

television is a theme the Guerreros are famously cantankerous about. One of his father's most famous songs was titled "No Chicanos on TV," in which Lalo warbled humorously:

*I think that I shall never see
Any Chicanos on TV
It seems as though we don't exist,
And we're not even ever missed...*

So it was with a certain onus of legacy that Guerrero put pen to paper. He started by making two lists: moments of epiphany about being Latino and realizations about being gay. It wasn't long before the two lists were overlapping, merging into each other, becoming one.

What's come from it is entertainment in the true tradition of Lalo—storytelling, singing, booty-shaking but, most importantly, the use of humor to gently prod an audience into examining discrimination. And in the same way Lalo articulated a particular displacement unique to *pochos*, or U.S.-born Latinos who fit neither in the United States nor Mexico, Guerrero has taken that displacement and squared it with the introduction of sexual orientation.

Had you asked the 20-year-old musical theater actor Guerrero if he, too, would artistically explore what it meant to be Latino, he might have pirouetted away from you with a scornful toss of his head. It was the first sea change: At 14, he'd cataloged his father's every press ripple with meticulous scrapbook-keeping. "A natural archivist," Guerrero was one of his father's biggest fans.

Lalo's musical career was stunning in its diversity. He'd started young as part of the popular quartet Los Carlistas in the '30s, swung *pachuco* music in the '40s, later written protest songs for César Chávez and United Farm Workers of America, fronted a wildly popular Mexican version of Alvin and the Chipmunks called Las Ardillitas, and even collaborated with Ry Cooder toward the end of his life.

But as a young man, the younger Guerrero loved musical theater, whereas Lalo loved sports. "We had nothing in common at that time," he says simply. Off to New York City.

By the time Guerrero came back to Los Angeles as a seasoned professional, he quickly fell in with the Latino glitterati. As it turned out, they'd all worked with, or admired, Lalo. Relationships with Linda Ronstadt, Cheech Marin, Ry Cooder, Edward James Olmos and Los Lobos came about naturally and would eventually come into the

documentary on his father. But Guerrero distinguishes that, by then, "the relationships were my own." He was no longer the scrapbook-keeper but a professional in his own right who chose to celebrate his father's work.

With Lalo's passing in 2005, Guerrero's status as son had to be put aside in favor of his professional talents as producer. There was a funeral to organize, mariachis to wrangle, details to settle between two families, two homes and two cities. Hundreds needed to mourn the passing of a man who

was a National Folk Treasure and Presidential Medal of Arts winner.

It was months later, upon concluding the last interview for the documentary, that Guerrero began to mourn. He remembers the exact moment. Luis Valdez, who wrote *Zoot Suit* and the screenplay of *La Bamba*, had just finished his comments on Lalo. They'd

stopped the tape, and Guerrero crossed the room to hug and thank the playwright, as he had with all of the other subjects. But something funny happened.



Eduardo "Lalo" Guerrero is considered "The Father of Chicano Music."

"I completely lost it," Guerrero confesses. "I had not cried since he passed."

Although Lalo would never see the completed film, he was able to see a video of *¡Gaytino!* in its early stages. It would seem the entertainment statesman found truth in his own prophesy of the show being Guerrero's future. He cried at least three times, "It's like watching me!"

PORTLAND LATINO GAY PRIDE 2008 presents a free screening and reception for Lalo Guerrero: The Original Chicano from 7 to 10 p.m. June 5 at Jupiter Hotel, 800 E. Burnside St., followed by *¡Gaytino!* 8 p.m. June 6 and 7 at Miracle Theatre, 525 S.E. Stark St. Tickets are \$22-\$28 from 503-236-7253.

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