



DROPKICK MURPHYS



ALBUM: **THE PRIDE OF BOSTON**
The Meanest Of Times

RATING: ★★★★★

THANKFULLY
STAY THE COURSE.

Given that nothing seems to be broken—hell, Martin Scorsese, who used their “I’m Shipping Up To Boston” in his Oscar-winning *The Departed*, now name checks them in interviews—the Dropkick Murphys don’t fuck with a good thing on *The Meanest Of Times*. Famous

ROCKS LIKE:

- RANCID'S *...AND OUT COME THE WOLVES*
- STIFF LITTLE FINGERS' *INFLAMMABLE MATERIAL*
- FLOGGING MOLLY'S *DRUNKEN LULLABIES*

for blending East Coast hardcore with whiskey-scorched Celtic folk, Beantown's favorite sons predictably make sure both are well represented. On the fast-and-furious side of things, Clash City rockers like “Surrender” and “Tomorrow’s Industry” revisit a time when Joe Strummer was the only songwriter that mattered. Proving the Murphys haven’t forgotten their roots, the Gang Green-strength blast of hardcore that is “Shattered” gives old-schoolers a reason to risk what’s left of their teeth in the mosh pit. If anything has changed this time out, it’s that the Murphys’ Celtic songs sound more traditional than ever. The banjo-and-bagpipes-powered “Fairmount Hill” practically bleeds unpasteurized Guinness, while the reeling “(F)lannigan’s Ball” sounds like Saturday night in Dublin’s suds-soaked Temple Bar district. It’s all potent enough to make you reconsider your list of things to do before you die. If catching the Murphys in Boston for one of their infamous St. Patrick’s Day shows isn’t already a Top 10 mission, *The Meanest Of Times* will convince you it’s time to reprioritize. (BORN & BRED; dropkickmurphys.com) *Mike Usinger*

IN-STORE SESSION WITH BASSIST/ VOCALIST **KEN CASEY**

What does the album title *The Meanest Of Times* refer to?

The overriding themes of the record are stories from growing up and a lot of stuff about family. I look back on my life and I have a lot of good memories, but there were also a lot of trials and tribulations.

You don’t sound like someone who was born with a silver spoon in your mouth.

No. The joke is sort of like, “Is the meanest of times, hypothetically, when you’re 12 years old and have to get into a fistfight every day trying to make it to and from school?” Some people might say, “That’s shitty,” but at the same time it was also awesome. Some of my hardest times in life made me who I am.

The Murphys are huge in Boston. Are you the unofficial mayor of the city?

I was always someone who hung around with different groups of people in different neighborhoods. So I know a lot of people from growing up, and then you add to that everyone that I’ve met through the band. A lot of the goodwill the band have tried to spread in our hometown has definitely come back to us. We get a lot of people wanting to treat us well.

You’ve got some Celtic music legends helping out

on “(F)lannigan’s Ball.”

There’s Ronnie Drew from the Dubliners and Spider Stacy from the Pogues. We flew over to Dublin on a day off on our last tour and recorded with Ronnie and Spider. Spider is a great guy, but we’ve known him for a while. With Ronnie Drew, let me tell you, there’s a guy who’s getting up there in age, who has some medical issues, and whose wife had just passed away. He came down to the studio, and as much as he’s been singing Celtic music for 50 years, we put a different spin on it than he’s used to. Instead of being “I’ll show you how it’s done,” he said, “I’ll sing it a thousand times until I get it right.” I never met anyone so humble.

Are the Dropkick Murphys doing better than you could have dreamed when you started out a decade ago?

It’s a great job. I never got out of the city of Boston [growing up], and now I’ve seen the whole world. But I’ve had a lot of support. I had just gotten married when we started this band. I made serious life decisions—walking away from a job and moving in with my father-in-law. You think he would have given me a slap in the head. Like, “Kid, you just married my daughter, and you quit your job to start a punk band?” But he was good enough to let me follow my dreams, and so was my wife. —Mike Usinger