

The Gypsy Grooves of Caravan of Thieves 2/7/11

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By Kristi Kates

The husband and wife team simply known as “Carrie and Fuzz” are at the wheel of the indie pop/gypsy/jazz band known as Caravan of Thieves. The partnership flourishes in both directions, musically and personally, and the result is an unusual musical configuration that started acoustically and has expanded its dynamics to include a whole lot more. The Caravan will pull into Traverse City’s InsideOut Gallery for a concert on Friday, Feb. 11.

GUITARS AND HUBCAPS

“Carrie and I started out as an acoustic duo, singing together, harmonizing and writing pop and folk songs,” explains Fuzz. “In the effort to remain acoustic while expanding the sound both dynamically and creatively, we turned to older styles - particularly gypsy jazz due to its acoustic instrumentation and lively feel.”

Their lineup soon expanded to better accommodate their complex arrangements, and today includes Ben Dean on violin and “frying pan,” and Brian Anderson on upright bass and “heavy foot.” Fuzz still sings, in addition to playing guitar, “tin can, and bucket,” and Carrie (Sangiovanni) sings and plays guitar and “hubcap.” The instrument jokes seem spawned directly from a combo of street music and gypsy culture, and inspired in part by a different era.

Django Reinhardt and the Hot Club recordings were always a favorite, Fuzz says, “but one day listening, we realized how compatible yet juxtaposed that sound was with what we’re doing, and the wild gypsy music and swing rhythms inspired a whole lyrical mood of fantastic--and at times--dark, yet cartoon-like story telling.”

FOLLOWING THE CARAVAN

A Caravan of Thieves show is certainly all of the things that Fuzz outlined, and more.

Quirky yet sharp, full of antics both instrumental and theatrical, they’re interesting to both watch and listen to -- a rarity in today’s market of pre-packaged pop. The few current bands that Caravan of Thieves does listen to lean toward the modern indie-folk genre, where more experimentation and less sheen showcase songcraft and less mainstream points of lyrical view.

“We mostly look back to the jazz, folk, pop, theater and classical legends,” Carrie says, “however, we do like certain modern popular bands that write interesting songs and have something to say, like Decemberists, Mumford and Sons, the Shins, and certain groups doing something similar to what we do, like Man Man, Devotchka and Gogol Bordello.” Suffice it to say that if you like any of the above bands, there’s a good chance you’ll be drawn into following along behind Caravan of Thieves, as well.

TOURING MISCHIEF

A good place to start is the band's latest recording, *Mischief Night*, which was recorded last spring.

"We recorded it in May, 2010 at FTC Stage One in Fairfield, Connecticut," Fuzz explains, "and we released it a few months later. The idea behind it was to document our live show highlights from the past year or two of touring. Since we started, the live experience had grown into a much more interactive and dramatic thing than we had originally planned. So we put an array of microphones around the room capturing all the antics from the stage to the last row of seats."

The band is also currently working on a new full length album, Carrie confirms.

"It's due out later this year - spring, hopefully," she says, adding they plan a full schedule of touring to go with it.

"Lots of touring," Carrie emphasizes, "summer festivals, and reaching new territories - we have our sights set on the West Coast and Europe."

First in line, though, is their upcoming show at Traverse City's InsideOut Gallery, which Fuzz explains will be a cacophony of music, sound - and trendy toppers.

"We'll bring lots of cool hats, some new songs, and some more of our finest appliances from around the kitchen and garage which we plan to beat into rhythmic submission," he says with a grin.

Caravan of Thieves will be performing at Traverse City's InsideOut Gallery on Friday, February 11, at 8:00 p.m. The gallery is located in the Warehouse District on 211 Garland Street. Telephone 231-929-3254 for tickets and more info.

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