

WHEN NOT FIGHTING OTHER BANDS AND HIRING BAGPIPE PLAYERS WITH STUPID NAMES, THE DROPKICK MURPHYS ARE BUSY BECOMING PART OF AMERICAN FOLK HISTORY . . .

IRISH EYES



Dropkick Murphys
(Al Barr, far right)

YOU RECENTLY BEAT THE RAMONES' ATTENDANCE RECORD AT THE AVALON BALLROOM IN BOSTON WITH YOUR ANNUAL ST PATRICK'S DAY WEEKEND SHOWS. THAT'S SOME RECORD . . .

Al Barr (vocals): "It's just become an event, you know what I mean? We just challenge ourselves every year to outdo the year before. We started with two shows in one day, we did three shows the following year and four shows this past year, and we're gonna try and do five next year. We'll see what happens."

YOUR NEW ALBUM *BLACKOUT* FEATURES LYRICS BY FOLK LEGEND WOODY GUTHRIE AFTER HIS DAUGHTER ASKED YOU TO PUT MUSIC TO THEM. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

Al: "Her child is a Dropkicks fan and talked to Mom about it. Mom called us, so we were like, wow, of course. It's very humbling to be asked, but at the same time what a daunting task to write music for someone as famous as Woody Guthrie, who was so important to the whole American folk music scene. Those are his lyrics on the song *Gonna Be A Blackout Tonight*. We were allowed to go into his archives and had to wear special gloves cos his lyrics are all like the original, it was just amazing."

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT SET OF LYRICS IN PARTICULAR?

Al: "At the end of all of his songs he wrote [about] what he was thinking, and it just kind of struck us. He was on the streets of New York City playing his guitar and this woman came along and said, What are you

singing about? And he said, We've gotta get that Hitler guy out of power in Germany, cos the song was written in 1942. And this woman's like, No, don't sing about that, sing about when Jesus is coming back. And he said, No, I think I'm gonna keep singing these songs against Hitler because right now I don't think the world is a place where Jesus would even want to come back to. The ironic thing is that America ended up going to war, but we picked the song about a year ago, which is kinda interesting."

WHEN YOU WERE IN AUSTRALIA FOR THE LIVID FESTIVAL LAST YEAR, THERE WERE RUMOURS OF A FIGHT BETWEEN YOU AND THE (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY. HOW DO YOU PLEAD, SIR?

Al: [Laughs] "We did have a bit of a heated conversation with them, but it all turned out for the best. We were all watching them play and kind of just in awe of how great they were, and then the singer [Dennis Lyxzen] made an off-the-cuff comment about the American people deserving what had happened to them [with September 11], maybe they've learned their lesson. When he came off stage we just said, there were a lot of people from all over the world killed in that horrible, horrible thing, and if you could just leave that out from your speech . . . You can talk about Bush and the government and how fucked they are cos that's freedom, but leave the victims of that horrible day out of it. It's just in bad taste. And as Americans, especially from Boston where the planes originated from, it was too soon to hear that. The singer

apologised and said he didn't really mean that the way it came out. It was all good after that. We shook hands and it was fine. It was just kind of flippant and disrespectful; it's like, wait a second, let's just kill it there, shut your fuckin' mouth."

BAGPIPE PLAYER SPICEY McHAGGIS RECENTLY LEFT THE BAND FOR A LIFE OF DOMESTIC BLISS WITH A GIRL IN THE UK. SHE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME GIRL . . .

Al: "Yeah, I guess. He just didn't want to do it anymore. We were all baffled. You're getting paid to drink beer and play bagpipes, how tough can it be? You can't make someone do this, no one was putting a gun in someone's mouth and saying, you'll fucking perform tonight. We've got another guy already, Scruffy Wallace, he's fucking brilliant on the pipes, been playing for 16 years. Pipers that are punk rock are not easy to find, so we were lucky to find him."

SPICEY McHAGGIS? SCRUFFY WALLACE? ARE CRAP NAMES A PREREQUISITE FOR ANY BAGPIPE PLAYER LOOKING TO JOIN THE DROPKICK MURPHYS?

Al: [Laughs] "When he came to the band, he gave us his given name, and we were calling him that. And he said, If you don't mind, can you call me Scruffy, cos my friends all call me that, and in my piping club that's what everyone calls me."

Dropkick Murphys' new album, *Blackout*, is out now on Shock/Hellcat.