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Tribeca 2006

When the Road Bends: Tales of a Gypsy Caravan

(Documentary)

 By [RONNIE SCHEIB](#)

A Little Dust production in association with ITVS, Fu Works Filmrights and Fortissimo Films. Produced by Jasmine Dellal. Co-producer, Sara P. Nolan. Executive producers, [San Fu Maltha](#), [Wouter Barendrecht](#), [Michael J. Werner](#) Directed by Jasmine Dellal.

With: [Taraf de Haidouks](#), [Esmá Redžepova](#), [Fanfare Ciocarlia](#), [Maharaja](#), [Antonio El Pipa](#) [Flamenco Ensemble](#), [Johnny Depp](#), [George Eli](#).
 (English, Romani, Spanish, Romanian, Macedonian, Hindi, Marwari dialogue)



A potent combination of ethnography and concert film, Brit helmer Jasmine Dellal's joyous celebration of tzigane music follows the 2001 U.S. "Gypsy Caravan" tour, which showcased five bands from four countries. Shot in part by [Albert Maysles](#), docu captures electrifying performers playing to sellout audiences across America, and the behind-the-scenes process by which the diverse groups, divided by language and largely ignorant of each other's music, start to jam and cross-pollinate. "Road" should secure a limited theatrical niche before moving into promising ancillary markets.

The bands are as varied in sound as they are in instrumentation. The musicians of the string-based Romanian Taraf de Haidouks appeared in "[Latcho Drom](#)" and "[The Man Who Cried](#)," starring Johnny Depp, who is interviewed here testifying to their genius. Mournfully scraping a broken string across a violin or merrily skittering through a wedding tune, the 18-piece ensemble, ranging in age from 22 to 80, embodies every *gadjo* image of gypsy music.

Also from Romania, Fanfare Ciocarlia's rousing 11-man brass band oompah-pahs with Germanic gravitas, then races weightlessly into flights of melodic fancy.

Macedonian diva Esmá Redžepova, trilling up and down the scales as she joyously strides through crowds of admirers, validates her title as "Queen of the Gypsies." Meanwhile, the northern India troupe Maharaja defies tradition by uniting musicians from different castes in a spectacular repertory that includes a female impersonator.

The most culturally distinct act is Antonio El Pipa's Flamenco Ensemble, the titular dancer's macho moves contrasting with the raw pain of his aunt's raspy singing voice.

As the tour progresses, the musicians begin to imitate one another, at first in fun but then with increasing interest, talking about how their respective cultures evolved from common North Indian roots. By the final concert, a veritable mass of performers fills the stage in a paean to gypsy fusion.

Dellal intersperses sequences of the groups filmed in their home surroundings. In Macedonia, Esmá Redžepova introduces some of the 47 kids she and her husband adopted, many of whom, now grown, play in her troupe. The small Romanian village that is virtually supported by Taraf de Haidouks is the scene of a wedding of one of their member's sons and then of the three-day funeral of their leader.

Lensing, primarily by Maysles and [Alain de Halleux](#), inventively highlights the immediacy of live performance and the laid-back rhythms at home.

Camera (color, 16mm, DV), Albert Maysles, Alain de Halleux; editors, [Mary Myers](#), Dellal; sound (Dolby Digital), [John Gurrin](#). Reviewed at Tribeca Film Festival (Discovery), May 7, 2006. Running time: 111 MIN.



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