

Caravan of Fun

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Yan Gong /// The Spectrum

Caravan of Thieves draws influences from 1930's swing and pop music and put the genres in a bizarre package. They performed on Thursday at Nietzsche's.

The Great Depression isn't normally considered fun – the Caravan of Thieves sought to prove otherwise.

Caravan performed at Nietzsche's Thursday as a stop on their *Enter the Funhouse* tour. This was the gypsy band's third time playing at Nietzsche's, and its unconventional playing style kept the crowd animated throughout the show.

The quartet band immediately grabbed attention when it first walked on stage. Violinist Ben Dean and singer Fuzz Fuzzman donned top hats and rugged pinstriped suits, while singer Carrie Sangiovanni wore an old-fashioned lacey dress and a flapper girl corset.

The idiosyncrasies don't stop at the odd appearance, however. Caravan of Thieves used scrap instead of an actual drum kit for percussion.

"We want percussion in our music but do not want a drummer," Fuzzman said. "The junk incorporates rhythm if and when we need it."

The band's strange outfits and instruments symbolize the band's idealism. Caravan of Thieves draw inspiration from the 1930s swing era, and they sought to emulate the energy from those times when forming the band.

"This idea of bringing the street performance to the stage led us to gypsy music and the 1930s swing era as these are free-feeling, charismatic performances by real entertainers," Fuzzman said. "With this as the musical backdrop, combined with our fascination with macabre images and sharp-witted

sarcasm, we began writing happy sounding pop songs with pretty harmonies, dark thoughts, and creepy characters. This all seemed to be a suitable combination. And banging on buckets, frying pans and hubcaps were just crazy and human enough to fit too."

Caravan of Thieves' personalities are just as odd as their set up. At one point, Fuzzman fell on the floor and rolled around while playing his guitar. Then he shot one foot into the air to conduct the band's sound, shaking it to signal for a volume increase.

The band also incorporated the audience into its performance. The Thieves brought a girl onstage to help them adlib a story without the use of music, and the crowd praised the originality of the act.

Caravan of Thieves' talent matched their stage persona. Dean's exciting violin solos and stomp percussion combined with Fuzzman's skilled guitar playing highlighted their performance. Fuzzman often switched to the difficult Spanish-style guitar and impressed the audience.

"It brought a different mood to their music, but blended well," said Mark Finch, a Nietzsche's regular.

Caravan of Thieves performed many popular covers, as well. The first example being a mixture of three different songs called the "devil jam." They blended together the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil," Beck's "Devil's Haircut," and the Charlie Daniels Band's "The Devil Went Down to Georgia."

The band's other mash-up consisted of the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive" and Gloria Gainer's "I Will Survive." The group then covered Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" shortly before the end of its performance.

The crowd was delighted when Caravan of Thieves returned for an encore. The band went unplugged and traveled into the crowd as they performed. They asked the fans to stomp to help them keep rhythm and they obliged.

Caravan of Thieves' *Enter the Funhouse* tour runs through June 9. Their new album *The Funhouse* is available on their website, caravanofthieves.com.

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