

## CITY LINK

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL  
WEEKLY 56,000  
FEB 9 2000

### by Colleen Dougher

Since 1994, the middle of February has seen people flocking to downtown Fort Lauderdale's Bubier Park for their yearly fix of Irish music, bagpipes, step-dancing and Guinness.

All you'll find there this weekend, however, is a guy in a green shirt, pointing people in the direction of Mills Pond Park. After six years of holding Irish Fest at Bubier, the Irish are moving on.

They hadn't planned to move so soon, but Sheila Hynes, executive director of the Irish Cultural Institute, which has put on the festival for 14 years, says she got word in December that they had been kicked out of the park due to construction.

"It was a shock, and very late as far as reprinting schedules and all that," Hynes says. "But the good news is that there is three times as much green space. Bubier Park was becoming Bubier Mini-Park, and we had more Irish than we could accommodate."

One of the great things about being downtown, she says, was being able to draw in all the walk-by traffic,

people who heard the music, smelled the food and dropped in to pick up on a little Irish culture. The flip side, however, is that the festival attracted so many Irish wannabes that it outgrew the park.

"There was really very little walking that you were able to do at Bubier Park," Hynes says. "It was beautiful and cozy, but now we'll finally have an opportunity to develop the festival more."

So, this year, Hynes will pack much more into the three-day bash — everything from an additional stage and more amusement rides to a dance area, cultural workshops, strolling musicians,

genealogy and history classes, storytelling, an Irish talent contest, even a return to cooking demonstrations, something that went over like a lead balloon in the festival's earlier days.

"With all of these wonderful pubs opening up," Hynes says, "people now realize that there is more to Irish cuisine than the potato."

And, of course, many talented bands also will appear, from festival veterans Black 47 to first-timers Hiring Fair, The Prodigals, Blackthorn and Cherish the Ladies to local groups like Celt, Fire in the Kitchen, Innisfree and

**continued next page**



**Festival veterans:** New York Celtic rock band Black 47 gets 'em moving.

### Black 47

If you like to see otherwise reserved people break into a jig, be sure to catch this New York Celtic rock band. For six years running, Black 47 has been getting Irish Fest patrons out of their seats and up to the stage to share in their lust for life.

The band came together when Irish singer-songwriter and playwright Larry Kirwan struck up a friendship with Chris Byrne, a former New York City cop-turned uilleann piper with a taste for punk and rap. Once they found a saxophonist, trombone player, drummer and bassist, they took their act to the Irish pubs of the Bronx and Manhattan.

Now, they're celebrating a decade together, as well as the release of their fourth CD, *Trouble in the Land*. The music, a blend of ska, reggae and funk wrapped up in Irish and wearing green suede shoes, is a challenge to describe. Best to check it out for yourself. This weekend, you'll get two chances.

Also, catch singer-guitarist Larry Kirwan 7 p.m. Saturday in the Irish Heritage Tent discussing his views on everything from immigration and politics to the Irish music scene, drama and romance.

*Black 47 performs 8:45 p.m. Friday and 9:30 p.m. Saturday on the main stage.*

from previous page

Echoes of Erin. Then there's the usual Saturday night, doesn't-quite-fit-the-Irish-Fest profile band, Joey Dee and the Starlighters.

With all Hynes has planned for the weekend, she feels confident that festivalgoers will make the haul to Mills Pond Park.

"As usual," she says, "Murphy's Law has worked in our favor."

For a woman who's just had the lawn pulled out from under her festival, Hynes is taking it well. After 14 years of organizing Irish Fest (and she swears it feels like 50), she's dealt with everything from bands who got snowed in somewhere and never arrive to misplaced equipment and AWOL band members. She's even had to call the local Irish pubs to track down bands. "Where [else] would you call?" she asks. "The local library?"

After years of organizing this festival, and three others like it, she's learned to roll with the punches.

Consider the history of Hynes and her Irish Fest:

In 1987, Hynes and her Irish buddies, having spent one too many St. Paddy's Days listening to some Italian guy sing "Danny Boy," decided to throw their own three-day bash featuring The Wolfe Tones, Noel Kingston, Irish comedian Hal Roach and The Clancy Brothers outside Fort Lauderdale's Lockhart Stadium. It cost more than expected, but the turnout — 16,000 people — exceeded their wildest expectations. Unfortunately, sports fans attending an event inside the stadium were unable to find parking, and the next year Irish Fest got the boot.

Still, Hynes was determined to keep up the tradition. So, she moved the party to Pompano Beach Municipal Stadium, where it remained for five years before city officials, anxious to attract a minor-league baseball team to the stadium, also bid farewell to the green-clad, Guinness-swilling souls who trampled the grass each year.

