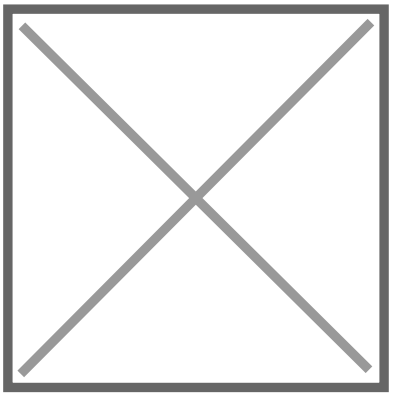


Sundance Review: Jaripeoâ??Poetry, Queerness, and Machismo Inside Mexicoâ??s Rodeo Culture

Description

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Directors: EfraÃn Mojica, **Rebecca Zweig**
Producer: Sarah Strunin
Editor: AnalÃa Goethals
Cinematography: JosuÃ© Eber Morales, **Gerardo Guerra**
Original Music: Emilia Ezeta, **Marton Radics**
Sound Design: Maria Rojas
Country: Mexico / United States / France
Runtime: 70 minutes
Languages: Spanish, English Subtitles
Festival Section: Sundance Film Festival 2026 â?? NEXT

Park City, UTâ??There is no single moment in *Jaripeo* where queerness announces itself. It drifts insteadâ??through glances held a beat too long, bodies brushing in the dark, a hand resting where it might not be noticed. Set within the jaripeos of MichoacÃ¡n, the hypermasculine rodeos that pulse with ritual, alcohol, and bravado, *Jaripeo* resists the familiar documentary impulse to expose, explain, or resolve. Directed by EfraÃn Mojica and Rebecca Zweig, the film offers something quieter and more demanding: an invitation to sit with queerness as it already exists inside traditionâ??sustained through proximity, silence, and care.

The jaripeo is a space of excess. Bulls buck violently beneath riders seeking glory; men shout, drink, and press close to one another; music pounds as night settles in. Mojica and Zweig do not frame this environment as spectacle to be decoded from a distance. They film it as atmosphereâ??thick, embodied, and disorientingâ??allowing sound, texture, and rhythm to do as much narrative work as dialogue. Masculinity here is not abstract. It is performed again and again through endurance, risk, and repetition.

A person standing in a cornfield at dusk, holding a flashlight and looking down, surrounded by tall co
Image Credit: â??Jaripeoâ?? via Sundance Film Festival / iTVS / arte/ Misfits Entertainment

Structurally, *Jaripeo* operates in a hybrid register that mirrors its thematic concerns. Digital vÃ©ritÃ© footage anchors the film in the present, while Super 8 sequences soften the frame, blurring memory and desire. The Super 8 camera functions not as nostalgia, but as attentionâ??a queer way of seeing that lingers on belts, boots, hats, hands, torsos in motion. Faces are often partial or fleeting. Bodies are present without being pinned down. The effect is not voyeuristic; it is relational. We are not asked to consume these figures, but to notice them.

Through Mojica, who appears not as an omniscient narrator but as a participant returning to a place that shaped him, we meet others who move through the jaripeo with varying degrees of visibility and risk. Figures like NoÃ© and Joseph complicate any easy opposition between machismo and queerness. What emerges across these encounters is not transgression, but care. Conversations unfold without urgency, often circling around what families know, what they accept, and what remains politely undiscussed. These exchanges feel less like interviews than check-insâ??moments of mutual recognition rather than confession.

Some early responses to *Jaripeo* have expressed a desire for moreâ??more time with individual subjects, more narrative development, more explicit storytellingâ??arguing that the film lingers too long on atmosphere and not long enough on biography. That reaction is understandable, especially given how compelling these figures are on screen. But viewing the film through that lens risks misunderstanding what *Jaripeo* is choosing not to do. This restraint is not an aesthetic limitation or a narrative gap. It is an ethical and artistic choiceâ??an ethical position rather than a narrative deficiency. Rather than extracting a lived story or demanding legibility, the film works through proximity, shared memory, and partial access, honoring the realities of queer life in communities where visibility is negotiated, not assumed.

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That ethical stance is inseparable from the filmâ??s artistic vision. In an interview conducted ahead of the filmâ??s January 25 Sundance premiere, Rebecca Zweig described *Jaripeo* as â??the longest poem Iâ??ve ever written,â• emphasizing that its structureâ??metaphorical, rhythmic, and deliberately restrainedâ??was intentional from the outset. Written like a poem, the film allows images to crash and echo rather than explain. The rodeo functions as metaphor; memory collaborates with form; sound and light carry meaning where language would flatten it. Less is more here not as minimalism, but as method.

