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Black 47 Serves Up Last Call

as Fans Drink in Last Days of the Band in Paramus

A [SoundPress.net Feature Article](#) by Rich and Laura Lynch

Heralding from New York City, Black 47 rocks hard for the passion of music and politics. Black 47 concerts are animated affairs. Their songs are a potent brew of Celtic rock, folk, jazz and reggae topped off with rousing lyrics about civil rights, Ireland, urban unrest and war. Black 47 is a band that has boldly spoken their mind for the past 25 years but they plan to go their separate ways in the fall of 2014.



Black 47 serves up their *Last Call* at Bergen Community College in New Jersey.

In the meantime, their final record **Last Call** dropped on March 4th, 2014. It has been described as "a 200 proof cocktail made with a shot of funk and two fingers of Irish malarkey thrown in for good measure." Black 47 will be touring for most of the year supporting the album with a TBA closing gig in New York City - coming full circle on a creative and sometime controversial career.

SoundPress.net caught Black 47 live at the Ciccone Theater in Paramus, New Jersey on March 7, 2014. The stage set up at the venue was simple with a dark curtain behind the band and their gear. Piped in music was played as Black 47 appeared.

"Take pictures, tape the show, we don't mind. Make sure you get the right profile," joked Larry Kirwin (guitar/vox). Black 47 is known for encouraging fans to record concerts as their shows are always changing. They opened with "Green Suede Shoes" layering rock and traditional Irish instruments together with green lights shining down on the stage adding to the mood. "Living In America" was also lively with its quick drum rolls blending with shots of Irish musical textures.





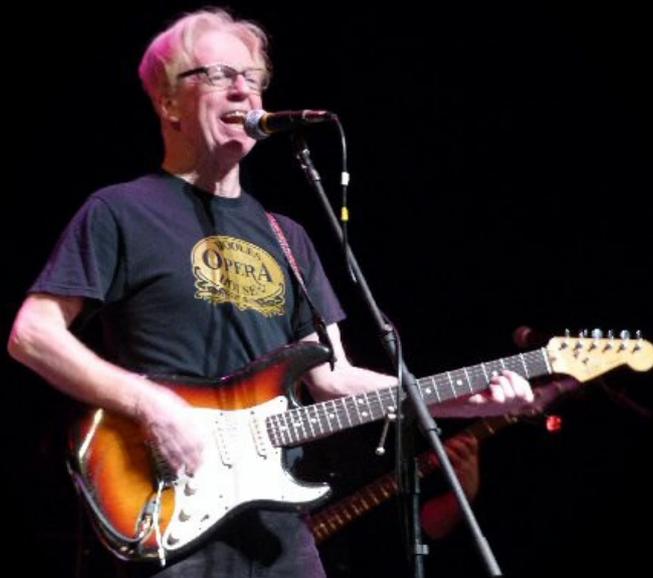
Black 47 band leader Larry Kirwan and their fantastic new album.

"Sweet, New Jersey! There's got to be at least one dancer here?," inquired Kirwan as he invited fans on stage. The group played an edgy Irish influenced jam. One man had the Irish jig down as the audience clapped along to this fun musical free for all. Next, it was time for some Irish reggae. Black 47 presented their unique spin on Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds". Larry led the crowd in a clapping, sing-a-long as they moved to a sequence of repeating the words "Desperate" with horns and the pipes rounding out the mix.

"We have a new CD called **Last Call**," mentioned Kirwan. He shared that the opening track from their new record began in the Bronx. Its the story of a girl who had a Puerto Rican mom and an Irish father. She was beautiful and we were crazy about her. "Salsa O' Keefe" was a sassy tex-mex blend of Latin and Irish sounds with a flute and horns kicking in more spice to the song.

"The Night The Showbands Died" also from **Last Call** was a taut tune and the evening's emotional highlight. Larry explained that it was about bands that use to play top 20 hits around Ireland. Many of these groups would go to Northern Ireland where tensions were high. One night in 1975, a Showband was assassinated. Black 47 honored their fallen brethren with this track that moved on heavy rhythms to enhance the heavy mood of the song and subject matter.

Following was a raucous jam with solos. Bassist Joe Burcaw beguiled the crowd with his picking and thumb plunks. Joseph Mulvanerty presented an almost jazzy jam on the uilleann pipes. A short but solid drum solo by Thomas Hamin finished it all with flair. "Fire of Freedom" was a feisty Irish flavored song of freedom and revolution.





Scenes from the Black 47 concert at the Ciccone Theater in Paramus in 2014.

"We will be outside afterwards to sign stuff and take pictures," stated Larry as he introduced "Hard Times" from **Last Call** where all the instruments swirled around the hook line. Next, was their classic "James Connolly". The hand drum along with the drums gave the power-packed tune more punch. A blue flag with stars was brought out briefly as the band boldly paid tribute to the man who fought for the working class. "St. Patrick's Day" also from the new album was a mix of spirited and slower sequences.

Their encore was Bob Dylan's "Like A Rolling Stone" a song given an up-tempo signature Black 47 treatment. Once again the band delivered a diverse set of Irish rock music. The group has stated that 2014 is their **Last Call** thus allowing them to finish at the top of their game. Yet, we can always hope for a future reunion. Of course, Black 47 will live on through their canon and the collective memories of their fans.

The Ciccone Theater located on the campus of Bergen Community College serves as a working space for dance and music students but the theater also hosts concerts and other events such as Black 47. The room has good sound and we found the staff there to be friendly and accommodating.

Black 47 Band: Geoffrey Blythe - sax; Joe Burcaw - bass; Thomas Hamlin - drum/percussion; Larry Kirwan - lead vocals/guitar; Joseph Mulvanerty - pipes/flute; Fred Parcells - trombone/pennywhistle



Black 47 stand united in memory of Irish revolutionary James Connolly.

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