

Bridgport band The Caravan of Thieves to play FTC show

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Party animals: Caravan of Thieves, Bridgeport's beloved gypsy folk band, performs at Fairfield Theatre Company on Stage One on Friday, Nov. 23. Photo: Contributed Photo / CT

When they first started playing music together, Fuzz and Carrie Sangiovanni were the vision of a rambling, bohemian couple, performing on roads and in parks, driving cross country and "avoiding responsibility as much as possible."

"Back then, we weren't on any big mission," Fuzz said. "The focus wasn't on becoming a successful act, as much as it was on having fun."

Fun is still very much a part of the duo's M.O., as anyone can tell from their rhapsodic, foot-stomping performances and spontaneous, street-corner sing-alongs.

But in the eight years since Fuzz and Carrie Sangiovanni met, their mission has taken a new turn: the Bridgeport band, which now goes by Caravan of Thieves, is more than just a joyride -- it's an expedition.

"You get to a point where you say, 'Let's try to make this really happen, and make it our living,'" Fuzz said during an interview last week from the group's tour van, which was rolling through Montana. "Little by little, it becomes more of a reality."

The band, which returns to the area for a concert at [Fairfield Theatre Company's](#) StageOne on Friday, Nov. 23, has edged closer to making Caravan of Thieves a full-time job through constant touring, the release of several albums and the creation of a unique sound and image that evokes the gypsy jazz of [Django Reinhardt](#) and the macabre eccentricity of "[Sweeney Todd](#)."

But to understand the colorful spectacle that is the Caravan of Thieves, it is best to see its live act. Decked out in Victorian-style top hats and suits, the Sangiovannis, along with violinist Ben Dean and double bassist Brian Anderson, spin dramatic and satirical tales with sultry harmonies, free-swinging rhythms and a touch of vaudevillian theatrics.

The band doesn't have a drummer; rather, they bang on a collection of percussive junk (pots, pans, buckets, a hubcap) and entreat the audience to shout, clap and snap their fingers.

Bubbling beneath the raucous enjoyment are maudlin narratives that are at once creepy and hilarious. On Caravan of Thieves latest LP, 2012's "Funhouse" (United For Opportunity), the band comes off as "jokesters and sarcastic" as they take jabs at a society that has lost control of its own destiny.

"It's all about going through your life not paying attention to what you're doing with yourself," he said. "We make it into an amusement park ride; it's funny and it allows us to put our digs in."

On the dark, rollicking "Eat You," the couple relates an overly interdependent relationship to a cannibalistic feast. "I'm dreaming about the moment that I'll love you to the bone," they sing with devilish sarcasm.

There are times, too, when Caravan of Thieves takes on a more sentimental tone, especially on its odes to spirits and the afterlife. "Raise the Dead," the anthemic lead single from "Funhouse," is a "celebration song for all the deceased and their achievements while they were alive -- all the fond memories we have of them, whether famous people from history, or just people you once knew, who have passed on," Fuzz said.

And perhaps that is what drives Caravan of Thieves: a passion for fleshing out the fun in even the most dour circumstances.

Founded in 2008, Caravan of Thieves began when Fuzz, a onetime member of the Bridgeport jam band Deep Banana Blackout, and Carrie, who he married in 2004, tapped Dean and Anderson to join what had thus far been an acoustic duo.

Since then, they have released three records: "Bouquet," their 2009 debut; "Mischievous Night," a 2010 live album taped at Fairfield Theatre Company; and "The Funhouse," which was recorded at Tarquin Studios in Bridgeport.

In addition, they have toured across the country, opening for such acts as [Emmylou Harris](#), [Dan Hicks](#) and The Decemberists and performing at a number of festivals, including Mountain Jam in New York and Herndon Festival in Virginia.

While the band has expanded the scope of its instrumentation to include banjos, resonator guitars and ukuleles, they have remained acoustic -- and highly mobile.

"We can set up anywhere," Fuzz said.

As the band celebrates its fifth anniversary this year, they hope to expand their reach. That might be in a prestigious venue like Fairfield Theatre Company or even on a street corner in New York City. But wherever they perform, Caravan of Thieves is taking its fun a little more seriously.

"We want to branch out," Fuzz added. "The more freaks we find out there, the more we'll travel to meet them."

Fairfield Theatre Company on Stage One, 70 Sanford St., Fairfield. Friday, Nov. 23, 7-10 p.m. \$25. 203-259-1036, www.fairfieldtheatre.org.

Link:

<http://www.ctpost.com/music/article/Bridgeport-band-The-Caravan-of-Thieves-to-play-FTC-4051087.php>