

# ROCKIN' THE BRONX

Like some cut-off-at-the-knees Clint Eastwood, I kick open the door of Sarsfields Pub - a Fender amp in one hand, a mike stand in the other. A collective groan rises from the dozen or so regulars. I stare them all down. Got to immediately establish who's boss or they'll walk all over you. Shivering from the blast of Arctic air, they return to the solace of their Guinness.

I survey the battlefield and shudder. Four hours of playing my balls off to this crowd of morons. Then it's all action! Set up the gear and the two colored floodlights. Give this kip a bit of atmosphere! Then steel myself and march straight up to the bartender. He knows what's coming and turns on his fat arse.

"Mick", I say, too tentative by far. "Mick!!!!" I roar. He swivels regally, a look of bored hauteur creasing his martyr's puss. I gesture imperiously at the television. "For Christ sake," he snivels, "they're watchin' the match from Ireland!" But I don't care if they're watching skin flicks from Outer Mongolia, that television goes off before we play. He'd dearly love to tell me to go fuck myself, that every other band plays with the television on, but he already knows my answer - "Black 47 is not every other band."

With that small victory under our belts, we lash into "Home of the Brave". The drum machine ricochets off the sheet-rocked walls and I wrench every extra decibel out of the guitar intro. Chris starts chillin' on the Uilleann and the pipes explode in a primal wail. Throwing a last hostile glare down the bar, I snarl:

Just got over from the Emerald Isle  
And I'm glad to see you're all doin' so fine  
Feels so good to be finally  
In the home of the brave and the land of the free

Dentures rattle, pint glasses tremble, middle fingers point skyward, there's a mass exodus for the door and we're off to another fabulous evening of light entertainment in the Bronx.

By New Year's Eve 1989, we had been fired from every joint on Bainbridge. We stood on the frigid avenue and cursed another owner who'd dicked us. Across the street, a deli had been shot up and a wounded Korean was being helped into an ambulance. "Welcome to the fucking 90's," I muttered.