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Calendar: Film Listings

Gypsy Caravan

Year Released: 2006 Directed By: Jasmine Dellal (NR, 111 min.)



Long ago the ancestors of the Roma left northern India, and they have journeyed ever since. Ten million Roma - or gypsies, a term some reclaim and some reject - still share a language and culture but are settled all over the world. Billed as the "Gypsy Caravan," five bands travel across America making music from across the Romani diaspora: the traditional music of Maharaja, from India; the powerhouse vocals of Macedonia's Esma Redzepova, officially dubbed "Queen of the Gypsies" in India in 1976; the flamenco stylings of Spain's Antonio El Pipa; the festive folk of Romanian ensemble Taraf de Haïdouks (seen in Tony Gatlif's Latcho Drom and endorsed in the film by Johnny Depp); and boisterous brass band Fanfare Ciocarlia. Documentarian Dellal follows the tour intimately, interweaving footage (some of it shot by the indefatigable Albert Maysles) from the stage and from the road with backstories for each artist in his or her own homeland. We learn that several have brought electricity and relative prosperity to their villages and that making gypsy music is an act of cultural, emotional, and economic survival. Periodically the film's sound recordist, who is an American Rom, steps in as a foil for the travelers, who vex their tour manager by sneaking off to smoke and fish in the pond outside a coliseum in Ann Arbor, Mich. Backstage the groups have their differences, but over the course of the film, there is a coming-together, based on the shared soul of the music and dance. Whimsical and absorbing, the film offers vibrant performance scenes spliced with thoughtful consideration of the Romani identity. Dellal crafts the stories of key players: Redzepova and her husband fostered 47 children; Taraf's 79-year-old lead violinist supports a family of grandchildren but is faced with ill health. This is not a concert documentary - it's rightfully more expansive in scope but may frustrate audiences when Dellal cuts away from a number so that we hear but do not see it - yet there are moments of transcendence onstage, including a jam-session finale. Throughout, the ebullience and passion of the music gives viewers a point of entry into what it means to be Roma, part of an ancient culture in a modern world - including Austin, a stop on the tour. (The 7:50pm show on Friday will be introduced by Dr. Ian F. Hancock, director of the Romani Archives and Documentation Center at UT and ambassador for the world's Roma to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and UNICEF.)

★★★★ Marrit Ingman [2007-08-10]

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NEW REVIEWS

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford The Assassination of Jesse James may be the world's first epic of misguided hero worship. - Josh Rosenblatt ★★★★★

Dragon Wars: D-War Based on a Korean legend, Dragon Wars is the fantasy story of reporter who unearths the truth about catastrophic L.A. earthquakes and sets off to save the city. - Marc Savlov ★★

Eastern Promises In Cronenberg's film about the Russian mob in London, the director and star Viggo Mortensen relate a corker of a story. - Marc Savlov ★★★★★

Good Luck Chuck Pitched somewhere between Farrelly Brothers-lite and some oddball National Lampoon outing, this comedy is as familiar as it is charming, which isn't to say it's a good film. - Marc Savlov ★★

The Hottest State Ethan Hawke writes and directs this story based on his own novel about a lovesick narcissist in New York City. - Marjorie Baumgarten ★★

In the Shadow of the Moon This documentary is a cheery restorative that recalls hazy memories of America's finest, boldest hour, when we went to the moon, again and again. - Marc Savlov ★★★★★

In the Valley of Elah Paul Haggis and Tommy Lee Jones deliver a scorching film that's part police procedural, part family melodrama, and all about our national failures in Iraq. - Josh Rosenblatt ★★★★★

Lady Chatterley This new French version of

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the D.H. Lawrence story is tastefully presented but not nearly as scandalous and coarse as the published novel. - *Marjorie Baumgarten*
 ★★★

Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint

This is an old-school heroic drama from Bhutan about an 11th century Tibetan saint whose tale begins with greed and vengeance. - *Marrit Ingman*
 ★★

Sea of Dreams

She's married to the sea, and he belongs to the earth: This Mexican film relies on prehistoric folk myths and a delightful color palette for its impact. - *Marjorie Baumgarten*
 ★

Sydney White

Teen popularity traumas are here translated into a loosely updated version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. - *Toddy Burton*
 ★★

Vanaja

In this Indian film, an adolescent girl named Vanaja, who dreams of becoming a dancer, is raped by her landlady's son. - *Marjorie Baumgarten*

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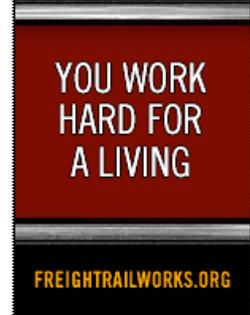


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