

It's Voodoo, Caravan and Beatlemania at Oyster Festival

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NORWALK

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Caravan of Thieves, a rollicking collection of local musical legends, will open the main stage of the Norwalk Seaport Association Oyster Festival at 7:30 p.m. Friday. (Contributed photo/Chad Anderson)

The Norwalk Seaport Association is about to host the swingiest Oyster Festival ever.

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, the band that brought back swing music in the '90s, will headline the festival's main stage on Saturday night, bringing their brand of edgy big band music to Veterans Memorial Park at 9 p.m.

"We have a large spectrum of fans," said trumpet player Glen Marhevka. "I really think this band puts on a great live show."

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy formed in the early '90s as a three-piece band, but later expanded to include a horn section. Marhevka joined the band in 1995. For the next five years, the seven-piece band would be a phenomenon, topping charts with "You & Me and the Bottle Makes 3 Tonight (Baby)" and appearing in the 1996 film "Swingers," which was filmed at the Daddys' Los Angeles haunt.

"From 1995 to 1998, we played in L.A. at this club called The Derby," said Marhevka. "It was

underground and completely packed. A lot of industry people were there."

Those industry connections propelled Big Bad Voodoo to stardom. In 1999, when that star began to dip, the band began to court their large fan base with a vengeance.

"We basically kept touring," Marhevka said. "Just going out touring relentlessly. All of a sudden we weren't on the radio, and we weren't on MTV, but we never stopped."

The band's latest album, "How Big Can You Get," released in April, is something new for them; a tribute to jazzman Cab Calloway. The band has been playing Calloway's "Minnie the Moocher" almost every night since the mid-'90s, but this is the first time they've attempted a collection of Calloway's music.

"Cab Calloway has always been a huge influence behind our music," said Marhevka. "We always wanted to do something."

Saturday's show, he said, will more than likely include a lot of tunes from the Calloway album.

"I think it's going to be a really fun show," he said.

The other two headliners are country star Chuck Wicks, who was not available for comment, and Beatlemania Now! Wicks will take the main stage at 9 p.m. Friday. Beatlemania Now!, a four-man recreation of the Beatles' career will come to the Lighthouse Theater on Sunday, at 6 p.m.

Asked if he expects screaming women to rush the stage, Scot Arch, who plays John Lennon, laughed.

There are other touring Beatles groups. But if you ask Arch, his group -- which includes Davey Justice (Paul McCartney), Jimmy Pou (George Harrison) and Eric Smith (Ringo) -- are as close to the real deal as you're going to get.

"God just happened to make you look like the guy and God just happened to give you a voice like the guy," he said of himself and his fellow band members. The Beatlemania Now! group is a permanent band -- Arch and Smith have been working together since the '80s.

Arch says he never gets sick of the music.

"For you to do this job well you have to be a fan," he said. "Everybody loves the music. Everybody is a huge fan. I listen to it in my car."

Caravan of Thieves, a rollicking collection of local musical legends, will open the main stage, (called The Lighthouse Theater,) at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Caravan is an all-star group starring guitarist James "Fuzz" Sangiovanni, his singer-guitarist wife Carrie Sangiovanni, bassist Brian Anderson and violinist Ben Dean. If you have been to any musical event in Fairfield County in the last 10 years, you've seen at least one of them: Fuzz was

a staple of the funk group Deep Banana Blackout, both Sangiovannis made up the acoustic duo Rolla, and Anderson was a member of jam-band trio Raisinhill.

The band came together last year for something completely different -- gypsy swing music, inspired by a host of musical styles. Carrie Sangiovanni lists the Beatles, Dr. Seuss and Django Reinhardt as influences.

"We get a lot of good feedback because of its originality" said Fuzz last week, as the band was on tour in the Midwest.

Caravan just launched an album, "Bouquet," and recently signed with Fleming Artists, the booking agency which handles Ani DiFranco and Toad the Wet Sprocket. The group is looking forward to coming back to Connecticut for the Oyster Festival and later, for a Halloween show at the Fairfield Theatre Company.

Caravan of Thieves might be the most trumpeted local group to take the stage at the Oyster Festival, but the most local headliner is Adam Currie, whose band will play the Bar -B-Q Pit at 9 p.m. Saturday.

Don't confuse Currie, 25, with the Adam Curry who was a video jockey on MTV in the early '90s. This Adam Currie is a Norwalk-based singer songwriter with an eight-piece electric band and a new record.

"We do a very high-energy electric show," he said.

It is his third Oyster Festival -- he got rained out last year -- and Currie is looking forward to his Saturday night gig.

He says he's not nervous about competing with swing band Big Bad Voodoo Daddy for the Saturday night spotlight.

"That will be good because we're kind of different genres," he said.

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