

Sports, Entertainment, Arts & Media News

American Pachuco: The Legend of Luis Valdez named first place winner of Seventh Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize and the Sundance Film Festival Favorite

First Place Winner of the Seventh Annual Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize

Against political resistance and industry skepticism, Luis Valdez pushes Chicano storytelling from the fields to the film screen with "Zoot Suit" and "La Bamba" – creating iconic works that challenge, celebrate, and expand America’s story.

"Bursting with energy and moving at a terrific pace."

"Lively, stylish, and consistently engaging. Smart, propulsive editing keeps the momentum high, while entertaining and informative interviews bring Luis Valdez’s journey vividly to life."

"Director **David Alvarado** injects the archival and interview footage with a number of creative visual flourishes to celebrate Valdez’s groundbreaking impact. It’s an accessible look at an artist who reshaped American storytelling by putting Chicano voices front and center."

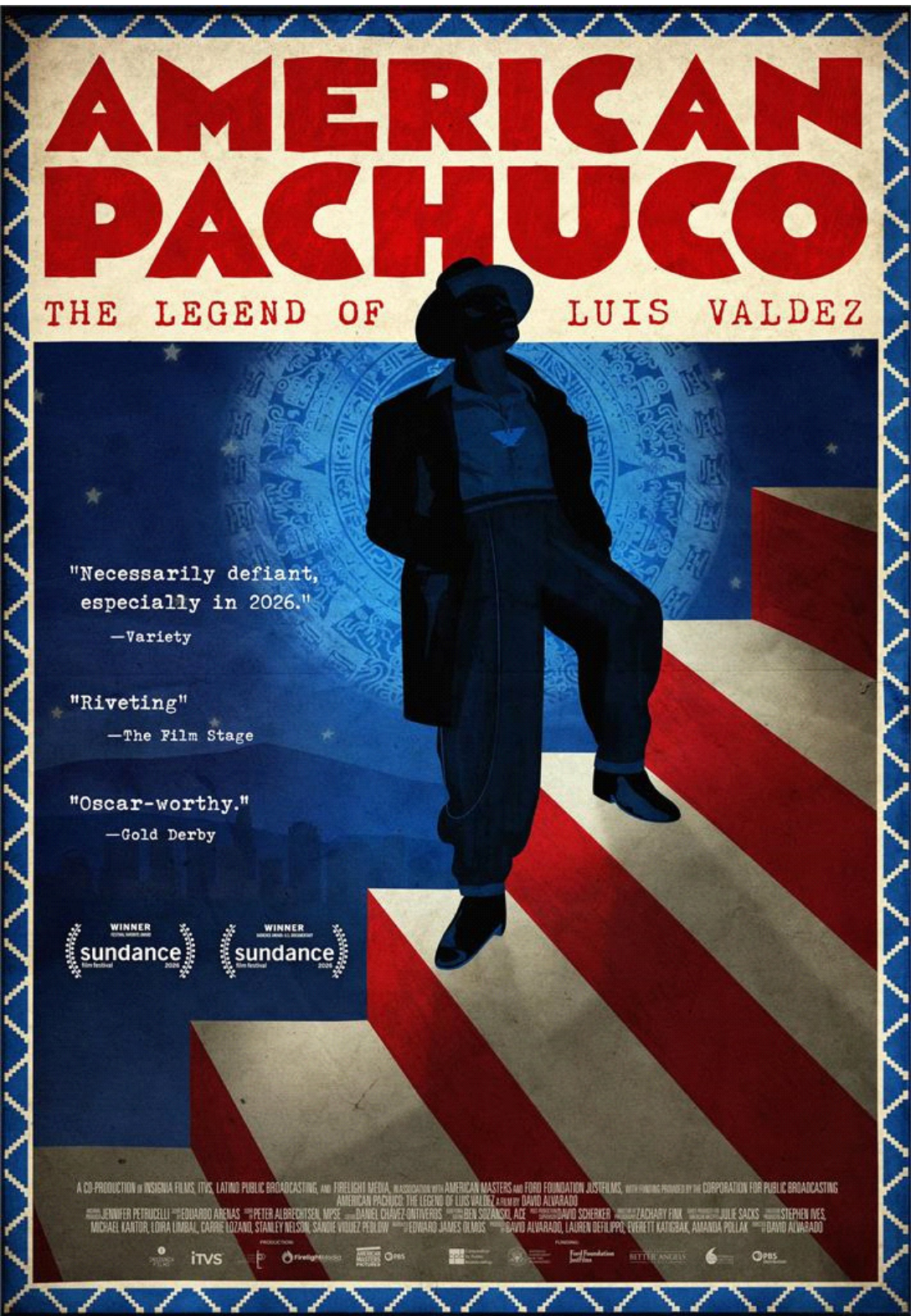
– **Matt Neglia, Next Best Picture**

"This playful and comprehensive biographical documentary from director David Alvarado spends time with a deserving trailblazer whose name and accomplishments perhaps aren’t engraved in the American consciousness, but should be."

"To spotlight a Mexican American pioneer who still stands proud in all the nuances of his identity feels necessarily defiant — especially in 2026."

– **Carlos Aguilar, Variety**

"David Alvarado’s American Pachuco: The Legend of Luis Valdez stands as a welcome corrective. More importantly, the well-informed film comes at a time when its very subject matter



— the long, tough fight for equality and recognition waged by Latinos in the U.S. — is once again making headlines. Understanding the life and work of

Luis Valdez is a way to broaden one’s understanding of what it means to be American, perhaps now more than ever. Watching this enlightening and entertaining

documentary is a good way to start."

