

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

Caravan of Thieves steals into Ventura for Zoey's concert Inside the 'Funhouse'

- By [Bill Locey](#)
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The members of Caravan of Thieves are (from left) violinist Ben Dean, singer/guitarists Fuzz and Carrie Sangiovanni and upright bassist Brian Anderson. "Some say we sound like 'Django Reinhardt meets the Beatles at Tim Burton's house,' " Fuzz Sangiovanni says.

Coming to steal the top spot in the ever-changing Your Favorite Band This Week category are the Caravan of Thieves, a Connecticut-based group that will exponentially enlarge their heretofore invisible local fan base when they play Zoey's in Ventura on Saturday night. The ensemble's raucous Gypsy swing will test the limits of what can be done with acoustic instruments. Don't worry — your feet will know what to do. And the cerebral part of you can take a trip down memory lane when the Thieves interpret Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," the Talking Heads' "Psycho Killer" and maybe even "You Are My Sunshine."

Carrie and Fuzz Sangiovanni began as a duo, but gradually expanded the Thieves project into a full-fledged caravan with the addition of two more players. Their third and latest album is "The Funhouse." The second album was a live effort and the first one wasn't. Imagine Gogol Bordello quieter but just as energetic, or something like that. Fuzz Sangiovanni, the dude with the fuzzy dome, discussed the latest during a recent phoner.

How's the Caravan of Thieves biz? Are you guys rich rock stars?

Oh yeah. We're just rolling in dough and driving around and having a blast.

Where are you guys at?

We're on the coast of Oregon.

Is it raining?

No. Not right now. It's beautiful. We're sort of zigzagging back and forth. We did a house concert last night and it was awesome. They could not fit one more person into that house.

So why Thieves and not Forgers, Embezzlers, Deliverers of Pizzas or some other line of work?

We sort of have that Gypsy vibe. We're driving around, don't always know where we're going to be staying some nights — just having a good time.

You and Carrie began as a duo. Then what happened?

We began as an acoustic duo and experimented with a few different people before we settled on Brian Anderson on upright bass and Ben Dean on violin.

The "Gypsy swing" label fits you guys?

It kind of does. Some say we sound like "Django Reinhardt meets the Beatles at Tim Burton's house."

You guys and Gogol Bordello — that would be a good double bill?

Yeah, it probably would be, even though they rock more than we do.

Since you have a guy with an upright bass, I would assume that limits your mode of transportation. VW Bugs are out.

Yeah. We have a big van.

Well, you could put it on top like a surfboard or Mitt Romney's dog.

That's right. Brian could ride it like a horse.

Or like Slim Pickens riding the A-bomb at the end of "Dr. Strangelove."

Wa-hooooooo! I don't think Brian would go for it.

When did you guys know that you and that dreaded day job may, in fact, become complete strangers?

Probably when we sold out our first show in our hometown of Fairfield, Conn., which told us that other people liked what we were doing besides just us.

What's your take on the new one, "The Funhouse"?

Well, you know, it was the second time we'd been in the studio. The second album was a live one and so, for the third one, we were looking to go somewhere new with the sound. We tend to write a lot of dark but humorous songs, so we called it "Funhouse," as it relates to what you want to do with your life. Do you want to strap in and just go along or do you want to actually pay a little bit more attention to your life? That was sort of the overall goal of the album and a lot of the songs are like that. So for us, that's a great place for us to be because we like to incorporate fun things like amusement parks and funhouses and then add some pitfalls of real life. Sonically it was a change as well, because we were adding more to the picture. We were more of an acoustic band originally and we recorded that. Now, though, we're different. We're not like a synthesizer band or anything, but we did add more acoustic instruments such as banjo, ukulele and a lot more percussion stuff. We've got a bigger sound, more of a thumping sound.

And, as the title would indicate, this is supposed to be fun, right?

It is, exactly. And that's really the whole vibe of what we do live. For a minute or two, you might think, "Wow — that's pretty heavy," but before you know it, you'll be laughing. We do a lot of crazy, fun stuff.

How do you guys survive on the road? How do you not fall prey to the many temptations lying in wait for people like yourselves?

We do. That's why we have some days off. The main objective is that we're going to go out and travel all over the place and on the days that we're playing, it's all about getting the job done. We don't want to show up wasted and late. We don't want the show to be all cockeyed. We really focus on the show.

That could be a band name — Wasted and Late.

That's a lot of bands.

Had any extra-oddball gigs? Ones that you might share in a family newspaper?

We played this wedding once — and we don't get asked to play too many weddings. It was in New York and there was this puppet show — a hand puppet show. It was just really bizarre. The bride was playing piano along with this puppet show and people who were attending the wedding were walking out laughing. We couldn't stay up there for more than a few minutes without bursting out laughing.

That sounds like an alcohol-related story.

Oh, yeah.

So, you're not the only Fuzz? The only one I remember was Fuzzy Knight — this ancient character actor who was in every western ever made.

Yeah, well, fortunately or unfortunately I've ran into a few dozen people named Fuzz out there. Sometimes people will come up and say, "Hey, that's my nickname," but as a kid, I was the only Fuzz.

I'm assuming this is hair-related?

Yeah, exactly. I had this whole Afro sort of thing.

If the '60s ever come back, you'll be like a god — or maybe a Garfunkel or Don King re-enactor. One time, I asked Art Garfunkel if he went to Don King's barber and he got all mad off at me. Anyway, one more easy one: What advice would you give to the next generation?

Quit your day job and just do it. Don't second guess and don't think you have to have a backup plan. People are always worried about backups. Just play it smart and get into it for the long haul. It takes a lot of nurturing and a lot of patience dealing with the crappy stuff that comes along. Just find your own way. There's no path and there's no real guarantees. If you don't love it, forget it.



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"The Funhouse," released Feb. 28, features 15 songs, including "Candy," "Haunt Me" and "Sister Went Missing."

Caravan of Thieves

The Gypsy swing band will perform at 10:30 p.m. Saturday at Zoey's, 185 Santa Clara St., Ventura. Tickets are \$8 and \$12. Call 652-1137 or visit www.zoeyscave.com. The band's website is caravanofthieves.com.

The group also will perform at 7 p.m. Sunday at McCabe's Guitar Shop, 3101 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. Tickets are \$15. Call 310-828-4497 or visit mccabes.com.

Rockin' Roll Call

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