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When The Road Bends: Tales Of A Gypsy Caravan

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When The Road Bends: Tales Of A Gypsy Caravan Review

110 minutes, USA (2006), PG

Soulful music documentary. Five authentic Romany bands tour America in this celebration of the spirited Gypsy gene

As the folk explosion continues to mushroom, the time seems right for another ethnographic music doc to capture the public's imagination à la **Buena Vista Social Club**. Having already earned Brit director Jasmine Dellal three festival audience awards, this could be the one, especially with the added bonus of its built-in Gypsy chic.

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Jasmine Dellal

Starring

**Maharaja
Esma Redzepova
Tara De Haidouks
Fanfare Ciocaria
Johnny Depp
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Covering the 2001 US Gypsy Caravan Tour - a traveling showcase for the world's finest Romany bands - Dellal's film joins the five virtuoso acts on a triumphant, six-week road-trip of sellout gigs across America. Hailing from Macedonia, Romania, Spain and Northern India (the birthplace of the Rom), the bands represent the rich ethno-cultural diversity within the 10 million strong Gypsy diaspora.

They're so different from each other, in fact, that it takes a while for them (and us) to recognize a musical connection between them, or an anthropological one for that matter. What links Maharaja's traditional Indian raga to the drunken brass oompah of Romania's Fanfare Ciocaria? And how is the frenzied string wizardry of their countrymen, Tara De Haidouks, related to Esma Redzepova's Macedonian wailing?

Dellal reveals their common denominators by slipping away from the intoxicating atmosphere of the Caravan concerts (shot in part by legendary documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles) to show us the grim reality of the performers' lives back home. What becomes painfully obvious is that these Gypsy troubadours have a tough time of it no matter where they live, and naturally it's mirrored in their music.

Take Juana, the illiterate aunt of flamenco dance star Antonio El Pipa. We find her struggling to stay afloat in a Spanish sink estate as her family slides into drug addiction. When she sings with her nephew's backing band, her caterwaul reminds you of building irons rusting in concrete.

"Fierce tribal pride and a sweaty lust for life"

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When The Road Bends: Tales Of A Gypsy Caravan
review by:
Billy Mowbray

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