

Music

Local Motion: Lock Up Those Valuables

Don't see Caravan of Thieves, or they'll steal your heart; and Rhythmic Circus lays down pool-party grooves

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By Dan Barry

If a ragtag group of gypsies started throwing Molotov cocktails through the window during the recording of "A Prairie Home Companion," it would probably sound like **Caravan of Thieves** did this past Friday. They played at the wonderful Two Boots down in Bridgeport, a space that successfully manages to be a restaurant, bar, and music venue all at once. The band, lead by Fuzz and Carrie (who you may know from Rolla), was an acoustic affair, featuring two guitars, stand-up bass, and violin. But unlike the many acts for whom "acoustic" means "spineless," the Caravan played a witches' brew of high-energy gypsy rock. It was loaded with quick, spazzy tempo changes, and songs would often increase in speed to frantic paces.

On stage, the band is a badass blend of talent and entertainment. Ben Dean, who I first saw playing in Jonny Rodgers' band, still rips into his solos with whiplash zeal. Fuzz and Carrie have a couples' chemistry in their harmonies, with Carrie hitting especially difficult notes in order to color the songs with Eastern scales. Fuzz's articulation on his guitar is astonishing—each note sounds pronounced and deliberate—as is his flamenco speed-strumming.

But on top of being musically interesting, the band has arranged their songs to carry a number of unexpected twists: full-band shouts, ridiculous pseudo-advertisements, comic digressions, and flashy solos, none of which ever felt gimmicky or contrived. At one point in their crazy stage show, Fuzz dropped to his knees to wail on his guitar, and found himself a little too close for comfort to bassist Brian Anderson's bow. So he did the logical thing and started trying to bite it. Anderson responded to Fuzz' playfulness with incredible ease, angling his bow so that it crossed both his bass and the strings of Fuzz guitar. And Fuzz—still snapping away like a dog—responded by adjusting his hands on his frets so that Anderson's bow would play a chord appropriate to the song. And so it continued for an astonishing handful of seconds: Anderson playing both instruments with one bow, while the frontman of his band bit maniacally at the air. Attention to details like that is so seasoned, so professional, that I was positively swept off my feet by the group. See the www.caravanofthieves.com for more info and show dates.

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