– **Jordan Mintzer, The Hollywood Reporter**



"Zippy and zesty...proves inspiring for these times."

"The galvanizing power of art isn’t only illustrated in “American Pachuco,” but intimately felt when the biography has plenty of panache to get its story of the groundbreaking Chicano artist across."

– **Stephen Saito, Moveable Fest**

"Lively, illuminating."

– **Rick Brough, KPCW Radio (NPR)**

THEATRICAL RELEASE OF AMERICAN PACHUCO: THE LEGEND OF LUIS VALDEZ

The theatrical rollout will start as follows:

July 17 - New York - Film Forum

July 24 - Los Angeles - Laemmle Theaters, AMC Theaters, Maya Cinemas, Alamo Drafthouse and more

July 31 - San Francisco - Opens at Roxie Theater, Smith Rafael Film Center in San Rafael, Rialto Elmwood Theater in Berkeley,

plus Alamo Mountain View and Valley Fair in the South Bay/San Jose Area

Director David Alvarado and Luis Valdez will join in-person conversations at each of the opening weekends in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. In total to date, over 20 cities across the U.S. are planning theatrical releases of the film including Santa Barbara, San

Diego, North Hollywood, Norwalk, Oxnard, Orange, Ontario, Long Beach, Salinas, Bakersfield, Pittsburg CA, Dallas, Austin, Houston, Chicago, Tucson and more. Theatrical bookings are being handled by mTuckman media.

OVERVIEW

An auteur emerges from America’s underclass: from migrant farmworker to revolutionary artist, Luis Valdez changed American culture. In the 1960s, his El Teatro Campesino performed on flatbed trucks and helped mobilize workers to win the first farmworker union contract. His “Zoot Suit” was the first Chicano play on Broadway. Despite critical rejection that killed the show, he persevered, creating “La Bamba”—a breakout blockbuster that authentically depicted Mexican-American life to the world. Now in its 60th year, El Teatro continues to be a beacon for Latino/a creators. This is the story of an artist who gave voice to the overlooked and opened pathways for generations.

SYNOPSIS

AMERICAN PACHUCO: THE LEGEND OF LUIS VALDEZ chronicles how writer/playwright/director **Luis Valdez** illuminated the Mexican American experience on stage and screen and transformed the American cultural landscape. Born in Delano, California in 1940, Valdez wrote his first plays in grammar school, had his first play produced when he was a student at San Jose State University. Please see sports-Ent. 4

EKKL Entertainment sets Aug. 14 as theatrical release for faith-based ‘Elijah Peel,’ inspired by true story

NEW YORK / LOS ANGELES / FRANKLIN, Tenn. — Thursday, July 9, 2026 — EKKL Entertainment will bring the powerful new faith-based drama ELIJAH PEEL to theaters nationwide on August 14, 2026, opening exclusively in theaters.

Written, directed, and produced by **Kevin D. Sepe**, ELIJAH PEEL stars **Robert Malcolm Cumming** and introduces **Evelyn Grace Kite**, alongside **Kevin Sorbo**, **April Billingsley**, and **Princess Elmore**. The film is executive produced by **Willie Robertson**, **Korie Robertson**, and **Terry Lee Harris**.

Inspired by a true story, ELIJAH

ELIJAH PEEL was shot on location in and around Memphis, Tennessee.

PEEL follows a stadium-filling rock star whose life of fame and addiction comes to a sudden halt after a heart attack nearly costs him everything. During his recovery, Elijah encounters a remarkable young girl whose unwavering faith, radiant spirit, and wisdom beyond her years begin to break through the walls he has built around his heart. Through their unexpected bond, her extraordinary hope inspires Elijah to begin a powerful journey toward healing, reconciliation, and faith.

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“From the moment we saw ELIJAH PEEL, we knew it was something special,” said Michael Scott, co-founder of EKKL Entertainment. “It’s a deeply moving story about second chances, human connection, and the power of hope and is exactly the kind of emotionally resonant, crowd-pleasing film that reminds us why the theatrical experience matters, and we’re proud to bring it to audiences this summer.”

Executive Producers **Willie and Korie Robertson** shared, “This is a story about faith and connection that we immediately believed in. We’re proud to be part of bringing this film to audiences.”

“ELIJAH PEEL is a story about the unexpected connections that can change the course of a life,” said Kevin D. Sepe. “I wanted to explore how even the smallest, most profound encounters can force us to confront who we are and who we might become. I’m incredibly grateful to EKKL for recognizing the heart of this film and helping bring it to a wider audience.”

Robert Malcolm Cumming (Hell’s Haven, Molar) anchors

the film as Elijah Peel, carrying the character from the heights of rock stardom through the depths of addiction to the fragile first steps of redemption. It’s a demanding lead — equal parts swagger and vulnerability — and Cumming gives Elijah the wounded charisma the story needs to earn its second chance.

The film marks the breakout performance of **Evelyn Grace Kite**, who recently made history as the youngest-ever recipient of the International Christian Film Festival’s Best Actress award. Her performance brings warmth, wit, immediacy, and emotional honesty to the story, giving the film much of its beating heart.

Kevin Sorbo portrays Elijah Peel’s talent manager, adding another compelling presence to a story centered on second chances, redemption, recovery, and the kind of hope that can transform a life.

Music also plays a central role in the film. The original soundtrack was produced by filmmaker Kevin D. Sepe and published by Harris Sepe Music, with standout tracks including “Life Too Short, Story Too Old,” “River Deep,” “Can You Feel It,” “The Wild Ones,” and “Not an Ordinary Love.” Blending rock, soul, and faith-driven themes, the music serves as a powerful extension of Elijah’s inner life.

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