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- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
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- [Classifieds](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Shopping](#)
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Movie review: 'Gypsy Caravan' is worth the trip



A riveting music documentary follows bands from four countries on a raucous tour of the United States.

By [Colin Covert](#), Star Tribune

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GYPSY CARAVAN



Unrated; Suitable For All audiences. In English and Subtitled Spanish, Romanian, Macedonian and Rajasthani.

Where: Parkway.

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The music documentary "Gypsy Caravan" is an eye-opener, an ear-opener and, most important, a heart-opener. The film follows five Roma bands from Macedonia, Romania, India and Spain as they tour the United States in a raucous, irresistible whirlwind of drums, brass and fiddles.

Recording them on their six-week excursion, with side trips to their homes, director Jasmine Dellal dispels many stereotypes about the gypsy lifestyle, props up a couple others and creates an honest and affectionate portrait of a much misunderstood people.

The film is in the vein of "The Buena Vista Social Club," with fly-on-the-wall camera work, on-the-run interviews and

long, infectious swaths of concert footage. The film leavens the performers' often painful stories with absurd humor. A befuddled policeman arrives when the musicians hook fish out of a municipal art center's courtyard pool, and the ever-worried American stage manager ceaselessly urges the artists to get to the auditorium on time.

Appropriately for an Indo-European people scattered over half the globe, a diverse cross-section of music is included. There's Fanfare Ciocarlia, the funky 11-man Romanian brass band that plays supersonic gypsy, klezmer and Turkish rave-ups. You may have heard their rendition of "Born to be Wild" at the end of "Borat." Their four CDs have been so successful they have brought electricity to their impoverished village.

"Queen of the Gypsies" Esma Redzepova, a humanitarian who adopted 47 children and was twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, sings captivating Macedonian tunes. The raga and dance group Maharaja, resplendent in northwest Indian finery, features Sayari Sapera, a specialty act to end them all. He twirls, dervish-style, in transvestite wedding dress, jewelry and full makeup. Hey, it's a tradition.

Romanian violin wizards Taraf de Haidouks (Band of Brigands), who get an affectionate plug from fan Johnny Depp, work miracles with scratchy strings, and Spanish flamenco artist Antonio el Pipa is passion personified. You can see why their tour sold out, fans traveled hundreds of miles for an autograph and concertgoers couldn't resist dancing in the aisles.

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