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"GYPSY CARAVAN": Members of the Romanian group Fanfare Ciocarlia hit the road in the documentary.

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## 'Gypsy Caravan'

- **Stars:** Documentary with Fanfare Ciocarlia, Taraf de Haidouks, Johnny Depp, Antonio El Pipa
- **Behind the scenes:** Directed by Jasmine Dellal
- **Playing:** Opens today at Edwards Westpark in Irvine; in English and Romani, Spanish, Romanian, Macedonian, Hindi and Marwari with English subtitles.
- **Rating:** Not rated
- **Running time:** 1 hour, 51 minutes

## The quick hit

Five Gypsy bands from four countries tour North America in this intimate combination of personal stories and wonderful music. In English and Romani, Spanish, Macedonian, Romanian, Hindi and Marwari with English subtitles.

**Grade: A-**

Thursday, July 5, 2007

# 'Gypsy Caravan' a musical trip

**Review: Movie follows five musical gypsy acts as they tour North America.**

By BOB STRAUSS  
Los Angeles Daily News

The celebratory music documentary "Gypsy Caravan" charts the North American tour of five Roma music acts from four countries. In the process, filmmaker Jasmine Dellal digs into individuals' lives, takes us to their homes and presents a rough sketch of the prejudices and repression the people as a whole have suffered through the ages.

The musical styles of Romania's Taraf de Haidouks and Fanfare Ciocarlia; Macedonia's "Queen of the Gypsies," Esmá Redžepova; Spain's Antonio El Pipa Ensemble; and India's Maharaja could not be more diverse. String bands and brass bands, raga and flamenco, even a little electronica and Indian knee dancing (in drag, no less) are all part of the mix.

But as one musician tries to explain, all gypsy music shares "some rhythm, the language. Also the feeling; very important."

Along with a crew of camera people that includes documentary legend Albert Maysles ("Gimme Shelter"), Dellal covers the world as well as the tour, moving smoothly back and forth between Balkan villages and the deserts of Rajasthan and the bands on the bus as it rolls along our interstates. Some share the Gypsy language of Romani, others only know the tongue of the nation where their families have lived for generations. The best part of the show is watching members of utterly different cultures bond over their far-flung common heritage (and, of course, the music).

There is no criticism of Gypsy lifestyles, and negative stereotypes are shrugged off as stupid bigotry.

Institutionalized illiteracy gets mentioned, and the wedding of a 19-year-old man to a cigarette-smoking 13-year-old girl is shown, but no judgment is attached. Neither is any real friction displayed.

Everybody is just as wonderful as they can be.

You could call that a flaw, but why bother? The music is unfailingly joyous (even at its saddest), and the film's devotion to outreach and understanding is just as exhilarating. "Gypsy Caravan" has been compared to "Buena Vista Social Club," and although it leaves us with a similar heady, musicological euphoria, it imparts an even greater sense of shared humanity.

Very important.

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