

Caravan of Thieves

Funhouse

By Sheryl Hunter

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Like a lot of young string bands, Caravan of Thieves looks to the past for inspiration – but unlike many of their peers they do not revel in bluegrass or old-timey music. This is one band that digs in a different direction, grabbing their influences from Django Reinhardt, swing, tango, and even scary old movies. Add to that the contemporary sounds like the Beatles, 1960s folk and the theatrical production “Stomp” and you have a sense of the crazy mixed bag that is Caravan of Thieves.

Based in Connecticut, the band is led by Fuzz Sangiovanni and his wife Carrie, with whom he shares guitar, vocals and songwriting duties. The quartet also features fiddle player Ben Dean and standup bassist Brian Anderson. The past couple of years has seen the band, build a solid following thanks to their enjoyable and theatrical live shows, and, like any band that builds its reputation on the stage, there is always that challenge to capture the live spark in the studio.



Caravan of Thieves do a solid job of pulling that off on its third recording *The Funhouse*, a concept album that celebrates the absurdity of life while showcasing the band’s unorthodox approach to music making. In addition to their mixed bag of musical influences, which draws heavily on gypsy jazz, the Thieves embrace lots of shouting, stomping, clapping and, in their words utilize “an orchestra of kitchen appliances for some additional percussive bang.”

The first single from the disc, the waltz-like “Raise the Dead,” finds the band making enough racket to do just that as they stomp their feet and join their voices to encourage some famous dead folk to come back for some fun. Then there is “I Don’t Wanna,” a jaunty tune that benefits from some fiery fiddle playing by Dean, while “Shim Sham” sounds like an old Tin Pan Alley song being played by some ragged group of traveling musicians.

A song like the jaunty “Mexico” is guaranteed to have toes tapping, while “Sister Went Missing” is more likely to inspire listeners to try their hand at learning the tango. “A dash of jealousy, insecurity, infatuation, my love, now give me the knife! /Love made a Monster out of me,” sing Carrie and Fuzz on “Monster,” a humorous tune that equates falling in love to the building of a Frankenstein monster. This band loves all things spooky as they warn us on “The Funhouse Exit” – “there are monsters, goblins and politicians everywhere!”

This could all come off like a bunch of silly stuff if the band did not have the musical chops to back it up. But Caravan of Thieves fortunately does and Fuzz, in particular, is a skilled guitarist who has worked with the Deep Banana Blackout and the Tom Tom Club. Both Fuzz and Carrie have crafted some memorable entertaining songs that, combined with the band’s overall enthusiasm, makes this one funhouse that lives up to its name.

Link:

<http://www.glidemagazine.com/articles/58556/caravan-of-thieves.html>