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### Film



### Gypsy Caravan - A Trip Beyond the Beaten Path

By [Eve M. Ferguson](#)

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There is a Roma proverb that says "You cannot walk straight when the road bends" and English filmmaker Jasmine Dellal's "Gypsy Caravan" certainly takes the less beaten path to tell the intimate stories behind the World Music Institute tour that brought together five Roma (or Gypsy) musical groups for six weeks on the road. The film's formal title is "When the Road Bends... tales of a Gypsy Caravan" but for marketing purposes was cut to "Gypsy Caravan," although the original title captures the philosophy of life that infuses the film and the major players; musicians from dissimilar places in the world who all share the essence of Gypsy culture. Renowned documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles shot footage on location in India, Europe and the United States to capture the mysterious and spectacular world of the Roma people and their music.

The bands; Fanfare Ciocarlia and the well-known Taraf de Haidouks from Romania, Maharaja from northern India, Anotinio el Pipa from southern Spain and Esma Redzepova from Macedonia, are the stars and the life force of this documentary film that follows the tour around the United States and recounts the bands' experiences encountering new and unfamiliar places and people, and finding their own among the way.

"Gypsy Caravan" owes its insider view to Dellal's deft ability to take herself out of the action. Her recent feature "American Gypsy" won international acclaim for its portrait of an American Romani family battling a decade of drama, and also provided a primer in Gypsy culture. "Some groups I met earlier, so they were used to having me around," Dellal comments, noting that she had filmed the legendary Taraf de Haidouks several times. "After six weeks on the bus, I was just the lady with the camera."

The film took over 5 years to make, for those who recall when the national tour took place, but with more than good reason. Dellal traveled to each group's homeland and spent significant time filming and capturing the cultural climate that spawned each musical entity. Scenes shot in the Romanian village home of the late Nicolas Neascu of Taraf de Haidouks and the deeply personal tone of the dialogue, relate the closeness of the filmmakers with their subjects, culminating in the moving footage of



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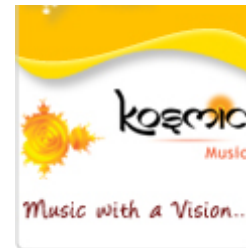
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Neascu’s funeral. Another scene in the northern Indian village of Maharaja’s main dancer, who performs the seemingly impossible “knee dance,” lends insight into the oppression and poverty of the Roma, but also captures the amazing spirit of those communities.

Apart from translating the nine languages spoken among the bands, the film makes the affinities between those far-flung vestiges of Gypsy culture obvious to the audience, even if they appeared to be almost invisible to the bands, whose interactions were sometimes contentious, but more often reflected a deeper connection of an ancient way of life known as Roma.

“Gypsy Caravan,” produced and directed by Jasmine Dellal, debuts commercially in cities nationwide during the month of June, accompanied by an astounding soundtrack that captures the incredible vivacity, melancholy and endurance of Gypsy music by the celebrated performers who keep it alive and share it with appreciative fans throughout the world.



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