



Caravan of Thieves plays pop with a vaudeville twist

The band tries to dodge the "gypsy jazz" label

by [Nick Keppler](#)



And the caravan is on its way: Caravan of Thieves

At every tour stop, the members of Caravan of Thieves stop at a thrift shop to add to their collections of two things that have become as essential to them as guitar strings and microphone stands: vintage clothing and small, durable objects they can bang on.

"There is a street-performance element to what we do," says Carrie Sangiovanni, who's been decked out in flowing skirts and gypsy-esque black lace since forming the band with her husband and songwriting partner "Fuzz" Sangiovanni in 2008. "The music is clearly the most important thing to us, but it was important to have an identity." Guitarist Fuzz, violinist Ben Dean and double-bassist Brian Anderson have all adopted a dark *Newsies* look.

Fuzz had played in a few respected groups in his native Connecticut (including jam band Deep Banana Black Out and Talking Heads offshoot Tom Tom Club), when he met Carrie, a Burlington, Vt.-based singer/songwriter. Within five months, they were engaged and within a year were embarking on their own musical project.

The Caravan sound is a mixture of pop, jazz and folk with a definite vaudeville twist. "We don't think of ourselves as throwbacks," says Fuzz. "We absorb things we hear and sort of regurgitate them back. It's just that all the things we listen to tend to go back a little further." Sixties pop and folk rock is an obvious influence, as is Django Reinhardt, though the band tries to dodge the "gypsy jazz" label.

Modeled somewhat after the street performers of Central Park, the band started off with a rule against instrument setups they couldn't pick up and carry. Hence, when Fuzz and Carrie did trade off their songs' few percussion parts, they used buckets, colanders, hubcaps and other small junkyard objects. They now combine their scrap into makeshift drum kits that look like the assemblage sculptures of some outsider artist.

Caravan's three albums of songs are dizzying in their musical complexity, lyrical imagery and storytelling aspirations. Just as interesting — and just as challenging — are the group's covers, which have included Talking Heads' "Psycho Killer" and Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." The members search out songs written for genres outside their own mix of styles and practically do surgery on them. "Sometimes we have to move the bass part to the violin or have the bass control the beat," says Carrie. "We try to keep as much of the songs as we can, but add elements so they fit for us."

And speaking of good fits, how much clothing of the Tim Burton–chic variety have they acquired in the past four years? "We certainly have a lot more than we had when we started out," says Fuzz.

Link:

<http://www.pittsburghcitypaper.ws/pittsburgh/caravan-of-thieves-plays-pop-with-a-vaudeville-twist/Content?oid=1497566>