

Discover more

Reading Film Reviews



Reserving Festival Passes



Reading Entertainment News



F A

IAM-



PALESTINE CINEMA DISPATCH: WHY PRO-PALESTINIAN ACTIVISTS ARE BOYCOTTING SPIDER-MAN: BRAND NEW DAY
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/palestine-cinema-dispatch-4/>)

AUGUST 21, 2026 · 7 MINS READ



THE CURRENTS: A MYSTERIOUS AND UNASSUMING LOOK AT MENTAL TURMOIL
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/the-currents-2026-review/>)

AUGUST 21, 2026 · 2 MINS READ



COME WITH ME: A TERRIFYINGLY TIMELY EXPLORATION
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/come-with-me-2026-review/>)

AUGUST 19, 2026 · 3 MINS READ



FIL

MY

IN

CU

AL



[INTERVIEWS \(https://www.filminquiry.com/category/interviews/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/category/interviews/)

INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS AND ALEXA PENAVERGA, STARS AND PRODUCERS OF MIGHTY OAK

BY LUKE PARKER (<https://www.filminquiry.com/author/luke-parker/>)
JUNE 12, 2020



Renting Blockbuster Movies



Discover more

[Renting Blockbuster Movies](#) >

[Reading Product Reviews](#) >

[Movies](#) >

Sean McNamara's *Mighty Oak* has a huge little star at the center of it. Based largely on the performing and songwriting talents of pre-teen **Tommy Ragen**, the film follows a young man who helps regenerate the hearts and minds behind a punk-rock band.

While the film's biggest commodity comes in a tiny package, established talents including **Janel Parrish**, **Levi Dylan**, **Raven-Symoné**, as well as **Carlos and Alexa PenaVega** have all signed on to help usher **Ragen** into his respective industries.

Film Inquiry recently had the pleasure of speaking with **Carlos and Alexa PenaVega**, the famed couple who not only know a thing or two about being child actors but who also took on producing roles for *Mighty Oak*. Together, they shared their relationship with **Ragen**, as well as their creative experiences as both a married couple and as parents.

Luke Parker for Film Inquiry: So you guys have quite the little talent working here with Tommy Ragen, who, and I waited until the end credits to check this, not only sang the music but wrote a lot of it as well. Tell me how you guys met him and how he became such a central pillar of this project.

Carlos PenaVega: A little over a year ago, **Sean McNamara**, the director who we've worked with before, hit me up and basically said, "I've got this little 🇺🇸 movie, it's an incredible script. And I've got two roles for you and your wife, are you interested?"



source: Paramount Pictures

Sean's the type of guy where, if **Sean** calls, I don't even have to read the script because I know it's going to be something great. So that happened and when I read the script, I asked who's playing the little kid. And he said, "man, I got to send you a bunch of stuff." Again, **Sean** isn't the kind of director who jumps on a project he doesn't believe in, so **Sean** made sure this kid was the real deal. And when he sent me his links, that was the first time I've ever seen anything of **Tommy's**. It was just through links and it was kind of hard to believe [he was that good]. And we met him in person on what, day one?

Alexa PenaVega: Yeah, the second we arrived, we went right into rehearsals. And he's wise beyond his ears, one, but I think, on the other hand, he's not an over-the-top kid. You know how you get kid actors sometimes who are very precocious? **Tommy's** just amazing. He's so sweet. He's uber-talented. And you never feel like you're hanging out with a little kid [laughs]. And he also has this beautiful innocence about him that I think a lot of kids have lost because of social media. But he's just been so into music and into the arts that he's been able to maintain being a little boy.

I noticed you guys took producing roles on here. Did your initial impressions of Tommy help guide that decision?

Carlos PenaVega: Yeah, so basically, we're very critical on things that we get to work on together. So yeah, I think the main thing was having **Sean McNamara** on there because he's the real deal. And then, once we found out who the star was, and that this kid was *also* the real deal, that was the—

Alexa PenaVega: For us, we believe in collaboration. We believe that it takes a true team to be able to put these projects together because no one person can do it. But in that, we love being a part of the creative process, we love being a part of everything that happens after the movie is made. And for us, when we get to put on those producer hats, when we get to be involved in that process, it just makes it that much more meaningful.

