US Of A 2014'), and the Celtic reggae of historical ballad 'Johnny Come A'Courtin'', where he's joined on vocals by the delicious tones of Oona Roche.

Resolutely refusing to fall into the easy trap of rocking up Irish folk favourites, you always got the feeling that Kirwan was a contrary bugger at heart, adding funk, reggae, soul, rockabilly and hip-hop to the band's sound and perhaps knowingly creating a rod for its own back. Along the way they created something unique, immensely listenable and thoroughly enjoyable, combining politics and pop tunes with ceilidh and craic. *Last Call* is a heroic last shout and a more than graceful exit, not to mention a fine introduction to a band that shouldn't really need it. Sláinte.

Sean McGhee