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Boston brawlers

REVIEW

WHO: *Dropkick Murphys
with Jackdaw*

WHEN: *Thursday night*

WHERE: *Lafayette Square*

Dropkick Murphys
and flowing drinks
a recipe for trouble

BY JEFF MIERS
News Pop Music Critic

“ Let’s go Murphys!
Let’s go Murphys!”
Man, you couldn’t get
away from the chant.
It felt like being in Eu-
rope during the World Cup.

The final gig in the 2007
Thursday at the Square con-
cert series was a combination
football game, high school
pep rally, and back-alley
brawl. What better band to
host such proceedings than
Boston’s Dropkick Murphys?

And who better to warm
the crowd for some exuber-
ant revelry than our own
Jackdaw?

I’ve no insider information
on the numbers, but this gig
certainly appeared to be the
best attended of the season.
One literally could not move.
That isn’t a problem when
you’re seeing, say, a jam
band, when everyone is all
blissed out on whatever it is
they bliss out on.

It was a problem on
Thursday, however. The
drinks were flowing, and the
agit-pop of traditional Irish

music, meshed with punk
and hardcore, got the blood
flowing. That’s what the
Dropkick Murphys trade in,
and that’s what the band’s
audience seems to crave.

Nothing wrong with any
of that, of course. Who could
ever dislike the Pogues, for
example? That band started
this whole thing moving, the
marrying of punk and rock ‘n’
roll attitude to traditional
Irish music. Many bands
have followed in that group’s
footsteps. Sadly, not much
good has come of it all. The
heartrending beauty of Celtic
melodies, when married to
the brutal machismo of punk
rock, ends up stirring the
emotions of folks in ways
they might not expect. Add
large quantities of beer, and
you’ve got a recipe for trou-
ble.

All pumped up on machis-
mo, with nowhere to go, seg-
ments of the rowdy audience
at the Square desired to cre-
ate some chaos by unleashing
aggression, via pushing into
folks who had nowhere to go.
I’ve no idea if anyone was in-
jured, but the climate turned
ugly from the moment the
Murphys took the stage.

This was a tough show to
review in any conventional
sense. Unless you were will-
ing to risk being trapped in
the middle of a volatile
crowd, it was pretty tough to
tell what was going on musi-
cally. The Murphys, who gave
every indication of loving the
chaos, took the stage with a
vengeance, their blend of pas-
toral melodies and punk ag-
gression turning the Square
into a pogo-ing, crowd-surf-
ing, moshing field of frenzy.

Maybe it was the bagpipes

that did it, that clarion call of
the perpetually wronged, the
downtrodden. There was
clearly something along the
lines of patriotic fervor being
exchanged between the Mur-
phys and their audience.

As a Massachusetts native,
I’m a sucker for all of this,
but only to a point. That
point was crossed when I
found myself in the middle of
the crowd while a group of
dudes attempted to assert
their right to get to the beer
line, sans the whole waiting-
in-line thing. Visions of the
Who’s Cincinnati debacle
dancing around my head, I
got out as quickly as possible.
Message to those guys: un-
cool, fools. There may be
bravery and safety in num-
bers, but there’s also some
stupidity.

The Murphys plowed on,
concentrating on songs from
their new album, “The Mean-
est of Times,” which hit the
streets on Tuesday, and never
straying too far from their
trademark punk-Irish-“I’m-
from-Boston” hybrid.

Jackdaw played a torrid
set before a large crowd,
which grew larger as the
band made its way through a
selection of songs from
throughout its career. Tight,
energetic and clearly invigo-
rated, the group won the
hearts of the crowd quickly.
Once they were in, they never
let go, whether playing
roughshod garage-Celtic, or
putting some testosterone in-
to the alt-rock anthem, “I
Melt with You.”

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Mark Mulwitz/Buffalo News

Al Barv, lead singer of the Boston-based Dropkick Murphys, revs up the crowd at the final Thursday at the Square concert. Another photo on the Picture Page, C8.