

You want the truth?!?

The truth is, even after having a song featured in *The Departed*, the Dropkick Murphys are keeping it real.

BY COLLEEN DOUGHER

Don't be fooled by those angry-looking Catholic-school kids who grace the cover of the Dropkick Murphys' sixth full-length studio CD, which dropped Sept. 18. The 15-song album, *The Meanest of Times*, is a celebration of life, complete with growling Boston Paddy-punk vocals, guitar, mandolin, bodhran, accordion and even bagpipes played by a guy named Scruffy.

Ken Casey, founding bassist and co-vocalist of this seven-member outfit, says that the cover is reminiscent of his Catholic-school youth and that "Famous for Nothing," the opener that launches with a school bell and screaming kids, evokes memories of growing up in a tight-knit parochial environment where everybody knows everybody else, and the grammar school, park, church and corner store sit only a stone's throw apart.

This CD — which includes the punked-up, working-class anthem "Tomorrow's Industry" and the hyperangry "Shattered" — reflects on the hard times that shape people's lives. "*The Meanest of Times* is a title from a lyric in a song," Casey explains, "and it just seemed to fit the picture, looking at the faces of those kids.... When people hear [the title], the first reaction is, 'Oh, it's heavy, about the times we live in.' We didn't intend for it to be like that. It's more lighthearted and sarcastic, but at the same time, there's a hint of the Catch-22, which is the fact that it's a fitting title for this day and age."

Casey talked on as he drove toward his home in Quincy, Mass.

How was working in Dublin, Ireland, with Spider Stacy of The Pogues and Ronnie Drew of The Dubliners?

Great. Spider's a good friend of ours, and he set the whole thing up. We met Ronnie while

playing with The Pogues in Dublin a few years back. The whole concept of doing this was to have three generations of Irish-music singing on the same song ["Flannigan's Ball"], and it was just wild. We did it at Westland Studios, where U2, Van Morrison, Thin Lizzy and all the great Irish bands and musicians have recorded. Ronnie Drew took a taxi down and spent the day with us, telling stories and singing songs, and he took the subway home. How down-to-earth is that? He is an absolute god in Ireland. What American who achieves that status would you see hopping on the subway home?

Why did you release this CD on your newly formed label, Born and Bred?

It's just creative control. Not to say that Epitaph told us how to write music, but like little examples of "Hey, I want to do this promotion." ... Like, in 2004, the Red Sox won the World Series, but that July, we did [a version of] the Red Sox's old fight song, "Tessie," and wanted to put this out on a CD for charity because we thought it would be a good omen for the Red Sox. Hellcat/Epitaph is on the West Coast and had no idea what we were talking about. They said, "Why would you want to do that?" It's like, "Do you understand how big this is in Boston, how many people watch the Red Sox?" ... We had to fight tooth and nail to have that happen.

With "Tessie" becoming the official song of that winning World Series run and "I'm Shipping up to Boston" being featured in *The Departed*, is your audience growing?

To be honest, the shows don't seem that much bigger, really. ... I mean, we've been doing what we've been doing in Boston and around the country for a long time, and maybe there are 300 to 400 more people at the shows,

but that's good. ... With *The Departed*, I just felt like instead of people saying, "Oh, it's the band with that song," what we liked more was meeting people at shows who said, "Hey, I first heard you on *The Departed*. I've since bought every one of your records, and I've been to three shows." ... I'd rather get a smaller amount of real, core fans than have a bunch of fly-by-night people that don't get what we're all about.

I understand your band once got involved in a protest at a Pittsburgh Warped Tour stop because stagehands were on strike.

Due to the background of the band and the nature of our support for working-class solidarity, the Stagehands Local in Pittsburgh reached out to us and let us know what was going on at the venue we were playing. ... They asked us to go on and wear their shirts and make a statement to the crowd to bring awareness. ... So we went onstage and said what we had to say. Meanwhile, the promoter tried to drag us off the stage while we were doing it, and then afterward, we played acoustic on the picket line with them. Where there's a strike or labor dispute, the best thing you can do is draw attention to it, so we did that. ... That's what we're about.

CITY LINK

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL
WEEKLY 56,000
SEP 25 2007

Who was Dropkick Murphy?

[He ran a boxing camp that] became a detox rehab before there were detoxes and rehabs. If someone is born and bred in Boston, they know about that or their family knows about that. My grandfather would always say things like, "If I catch you drinking again, I'll take you to Dropkick Murphy's." It was like the bogeyman. ... When we started the band in '96, we were selling [Dropkick Murphy] T-shirts at the first show. When we played the second show, kids would come up to us and say, "What the hell is this? I got old guys stopping me everywhere, saying, 'I was in that place, you know.'"

Dropkick Murphys will perform 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Revolution, 200 W. Broward Blvd., in Fort Lauderdale. Horrorpops and Everybody Out will open. Tickets cost \$21. Call 954/727-0950 or visit Jointherevolution.net. To read an extended Q&A with Ken Casey, visit Dougher's blog at Amusetheants.blogspot.com.

Contact Colleen Dougher at cdougher@citylinkmagazine.com.