

AMERICAN MASTERS



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American Masters and VOCES Present *American Pachuco: The Legend of Luis Valdez*

*A Portrait of the Pioneering Chicano Playwright and Filmmaker,
Documentary Premieres Tuesday, October 6 on PBS*

NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES – A celebration of Luis Valdez, whose influential work in theater and film reflects the struggles and triumphs of the Mexican American community, ***American Pachuco: The Legend of Luis Valdez*** is presented by *American Masters* and VOCES, and produced, written and directed by David Alvarado. The film premieres on Tuesday, October 6, 2026 at 9 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS, PBS.org and the [PBS app](#).

The son of migrant farmworkers who became a revolutionary artist, Luis Valdez changed American culture. In the 1960s, his El Teatro Campesino performed on flatbed trucks and helped mobilize farmworkers to win their first union contract. In 1979, his “Zoot Suit” was the first Chicano play ever performed on Broadway. His feature film, “La Bamba” was a breakout blockbuster in 1987 that authentically depicted Mexican American life and shared it with the world. Founded in 1965, Valdez’s El Teatro continues to be a beacon for Latino/a creators. ***American Pachuco*** is the story of a pioneering artist who gave voice to the overlooked and opened pathways for generations.

Winner of the Audience Award, U.S. Documentary, and the Festival Favorite Award at this year’s Sundance Film Festival and recipient of the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film, ***American Pachuco*** features extensive interviews with Valdez and is narrated by

Edward James Olmos, who starred in the original production of "Zoot Suit." The documentary also features interviews with Lou Diamond Phillips, Cheech Marin, Linda Ronstadt and others, as well as newly rescued 1960s and 1970s Teatro Campesino archival film that was on the verge of deterioration and restored specially for the program.

"For six decades, Valdez has proven that Chicanos aren't marginal to America: they *are* America," says filmmaker David Alvarado. "From farmworker strikes to Broadway's first Chicano production to *La Bamba*, his work insists on one truth: when power structures say we don't belong, cinema becomes our most powerful tool to insist that we do."

"Luis Valdez is a theatrical firebrand, a true groundbreaker who reminds all of us of what theater and film can do," says *American Masters* Executive Producer Michael Kantor. "This film is a beautiful celebration of his pioneering work – it is a must-see for anyone interested in the promise of American theater."

"***American Pachuco*** reminds us of the power of art to mobilize people and make change," says VOCES Executive Producer Sandie Viquez Pedlow. "Luis Valdez's plays and films resonate as strongly today as ever and continue to inspire new generations of Latino artists."

American Pachuco: The Legend Of Luis Valdez is directed, written and produced by David Alvarado and produced by Lauren DeFilippo, Everett Katigbak, and Amanda Pollak. It is a co-production of Goodhue Pictures, Inc. d/b/a Insignia Films, ITVS, Latino Public Broadcasting and Firelight Media, in association with American Masters Pictures and PBS, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

American Pachuco: The Legend Of Luis Valdez will stream simultaneously with broadcast and be available on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS app](https://www.pbs.org/app), which is available on iOS, Apple TV, Android mobile and tablets, Android/Google TV, Roku, Amazon Fire TV and tablets, Comcast, Samsung Smart TV, VIZIO and LG Smart TVs. PBS station members can view many series, documentaries and specials via [PBS Passport](https://www.pbs.org/passport). For more information about [PBS Passport](https://www.pbs.org/passport), visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](https://www.pbs.org/passport/faq) website.

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About David Alvarado (Writer/Director/Producer)

David Alvarado is an award-winning documentary filmmaker who brings to life stories of trailblazers in science, the arts, and human rights. His journey began interning at Dallas PBS member station KERA, where he climbed from marketing to production, discovering his calling behind the camera. He co-founded Structure Films in New York City with Jason Sussberg. His work as Director/Producer/Cinematographer includes three feature documentaries: *The Immortalists* (2014), *Bill Nye: Science Guy* (2017), and *We Are As Gods* (2022). He has directed and produced for PBS's NOVA series with *Who's in Control* (2023) and *Secrets in Your Data* (2024) and produced Independent Lens' three-part series *Matter of Mind* (2023-2025). He also hosted and produced an eight-part Audible Original podcast on environmental technologist Stewart Brand.

Alvarado has pioneered innovative funding methods, from record-breaking Kickstarter and branded funding campaigns with Stripe, Inc. to successful NFT initiatives. A Stanford Documentary Film MFA graduate, he has earned fellowships at WGBH Producers Academy, Sundance's Producers Workshop, and recognition in DOC NYC's "40 Under 40 Filmmakers to Watch." As a decade-long NALIP member, Chicano filmmaker Alvarado has dedicated his career to making the world more thoughtful through documentary storytelling. That mission began twenty years ago, when Luis Valdez showed him what was possible at an event that ultimately culminated in this film.

