

RADICAL

Mexico (2023) 125 minutes

Director: Christopher Zalla

Cast: Eugenio Derbez (Sergio)
Daniel Haddad (Chucho)
Gilberto Barraza (Papa Paloma)



Screening 2nd April 2025 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Based on a true story, a teacher arrives in a Mexican school located in a border town full of neglect, corruption and violence. He tries a "radical" new method of unlocking his students' interest, potential and, maybe, even their genius.

Reviews



... The story of a wacky, unconventional teacher who inspires stubborn, disadvantaged students to succeed and excel isn't anything new. It's a great story that's been done before on screen, but Zalla's version is a lot of fun. Much of the film's success must be credited to the cast, with great actors and characters that are equally easy to fall in love with. And let's be honest here: what film hasn't benefited greatly from Derbez's potent chemistry alone? ...

... The film grows overly melodramatic as it nears its conclusion, but mostly stays positive. The story provides a constant reminder how important it is to foster a natural curiosity in children by striving to make learning fun. It tugs on the heartstrings with a familiar refrain, but as a film that is engineered to have a broad, popular appeal, it manipulates emotions by design. Despite a couple of minor stumbles, *Radical* is as crowd-pleasing as it gets.

Louisa Moore, Screen Zealots

... In contrast to his strict music teacher in *CODA* (2021) his [Eugenio Derbez's] Sergio here is the type of magical mind who leads with an air of theatricality in his interactions with sceptical children and adults. He offers his silent students a perfect score if they can speak up and give a wrong answer to a question, and when one says they want to learn about boats, he takes them to the school's barren library to look for answers. He doesn't teach them multiplication tables. This is just the beginning of Sergio's celebrated pedagogical spark, as he whips up curiosities and encourages them to learn whatever they want to. He teaches them to think for themselves ...

... *Radical* saves its most challenging material for the philosophies within, like looking at education as a process that needs resuscitation and inspiration, not the discipline and strict schedule that was put into place before Sergio arrived. And in the scheme of all the movies that *Radical* makes you think of, Zalla cleverly angles it as Sergio vs. the expectations of standardised tests and all the stuffy ideals they come with...

Nick Allen, Roger Ebert.com

Film Facts

- Sergio Juarez Correa worked at the Jose Urbina Lopez primary school in Matamoros, Mexico. He was inspired by Sugata Mitra, a British professor of educational technology who, himself, had been influenced by Summerhill founder, A S Neill, in the 1960s.
- *Radical* director Christopher Zalla's second film, won the Festival Favourite Award at the Sundance Film Festival 2023.