

'Shanghai Gypsy': Cleveland International Film Festival review



"Shanghai Gypsy" is boisterous and colorful - but not a cliched gypsy film. (CIFF)



By Laura DeMarco, The Plain Dealer

"Shanghai Gypsy" is populated with loud, colorful characters. Bands play boisterous music at all-night parties, and, of course, big fat gypsy weddings. Old ladies read cards, everyone's a flashy dresser -- except for the old ladies in their babushkas -- and family is everything.

But this 2012 Slovenian film is much more than a sum of lusty gypsy cliches. Director Marko Nabersnik's tale follows four generations of the Mirga family in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from the turn of the last century to the wars of the 1990s. He focuses on the crafty Uljas, who discovers how profitable it can be to trade Western goods in the 1950s, and his son Belmondo.

Belmondo, who learns his trade at his father's hand, becomes more successful than Uljas ever was, bringing goods from nearby Italy to villagers living under drab communism. But this gypsy king thinks bigger than the black market, eventually building a whole village for his clan, called Shanghai.

But as time progresses and war gets closer in his disintegrating country, Belmondo turns from trading goods to trading arms, endangering Shanghai and his family, and Nabersnik's

enjoyable escapist film takes on even more layers. Lush cinematography of the Yugoslav countryside and a knock-out performance from Visar Vishka as the evolving Belmondo enhance the film's emotional depth.

REVIEW

Shanghai Gypsy

What: Feature directed by Marko Na bersnik (2012/Slovenia). In Slovenian, Italian and Roma with English subtitles. 124 minutes.

When: 11:15 a.m. Friday, 3:35 p.m. Saturday and 9:10 a.m. Sunday in the Cleveland International Film Festival.

Grade: A
