

Caravan of Thieves can't be pigeon-holed

By Roger Hillis • November 12, 2009

EASTON — Expect the unexpected when the quartet called Caravan of Thieves takes the stage of the NightCat cafe and nightclub in Easton on Saturday.

Based in Bridgeport, Conn., the group is touring in support of its “Bouquet” album, which blends elements of folk, alt-bluegrass and other styles — complete with lyrics about ghosts and graveyards, among other topics. The songs are interpreted on stage with doses of high energy and crowd participation.

The band is led by singer-guitarists Carrie and Fuzz Sangiovanni, who are husband and wife. Ben Dean plays the violin while Brian Anderson plays an upright bass.

Their act can't exactly be pigeonholed.

“We call it gypsy jazz or folk, but you can call us what you want,” Carrie said.

As far as the lyrical imagery?

“We're big Tim Burton fans. Doing a video with him would be a dream come true for us,” Carrie said.

The band is just as eclectic when choosing cover songs to intersperse with their originals at live shows; favorites include Queen (“Bohemian Rhapsody”), The Beatles (“Being For the Benefit of Mr. Kite”) and even Dr. Seuss (“Mr. Grinch”). “It's pop music that pushes the envelope,” Fuzz said.

All are performed without the help of drums or electric instruments.

“It's just us and our instruments, no bells and whistles. We don't even have amplifiers,” Carrie said. “The way we sound on stage is the same way we would sound in your living room. I wanted to get back to an acoustic style of music but put a new twist on it.

“It's kind of like putting all of our influences into a blender. We have the energy of rock and the storytelling aspect of folk.”

They didn't arrive at this approach overnight; Carrie and Fuzz previously performed as an acoustic duo with a more commercial sound.

“It would be easy to say we've always listened to Duke Ellington, but it was more of a musical journey that led us to this,” Fuzz said. “I know I went through my blues-funk phase and my jazz phase and I felt like it had all been overdone.”

Jam band fans may remember Fuzz as the lead guitarist of the East Coast touring group Deep Banana Blackout. He also tours the world as a guitarist with the Tom Tom Club, which is led by one of music's most enduring husband-and-wife teams — Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth, who have been married for more than 30 years;

they were also half of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame act The Talking Heads.

“Chris and Tina live near us in Connecticut. They came out to see us and jammed with us on Halloween,” Fuzz said. “They’re very inspiring; they work well together as a couple and as a team. The keyboardist from Tom Tom Club, Bruce Martin, also joins us on stage sometimes to play accordion.”

Caravan of Thieves usually win crowds over fairly quickly at concert-style venues, but it can take a while at nightclubs.

“Sometimes people look at us like we’re crazy at first, but then after the show they’ll tell us we’re a breath of fresh air,” Carrie said.

“You might love us or you might hate us, but at least we get a strong reaction.”

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