About Insignia Films

Insignia Films makes premium documentaries about the visionaries, movements, and moments that define our world. Led by Stephen Ives, Amanda Pollak, and Lauren DeFilippo, the company is a home for filmmakers, journalists, artists doing the most ambitious work of their careers. Their films have premiered at Sundance, TIFF, and DOC NYC and stream on PBS, Netflix, National Geographic, Hulu, and Disney+. They've been building this for over three decades. Ives' 1996 PBS series *The West* drew more than 38 million viewers and set the standard they've worked from ever since: in-depth, character-driven storytelling that has been honored with Primetime Emmys and awards from the Directors and Writers Guilds of America.

About American Masters

Now in its 40th season on PBS, *American Masters* illuminates the lives and creative journeys of our nation's most enduring artistic giants — those who have left an indelible impression on our cultural landscape — through compelling, unvarnished stories. Setting the standard for documentary film profiles, the series has earned widespread critical acclaim: 28 Emmy Awards — including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special

— two News & Documentary Emmys, 14 Peabodys, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards, an Oscar, and many other honors. To further explore the lives and works of more than 250 masters past and present, the [American Masters website](#) offers full episodes, film outtakes, filmmaker interviews, the podcast “American Masters: Creative Spark,” educational resources, digital original series and more. The series is a production of The WNET Group.

About VOCES

Produced by Latino Public Broadcasting, the acclaimed PBS documentary series [VOCES](#) features the best of Latino arts, culture and history and shines a light on current issues that impact Latino Americans. Devoted to exploring the rich diversity of the Latino experience, VOCES presents new and established filmmakers and brings their powerful and illuminating stories to a national audience — on TV, online and on the PBS app. Luis Ortiz is series producer; Sandie Viquez Pedlow is executive producer. Follow us on [Facebook](#).

About The WNET Group

[The WNET Group](#) creates inspiring media content and meaningful experiences for diverse audiences nationwide. It is the community-supported home of New York’s [THIRTEEN](#) — America’s flagship PBS station — [WLIW](#), THIRTEEN PBS KIDS, THIRTEEN WORLD and WLIW Create; Long Island’s only NPR station WLIW-FM; [ALL ARTS](#), the arts and culture media provider; newsroom [NJ Spotlight News](#); and FAST channel PBS Nature. Through these channels and streaming platforms, The WNET Group brings arts, culture, education, news, documentary, entertainment, and DIY programming to more than five million viewers each month. The WNET Group’s award-winning productions include signature PBS series ***Nature***, ***Great Performances***, ***American Masters***, and ***Amanpour and Company*** and trusted local news programs like ***NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi***. Inspiring curiosity and nurturing dreams, The WNET Group’s award-winning Kids’ Media and Education team produces the PBS KIDS series ***Cyberchase***, interactive ***Mission US*** history games, and resources for families, teachers and caregivers. A leading nonprofit public media producer for more than 60 years, The WNET Group presents and distributes content that fosters lifelong learning, including initiatives addressing poverty, jobs, economic opportunity, social justice, understanding, and the environment. Through Passport, station members can stream new and archival programming anytime, anywhere. The WNET Group represents the best in public media. Join us.

About Latino Public Broadcasting

For over 28 years, [Latino Public Broadcasting](#) (LPB) has been developing award-winning film and digital media that explores the history, arts and culture of Latino Americans, bringing these powerful and illuminating stories to a national audience on PBS — on TV, online and on the PBS app.

LPB projects have spotlighted Latino contributions to the arts (*Julia Alvarez: A Life Reimagined*, *John Leguizamo's Road to Broadway*, *Raúl Julia: The World's a Stage*); told the story of Latino icons from Dolores Huerta to Luis Valdez, Tito Puente to Celia Cruz, Ruben Salazar to Roberto Clemente; explored history and politics through a Latino lens (John Leguizamo's *American Historia*, *Latino Vote 2024*); and told stories from Mexico, Puerto Rico and Latin America (*Water for Life*, *Reportero*), many as part of its signature PBS series VOCES.

LPB programs have won over 130 awards, including three prestigious George Foster Peabody Awards as well as Emmys, Imagen Awards and documentary awards at the Sundance Film Festival, including Festival Favorite, Audience Award, NEXT Special Award for Creative Expression, and Best Director. LPB has been the recipient of the Norman Lear Legacy Award and the NCLR Alma Award for Special Achievement – Year in Documentaries. Sandie Viquez Pedlow is executive director of LPB; Edward James Olmos is co-founder and chairman. Follow LPB on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Linkedin](#) and [Bluesky](#).