

# The Gypsy Caravan Tour

with David Grisman

**Stephan Wrembel Trio, Robin Nolan Trio with Brandi Shearer, Sammo and The Gypsy Kids**

The Gypsy Caravan, featuring David “Dawg” Grisman, has been performing in California for several weeks, and their January 27 appearance at Mill Valley’s Throckmorton Theater was a hugely entertaining showcase of the Gypsy Swing music made famous by Django Reinhardt.

The Throckmorton is an intimate room with a capacity of perhaps 300 that includes balcony seating. The opening act was the Gypsy Kids with Samson Grisman on bass, the twin guitars of Sam Miltich and Tom Davy, and the astoundingly talented 19 yr old Annie Staninec of San



Francisco on fiddle. Their set featured some swift pickin’ on a bunch of classic Hot Club Standards starting with “I Found a New Baby.” “Japanese Sandman,” “Swing Gitane,” and “Some of these Days.” These fiery tunes were heated up further as Annie traded fours with Sam Miltich and Tom Davy. At the conclusion of the set, the Dawg popped out from the wings and wailed through the classic “Limehouse Blues,” with the youngsters, while Annie whipped up a fiddling froth. The Dawg explained how he recorded his completely rearranged rendition of Minor Swing with Stephane Grappelli who came to a

session, played flawlessly and never said a word about the fact that the tune was in the wrong key. Then the kids tore it up. At the conclusion of the set, the crowd offered up a unanimous standing ovation and the kids returned for a hot rendition of “Avalon.”

After a brief intermission the Robin Nolan Trio hit the stage with some beautifully played original swing. Robin’s brother Kevin plays driving rhythm and bassist Simon Planting is a dynamic force bringing along huge tone and kick to the music. After an introductory instrumental, Robin graciously introduced vocalist Brandi Shearer, adorned in a gorgeous long black dress and pearls, for a sassy take on Irving Berlin’s “Russian Lullaby.” The band displayed its talent for arrangements with a swinging rendition of Hank William’s “Setting the Woods on Fire.” The trio’s less Django-centric approach was a welcome variant, and Brandi Shearer brought a tremendous amount of personality and vocal talent to the proceedings. Other cool highlights of the set included the Gypsy Anthem, “Dark Eyes,” done as a “duo” with Brandi & Kevin joining Robin on guitar. The final selection brought the return of David Grisman to complement “San Miguel,” a romantic original co-penned by Brandi Shearer and Robin Nolan.



The evening’s final set featured the astounding Stephane Wrembel quartet along with Grisman for perhaps the evening’s most intense licks. Wrembel infuses his music with tastes of Indian Raga and modal improvisation, which seemed to suit the Dawg’s sensibilities just fine. The band featured wild rhythms laid down by a fantastic washboard player who donned thimbles on every finger tip and played this Rube Goldberg device like a house on fire. “Nuages,” “Dark Eyes,” and others received eye-popping treatment by the band.

No one wanted the evening to end – at the set finale, the Robin Nolan Quartet returned to play along with Stephane Wrembel and the Dawg on the Theme from Belleville (the French Cartoon Movie from 2004). Everybody traded licks, and really brought the house down. The evening's final curtain call featured Sammo and the Gypsy Kids returning to the stage and forming a Gypsy Orchestra to play Grisman's "Gypsy Medley," from the King of the Gypsy's Soundtrack (and the Grappelli – Grisman LP) with three bassists, 6 guitar players, a washboard wizard and Annie Staninec filling in the role of the late great Stephane Grappelli. Big shoes...and our local girl filled them admirably.

Associate Producer and Tour Director Nick Lehr announced at the conclusion of the event that the Gypsy Caravan tour would resume in June, 2006 with 4 consecutive nights, featuring a whole new cast of Gypsy Jazz acts to the Throckmorton Theater in Mill Valley.

Attendance at an upcoming performance by this talented collective of young, and old Gypsy Musicians comes highly recommended.

-Ted Silverman  
San Francisco  
<http://www.WorldWideTed.com>

Associated Links:

David Grisman: <http://www.dawgnet.com/>

Stephane Wrembel: <http://www.stephanewrembel.com/>

Robin Nolan: <http://www.carbonize.com/clients/robinnol/home.htm>

Brandi Shearer: <http://www.brandishearer.com/>

The Throckmorton Theatre: <http://www.142throckmortontheatre.com/event.php?eventid=249>

Gig announcement: <http://www.lutherie.net/live.music.html>