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Caravan of Thieves

"Bouquet"

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caravanofthieves.com

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AUGUSTA, GA - As Caravan of Thieves slowly begin to ease themselves out from the music world's periphery and into its mainstream, the band is likely going to inspire more than a few comparisons to Gogol Bordello and the Decemberists. And though such blurbings will be sufficiently widespread so as to be accepted as hard fact, it would nonetheless be somewhat misleading. While it's certainly true that the Northeastern quartet's "Bouquet" is entrenched firmly in the former's frenetic gypsy swing and in the latter's folk songwriting sensibilities, they are, before all else, their own unique animal and, despite their almost ADHD-like hyper-dabbling in everything from vaudeville to sea shanties to tango numbers, they manage to fuse that dizzying range of influences into an execution of something wholly blistering, intelligent and cohesive.

The seamlessness of the Thieves' style and performance is rooted in the husband-and-wife guitar tandem Fuzz and Carrie (last names, apparently, be damned), who slap, whack, strum and pick their way through the album's dozen tracks. Indeed, it's a hell of a lot of fun to listen to them trade solos over a barrage of minor seventh chords with violinist Ben Dean on "Bar Isole," but the duo's secret weapon is their uncanny sense of vocal harmony; capable individual singers they may be, one listen to the beautiful chorus of "Freaks" is all you'll need to be convinced. Speaking of Dean, the man adds a nearly surreal air to the group's aesthetic, his fiddle runs sounding as if they might spin out into the stratosphere on "Ghostwriter"—and if Brian Anderson weren't there to keep everything grounded with his thumping double bass, they certainly would.

Of course, such prowess could be taken as showboating were it not for Fuzz and Carrie's ability to craft rock-solid, quirky songs: though rooted in the old-time shanty, "Burial at Sea" flirts with a menacing Morricone-esque progression, and "The Butcher's Wife's" cautionary fable sounds like the "Sweeney Todd" libretto-writers were commissioned to pen the soundtrack to Walt Disney's nightmares. Never, however, let it be said that there isn't a soft side to "Bouquet;" the gentle, lilting waltz "Zuzu's Petals" is the album's subtle centerpiece.

Despite their lack of Ukrainian street cred (and really, is there no more formidable variety?), Caravan of Thieves are too charming, too wry, and just too damn good to fly under anyone's radar. Especially yours...if you're still reading this, you have no excuse.

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