



Thieves Seize The Spotlight

by Elise Granata | June 18, 2009

When a band of gypsies took over a downtown stage, a young audience stood riveted — and called for an “encore” after every song. A group of wide-eyed young ones watched the [Caravan of Thieves](#) band play on the Elm Street Stage on Wednesday as part of the [International Festival of Arts & Ideas](#). Clinging to the barricades around the stage, the kids in the crowd were fixated on the fact that Brian Anderson could lift an upright bass while performing.

The bass trick was just one antic from the [Caravan of Thieves](#)' arsenal. The Thieves' performance incorporates interactive elements that bring them to a more “intimate, conversational” level, said vocalist and guitarist Fuzz San Giovanni. The band got their sea legs in local theaters, and grew into the habit of having a background set along with their performance: a gypsy camp setting, strewn with old hubcaps and beat up fences.



They didn't bring the gypsy camp Wednesday, but they still stood out. They took stage clad in neat, modernized Victorian outfits, with paisley, tailored pants, vests and lace. They wailed on hubcaps, stomped on the stage surface and frequented handclaps, virtually becoming human noisemakers without the presence of any real drum set. Offset by the touches of sultry jazz with Anderson on upright bass (pictured here, left) and the San Giovanni's warm, spirited acoustic arrangements, what initially might sound like a scattered routine is just one of the ruses the Thieves have in store.

The band's covers of choice reflect this homogeneity. Carrie San Giovanni, vocalist and guitarist said the bands they choose to cover are “some of our biggest influences.” The above video

features a Beatles montage. San Giovanni compared both quartets: “The Beatles have a lot of harmony together ... very melodic, song-oriented ... we also have a lot of classical arrangements in our music ... the bands are a big input in that too.”



“People will usually make the gypsy jazz correlation but they don’t always see the other types of rock influences,” said Fuzz, “so we try to show them that by doing a Beatles song, or a Queen song, but we’ll also do the Grinch.” They also covered ‘You Are My Sunshine’ during their Wednesday set, delivered in an easy playfulness, with tweaked classical elements by Ben Dean on violin and gypsy jazz elements that Fuzz described as “the ultimate acoustic — so much energy, so much fun, so wild.”



As for the kids? “We’re really kid-friendly, we don’t think of it that way at first,” said Carrie of the reaction to their set. “I laugh inside because we have some really dark lyrics sometimes, like ‘Sitting in a stack of skulls!’ and the kids [cheer].” For the family setting of the International Festival of Arts & Ideas, Caravan of Thieves blended in seamlessly. And in the middle of a beaten-up gypsy camp — well, they can do that too.

Link:

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2009/06/caravan_of_thie.php