

It's the 'Meanest of Times' for Murphys

By **ANDY GRAY**
 Tribune Chronicle

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Dropkick Murphys drummer Matt Kelly can't wait to find out the reaction to the band's latest CD.

"The Meanest of Times" will be released Tuesday, the same day the band headlines a show at the Agora Theatre in Cleveland, but in the past the band's devoted fan base found a way to get ahead of the music in advance.

"The Warrior Code" leaked, like three months early," Kelly said during a telephone interview. "I've been looking around on the message boards (seeing posts), 'Anyone found it yet?' 'No'.

"There's a lot of anticipation on our end. With the other records, it was like opening your Christmas presents on Dec. 15. When the day actually comes, it's not that big of a deal. But people are chomping at the bit to get it, so it's really an exciting time."

The lone feedback they've gotten so far has been from music critics — traditionally not the band's biggest supporters.

"The big mags have panned us and written us off in the past, but the critics so far have been great, even the ones up to this point that either panned us or gave us a 'Meh'."

"The Meanest of Times" is the latest collection of from the Boston band — Ken Casey, vocals and bass; Al Barr, vocals; Kelly, drums and backing vocals; James Lynch, guitar and backing vocals; Tim Brennan, man-

dolin, accordion, banjo, bouzouki, tin whistle and acoustic guitar; Marc Orrell, guitar, accordion, piano and backing vocals and Scruffy Wallace, bagpipes — mixing punk fury with Irish folk flourishes. It's a sound clearly inspired by The Pogues but with a couple extra shots of punk.

Kelly said he believes the new CD strikes the best balance yet between those two ingredients.

"The heaviness and aggression of the punk style with the melody of the traditional instruments come to a really cool medium here," he said. "I'm not trying to toot my own horn, but we were able to accomplish what we've been trying to accomplish."

And the band got some acknowledgment from their predecessors with Spider Stacy of The Pogues and Ronnie Drew of The Dubliners making an appearance on "(F)lannigan's Ball"

"They added a real something to it," Kelly said. "These guys are gods among men. It's a special treat for the fans to hear it, and just to have these guys give us the time of day is a huge honor for us."

Dropkick Murphys got some mainstream exposure last year when its song "I'm Shipping Up to Boston" prominently was featured in the Academy Award-winning film "The Departed."

The band has been seeing some new faces at its live show, but it really noticed a difference in its sales. After the movie came out, the song was downloaded 260,000 times, according

When you go

WHO: Dropkick Murphys, Horrorpops and Everybody Out

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday

WHERE: Agora Theatre, 5000 Euclid Ave., Cleveland

HOW MUCH: \$22. Tickets are available at all Ticketmaster outlets and 330-747-1212.

to Kelly, and 100,000 downloaded the "The Warrior Code," the CD that included the song.

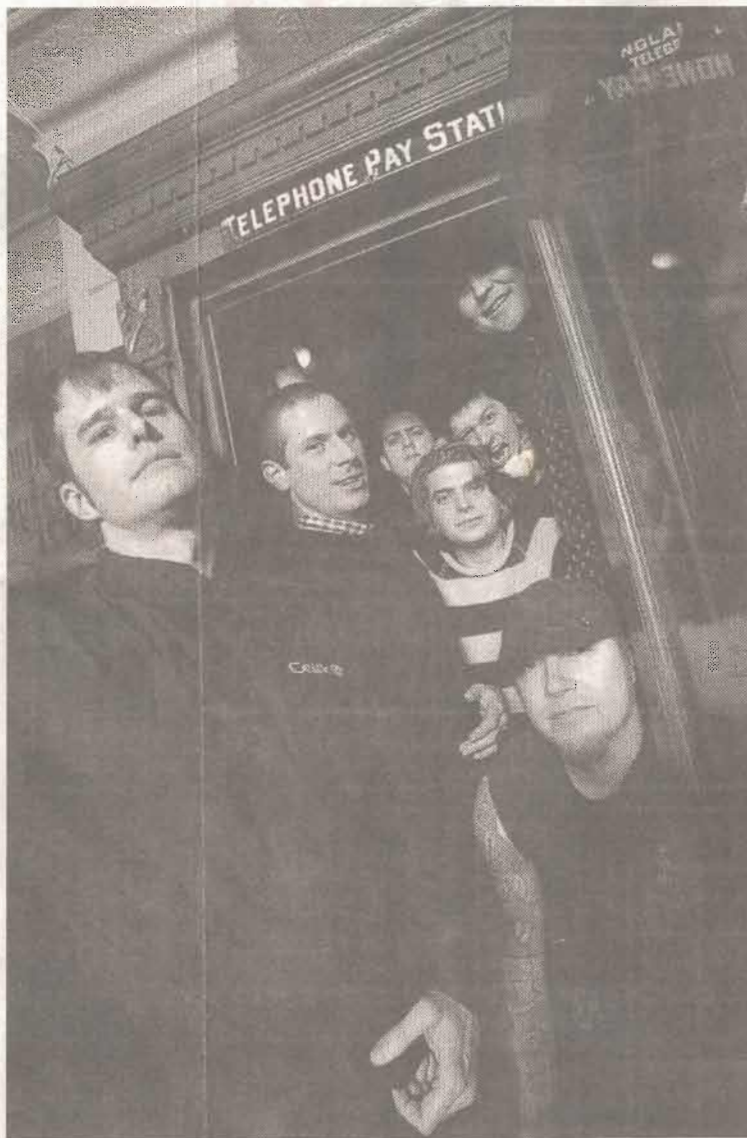
Kelly seemed just as excited that director Martin Scorsese mentioned the band when he accepted his Best Director Oscar.

The band has a short tour planned through the end of the month to coincide with the release of "The Meanest of Times," but it will be staying home for the month of October. Part of it is because Kelly is getting married, but the band surely will be following the Boston Red Sox in the playoffs.

Before "The Departed," Dropkick Murphys were best known outside of punk world for its devotion to the city's sports teams and recording "Tessie," the anthem of Boston Red Sox fans.

Kelly remembered the band being on tour in Florida during the playoffs in 2004, the year the Red Sox finally won the World Series. They waited to go on stage until the game was over, and it was one of the nights that the Red Sox lost.

"That was the worst set we ever had," Kelly said.



Special to the Tribune Chronicle

The Dropkick Murphys brings its blend of punk and Pogues to Cleveland's Agora Theatre Tuesday. The band is touring (except for in October) in support of its latest CD, "The Meanest Of Times."