

## Strange amusements

### Caravan of Thieves give gypsy jazz a theatrical makeover

by [Alan Sculley](#)



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Caravan of Thieves

Sunday, Oct. 21, 7 p.m.

The Loft, 2506 W. Colorado Ave.

Tickets: \$10/adv, \$15/door; [loftmusicvenue.com](http://loftmusicvenue.com), 445-9278.

Even though **Caravan of Thieves** has released three quirky albums that are well worth hearing, the best way to understand the group is still to see it in concert. Dressed in outfits from the turn of the century— as in 1900, not 2000 — the Connecticut-based foursome plays, dances, acts out portions of some songs, and even tosses in the occasional "**Bohemian Rhapsody**" or "**Psycho Killer**" cover.

With eccentric musical abandon, husband-and-wife founders **Fuzz and Carrie Sangiovanni** sing and strum their way through an eclectic mix of acoustic numbers. Violinist **Ben Dean** and bassist **Brian Anderson** round out the band, with all four members contributing percussion via pots, pans, buckets and other handy household items. The result is a festive sound that blends swinging gypsy jazz with highly melodic pop and plenty of sweet boy-girl vocals.

The band's latest album, 2012's **The Funhouse**, is based around an amusement park motif, a fitting metaphor for Caravan of Thieves' prevailing vibe. But it also demonstrates the couple's development as songwriters who can craft memorable hooks and melodies. Songs range from the raucous thunder of "**Eat You**" to the peppy strut of "**I Can't Behave**," from the melancholic sing-along feel of "**Raise the Dead**" to the martial tones of "**Sister Went Missing**."

"When we first started the band, it was definitely all about the music," says Carrie. "We had this idea for the style we wanted to do and the influences we wanted to try to mesh together. But we knew we wanted to make it visual as well, to help the listeners get a better grasp on the styles we were doing and to pull them into our own little world."

In the early days, it was just the Fuzz and Carrie show. The couple got engaged just five months after meeting, took to the road to play acoustic duo shows in clubs, in parks, on the street — pretty much anywhere they could break out their guitars and blend their voices without being a nuisance.

"It was almost like a street performance," says Fuzz. "And when we were thinking about Caravan of Thieves, it was: Let's just see if we can continue this idea — musically, conceptually, aesthetically — but have it be a band."

The band released its debut album, *Bouquet*, in 2009, with a live release, *Mischief Night*, following the next year. At first, there was no percussion, but on-tour visits to antique shops and thrift stores changed all that. Borrowing a page from the stage show *Stomp*, they transformed household objects into a percussive onslaught. On *The Funhouse*, the cheerful cacophony is so pronounced that it's hard to imagine the music without it.

"We have big, grandiose ideas of someday having an enormous stage set with a lot of junk thrown all over the place," says Fuzz. "It started as just a fun little idea, and now it's become an integral part of what we do."

But still, says Fuzz, the music comes first: "Some people think we're going to get up there and it's like going to see a Broadway play or something. But it is, first and foremost, a musical concert, and we're up there playing instruments the whole time. We don't really choreograph anything, but we move around a lot and — on certain sections of songs — we might be speaking. We're certainly more visual, interactive and theatrical than, say, your typical acoustic or bluegrass band."

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