That ethic of care extends beyond aesthetics and into the conditions under which the film was made. Over the course of four years, much of the crew lived in Mojicaâ??s family home while filmingâ??sleeping under the same roof, sharing meals, and becoming part of the household. *Jaripeo* was not made through brief visits or extractive access, but through sustained presence. It was, unmistakably, a labor of loveâ??one carried not only by Mojica, but by his entire family, whose generosity and trust made the film possible.

This approach to masculinity aligns closely with the work of Octavio Paz, whose mid-20th-century writings on Mexican identity remain foundational. In *El laberinto de la soledad*, Paz understands machismo not simply as dominance or aggression, but as a posture shaped by solitude, emotional restraint, and historical pressureâ??a performance forged under conditions of conquest, Catholic morality, and nationalist mythmaking. Masculinity, in this reading, is less about power than about containment.

While Gloria AnzaldÃºa later critiqued and reframed machismo from a Chicana, U.S.-based borderlands perspective, her intervention responds to a different historical and geographic contextâ??one shaped by diaspora, racialization in the United States, and the psychic violence of the border. For *Jaripeo*, which is grounded in rural MichoacÃ¡n rather than migration or exile, Pazâ??s framework offers a closer cultural alignment: one that allows masculinity to be read as inherited, contradictory, and vulnerableâ??making room for queerness without reducing it to either rebellion or caricature.

The filmâ??s abstracted sequencesâ??red-lit cornfields, bodies illuminated against night, horses and riders suspended between motion and stillnessâ??do not replace lived experience; they perform it. They evoke shared queer memory without reproducing it literally. What is left unsaid here is not absence. It is intention.

> A man wearing a cowboy hat enjoys a lively party atmosphere, pointing and smiling amid a crowd wi
> Image Credit: â??Jaripeoâ?? via Sundance Film Festival / iTVS / arte/ Misfits Entertainment

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That intention comes into sharp focus in the filmâ??s final moments. Sitting in the cab of a truck, Mojica reflects on the limits of deconstruction and the weight of inheritance. He speaks of trying to separate himself from the â??machoâ?• mentality he was raised within, then stops short. To deny it entirely, he suggests, would be to refuse where he comes fromâ??the values, traditions, and familial closeness that still hold beauty for him. And yet he also questions which of those traditions have grown antiquated, which behaviors no longer reflect who he is. The film does not resolve that contradiction. It lets it stand. He trails off. He takes a drink.

What makes that moment so affecting is not that it answers anything, but that it doesnâ??t. Mojica does not arrive at certainty; he arrives at honesty. He names uncertainty without apology or performance. That actâ??plain, unfinished, deeply humanâ??contains the filmâ??s deepest truth.

Jaripeo does not insist that identity be clarified, purified, or finalized. It suggests something quieter and more difficult: that it is okay not to know. That naming uncertaintyâ??without forcing resolutionâ??is itself an act of bravery. The film treats ambiguity not as failure, but as a place of care. One can question tradition without erasing it, hold beauty alongside harm, and live inside contradiction without demanding closure.

This ethic is inseparable from the filmâ??s visual beauty. The Super 8 images are intimate and tactile, reframing the rodeo as memory, desire, and metaphor. Light and sound move like verse. The beauty here is not ornamental; it is how the film thinks.

In its final movement, *Jaripeo* offers no answers and no instructions. It offers permissionâ??to sit with uncertainty, to speak it aloud, and to recognize that doing so, honestly and imperfectly, is beautiful.

> Close-up portrait of a man wearing a cowboy hat and a plaid shirt, standing outdoors with a blurred b
> Image Credit: â??Jaripeoâ?? via Sundance Film Festival / iTVS / arte/ Misfits Entertainment

Note: All quoted dialogue is transcribed from the filmâ??s English subtitles.

Screenings & Tickets

Jaripeo is an official selection of the **NEXT** section at the **Sundance Film Festival**.

In-person screenings:

- **January 25, 2026** â?? The Yarrow Theatre (World Premiere), Park City
- **January 26, 2026** â?? Megaplex Redstone, Park City
- **January 27, 2026** â?? Broadway Centre Cinemas, Salt Lake City
- **January 30 & February 1, 2026** â?? Holiday Village Cinemas, Park City

Online screenings:
Available to the public **January 29â??February 1, 2026**, with additional access for credentialed press and industry beginning January 28.

Tickets and screening availability can be found at the official Sundance Film Festival website.

Sundance Tickets

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