

Gypsy Caravan

World Village 468070

Full Price (72 mins)



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The feature-length documentary *When the Road Bends...*

accompanies a resurgence of interest in the wild world of

Gypsy music, and this CD is basically a compilation of music by groups that appear in Jasmine Dellal's film. These include top-notch artists from the Balkans – Taraf de Haïdouks and Fanfare Ciocărlia from Romania and Esmă Redžepova from Macedonia – plus flamenco from the Antonio El Pipa Company and Rajasthani Gypsy roots from Maharaja (formerly known as Musafir). It's a compelling listen, although it's neither a proper sampler of the range of Gypsy music nor a real soundtrack album. (There are some short atmospheric extracts dropped in between the licensed tracks, however.) The music from the Balkan musicians is as good as you'd expect and the Taraf's 'Mugur Mugurel' features the singing of



than Simon Emmerson, fresh from triumphant global fusions of the System. The songs may be centred

subject matter – death, poverty, sex and magic – is as much as everything on this bold and ambitious album works, from opening reflections about tradition and change, spoken setting 'folkscape' to Transglobal Underground's *sitar-laden* excursion into 'Cold Hailey Rainey Night' with Eliza Carthy and Coppers. Other highlights include a mindboggling electro

veteran fiddler Nicolae Neacșu, whose funeral is movingly observed in the film. Maharaja is one of the best bands uniting several musician castes of Rajasthan, playing double flutes, haunting strings, punchy harmonium and percussion with full-throated vocals. And you can certainly hear echoes of that music in the flamenco church recording with voices, drums and palm claps recorded in Jerez de la Frontera that follows. I'm just not sure, despite the splendid gravelly voice of Juana la del Pipa, that the Antonio El Pipa Company are as exceptional as the other musicians. For Balkan Gypsy music, and for the welcome addition of the Perpignan group Kaloomé, you can't beat the recent *Queens & Kings* album from Fanfare Ciocărlia. But if you've been turned onto Gypsy music by *When the Road Bends...*, you won't be disappointed by this disc.

Simon Broughton