

COLORS 42: GYPSY

Shutka—the name means “trash” —is Europe’s largest settlement of Rom, a people also known as Gypsies, nomads, and dirty thieving tinkers.

For COLORS 42 we spent three weeks there getting to know a few of the 50,000 inhabitants, including Papa Alfonso, the 81-year-old nymphomaniac; Edo Arseni the maxillofacial surgeon; Savim, the junior boxing champion; and Ramandan, the self-proclaimed *Putska* (Romanes for homosexual).

From the Turbo Folk Hip (the Gypsy equivalent to hip-hop) booming in the Macedonian discos to the 24-hour Roma TV station, we found a community firmly rooted in the modern world. Most people spoke several European languages, including German and Italian. Teenagers displayed their Nike swooshes with pride and listened to the Backstreet Boys.

With a Romani mayor, a Romani lawyer and total freedom to speak the Romanes language, Shutka should be a promised land for Gypsies. But walk down the unpaved streets, use the outside toilets, step over the trash on the streets, and you’ll see it’s still a dump.

Discrimination and poverty unite most of the 20 million Roma worldwide. In Shutka, as in most Gypsy communities, the Roma are still a race apart—all shades from white to brown, they consistently call themselves “black.” They isolate themselves as they are isolated by others. The result: A fierce sense of identity and abnormal levels of illiteracy and poverty.

The COLORS team of correspondents and photographers also gathered testimonials from Gypsies around the world—from the original *Rom* of India to the *Travelers* of England, the *Kale* of Spain, and the *Dom* of Egypt and Israel.

COLORS 42: The Gypsy issue is available at newsstands from 17th February 2001.

For further information: www.colors magazine.com