That's when Irish Fest came rolling into downtown Fort

Lauderdale. In 1994, looking to draw younger people who didn't want to listen to their mother's music, Hynes decided to bring in a band that might get their attention. Never one to ease into anything, she booked Black 47, a group that got kicked out of the first dozen bars it played in New York City.

Some New York pub patrons thought the band's music (which includes Irish rap, funk, ska and reggae) strayed a bit too far from what they considered Irish, and didn't hesitate to tell the band. To which singer-guitarist Larry Kirwan replied, "I'm from Ireland, I wrote that song, that makes it Irish. So shut the fuck up."

On the surface, Black 47 may not seem the perfect match for a festival that drew identically dressed white-haired couples with green-cloved cheeks. And, sure enough, Hynes did get her share of complaints, but not enough, she says, to put her in the ex-festival director category.

Eventually, her decision paid off, and Black 47's universal message — songs about dead heroes, disastrous weddings and tributes to ordinary people who have lost much yet manage to survive and look to the future with hope — won over even the spunky ladies with the big purses and the "Kiss Me, I'm Irish" pins.

Seven years later, Black 47, which just released its fourth CD, *Trouble in the Land*, is still playing the fest, only now they're playing for two nights, instead of one.

The group's popularity has opened the door for younger bands (ranging from Gaelic Storm and Off Kilter to Hedge School and Goats Don't Shave) that Hynes has since booked into the festival.

To see what Hynes has lined up this year, see the next page. As for next year, God only knows what she has up her sleeve. In fact, Hynes isn't even sure where next year's festival will be held.

"This is our fourth migration," Hynes says, laughing. "We're still the Irish immigrants."

**from previous page**

Echoes of Erin. Then there's the usual Saturday night, doesn't-quite-fit-the-Irish-Fest profile band, Joey Dee and the Starlighters.

With all Hynes has planned for the weekend, she feels confident that festivalgoers will make the haul to Mills Pond Park.

"As usual," she says, "Murphy's Law has worked in our favor."

For a woman who's just had the lawn pulled out from under her festival, Hynes is taking it well. After 14 years of organizing Irish Fest (and she swears it feels like 50), she's dealt with everything from bands who got snowed in somewhere and never arrive to misplaced equipment and AWOL band members. She's even had to call the local Irish pubs to track down bands. "Where [else] would you call?" she asks. "The local library?"

After years of organizing this festival, and three others like it, she's learned to roll with the punches.

Consider the history of Hynes and her Irish Fest:

In 1987, Hynes and her Irish buddies, having spent one too many St. Paddy's Days listening to some Italian guy sing "Danny Boy," decided to throw their own three-day bash featuring The Wolfe Tones, Noel Kingston, Irish comedian Hal Roach and The Clancy Brothers outside Fort Lauderdale's Lockhart Stadium. It cost more than expected, but the turnout — 16,000 people — exceeded their wildest expectations. Unfortunately, sports fans attending an event inside the stadium were unable to find parking, and the next year Irish Fest got the boot.

Still, Hynes was determined to keep up the tradition. So, she moved the party to Pompano Beach Municipal Stadium, where it remained for five years before city officials, anxious to attract a minor-league baseball team to the stadium, also bid farewell to the green-clad, Guinness-swilling souls who trampled the grass each year.

That's when Irish Fest came rolling into downtown Fort

Lauderdale. In 1994, looking to draw younger people who didn't want to listen to their mother's music, Hynes decided to bring in a band that might get their attention. Never one to ease into anything, she booked Black 47, a group that got kicked out of the first dozen bars it played in New York City.

Some New York pub patrons thought the band's music (which includes Irish rap, funk, ska and reggae) strayed a bit too far from what they considered Irish, and didn't hesitate to tell the band. To which singer-guitarist Larry Kirwan replied, "I'm from Ireland, I wrote that song, that makes it Irish. So shut the fuck up."

On the surface, Black 47 may not seem the perfect match for a festival that drew identically dressed white-haired couples with green-cloved cheeks. And, sure enough, Hynes did get her share of complaints, but not enough, she says, to put her in the ex-festival director category.

Eventually, her decision paid off, and Black 47's universal message — songs about dead heroes, disastrous weddings and tributes to ordinary people who have lost much yet manage to survive and look to the future with hope — won over even the spunky ladies with the big purses and the "Kiss Me, I'm Irish" pins.

Seven years later, Black 47, which just released its fourth CD, *Trouble in the Land*, is still playing the fest, only now they're playing for two nights, instead of one.

The group's popularity has opened the door for younger bands (ranging from Gaelic Storm and Off Kilter to Hedge School and Goats Don't Shave) that Hynes has since booked into the festival.

To see what Hynes has lined up this year, see the next page. As for next year, God only knows what she has up her sleeve. In fact, Hynes isn't even sure where next year's festival will be held.

"This is our fourth migration," Hynes says, laughing. "We're still the Irish immigrants."