

MUSIC/ Wednesday, November 30, 2011 *By Jessica Novak*



Here Comes the Fuzz

Carrie and Fuzz Sangiovanni know precisely how to paint a picture of their music for new listeners: “If Django Reinhardt, the cast of *Stomp* and *The Beatles* all had a party at Tim Burton’s house, **Caravan of Thieves** would be the band they hired.” That description, straight from the band’s selfwritten bio on their website, www.caravanofthieves.com, does well to include several facets of the band’s unique sound.

“We actually came up with it {the bio},” Fuzz explains in a phone interview from his home in Connecticut. His wife, Carrie, also on the line, chimes in, “Cause nobody got it. You know what your influences are and what elements stick out. *The Beatles*: the harmony vocals, the songwriting we use. Reinhardt: the chords and swing, Tim Burton: kind of the spooky, dark, satirical side to us, too. It helps paint a picture if people don’t get it right away.”

For those who want to see the crazy combination in action, Caravan of Thieves will be playing the Barge Canal Coffee Company, 37 Lebanon St., Hamilton, on Saturday, Dec. 3, 8 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call 824-4331.

The Sangiovannis, joined by violinist **Ben Dean** and double bassist **Brian Anderson**, began building their spooky, swinging style in the spring of 2008. The Sangiovannis had performed as an acoustic duo and then with a rock band, but found themselves uninspired by the latter’s music. They decided to return to their acoustic roots and picked up Dean and Anderson along the way, as they infused the music with a gypsy-swing-jazz feel and then began incorporating costumes and an entire stage show to complete their wild image and sound.

“There were things that we learned from being in our acoustic duo that we didn’t want to do,” Fuzz Sangiovanni explains. “We find there’s been a surge of acoustic music going on right now, a kind of singer-songwriter, pop-and-folk, alt-country and all this sorta stuff. We don’t want to go up these roads because they’re pretty flooded. When we were doing our live acoustic show, we found that people would come up and be like, ‘You have a lot of energy for just two people,’ and some of the more energetic, spunky, swingy stuff was working.”

Now the four-piece makes it work more than ever. Their live show incorporates “fun, rickety, bangin’ on stuff” like pots and pans, according to Fuzz, as well as theatrics such as jumping into the audience or rolling around the stage. “Even if the music is something that some people might not get, they’ll have fun at the show,” Carrie Sangiovanni says. “People always leave with a smile on their face. Whether the music is your thing or not, you’ll probably still have a good time at the show.”

Although the group released the independent CDs *Bouquet* (2008) and *Mischief Night* (2010), the Hamilton gig will feature songs from their forthcoming album *The Funhouse* (UFO), due next spring. Advance copies will be available at the Barge Canal. In addition to their own original material, the caravan has often thrown in unexpected covers including Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” a disco grouping of “I Will Survive” and “Stayin’ Alive” and a hellish medley featuring everything from “Sympathy for the Devil” to “Devil’s Haircut.”

Fuzz laughs when asked about the nutty covers: “I like to try to pick something that’s so far off the path that you wouldn’t expect us to do it just because it’s such a challenge. The only thing we don’t cover is really, really kinda bubblegummy or poppy; that stuff is just too hard. It has to have some element of mystery and bizarreness in its own right. We tried to cover ‘Sailing’ by Christopher Cross, but there’s just nothing we can do to caravanize that.”

—**Jessica Novak**

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