Both of your characters have very important relationships with Tommy's but surprisingly, they're on opposite sides of the aisle. Like you just said, I've seen you guys talk in interviews about how collaborative your approaches are when it comes to taking on different projects. So when you guys were first exploring the story or first trying to get into the mind of your characters, how were your perspectives of the story different?

Alexa PenaVega: That's a really good question. You know, while filming this project, I was pregnant with our second son. I was actually five months pregnant—

In the movie?!

Alexa PenaVega: Yeah! And we were trying to hide it, but I had a pretty large belly at that time. But anyway, when we were in rehearsal, it was really cool to sit in Tommy and have that connection with him. I think because I was pregnant – and our first son was with us on set the entire time – that kind of mom instincts were already there. Being pregnant, that extra hormonal place [helped].



source: Paramount Pictures

Valerie is such a unique character because if you're watching her from the viewpoint of the audience, you think she's just this terrible, awful mom. But really, she's just hurting and her sweet little boy is taking care of her. People think she's a drug addict, but really, she's just broke and can't get help for her sickness. And it's heartbreaking, but I kind of started thinking of my life, thinking "man, I'd do anything for my kids." But also at the same time, while she was put in such a difficult position, I think the theme of the [movie](#) is hope and how you might find it in the craziest place. Like all of these people had given up hope and moved on from their dreams, but then comes this little boy who changes everything for them. Hope came in the smallest package.

Carlos, I wanted to direct that towards you as well because you're a father as well, obviously, and both of you guys have taken on a lot of role model characters recently. What is it about these younger, inspirational adult characters that speak to you as an actor?

Carlos PenaVega: I think it's super important. These types of movies and these types of characters, I feel, are so rare nowadays. All these movies come out and we cringe because there are kids watching this, there are kids going out and they want to be like this character or be like that character, and feel-good, hope-driving family movies really resonate with us.

Alexa PenaVega: This one was definitely a little more on the edge...

Carlos PenaVega: Right, but it's so aspirational.

Alexa PenaVega: Absolutely!

Carlos PenaVega: I don't think any parent is going to watch this and go, "my kid can't watch this movie." Something I do want to add, which is kind of my revelation with this story, is that I had this band in the day called Big Time Rush.

Yeah, I've heard of them [laughs].

Carlos PenaVega: [laughs] It was a fun run, it was a fun run. We performed in front of these huge, crazy audiences and there was so much energy. And here, I'm playing this character who was huge in their mind, and these little shows they played meant the world to them. I remember having a conversation with **Sean** going, "you know, it's amazing to me that there are people all around the world. And we forget how important these things are to these people."

Like back when I was in high school, my drama plays, that was the end-all, be-all of my life. At the time, I had to get a certain role and my parents had to be there, but looking back, it was a little high school play. So it was really cool to be in these characters where these intimate performances and shows in front of 30 people meant everything. This, for them, completes their life. And it was really cool to have that perspective [again].



source: Paramount Pictures

You guys touched on this earlier, but we're seeing more and more films these days where the foundation revolves around young, child stars. When a movie is so largely based on the talent and charisma of a young kid, what happens to the dynamic on set?

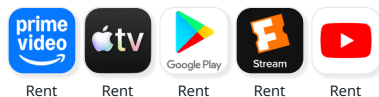
Alexa PenaVega: Honestly, if anything, it enhances it. I also think it depends on the person. **Tommy** is such a chill little kid, and he's excited like he still gets excited about things. And, like I said, I think the biggest thing about him is that there's such an innocence about him. **Sean** did an excellent job capturing that. When you watch this movie, you really feel like he's this sweet little kid, which is also a huge testament to his parents. His parents are awesome.

But I think nowadays, it's tough. You watch movies with little kids – and I'm not trying to bag on kid actors because I was a kid actor and I felt like we weren't all like this – but with social media and everything, kids know that they're doing all this stuff. **Tommy** doesn't have any of that. Being on set, and having a story [surrounding] his talent, I feel like, if anything, it enhanced the experience and allowed everything to feel organic.

Film Inquiry thanks Alexa and Carlos PenaVega for taking the time to talk with us.

Mighty Oak is currently available on streaming platforms.

WATCH MIGHTY OAK



Powered by

(<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/mighty-oak>)

× [Renting Blockbuster Movies](#)

DOES CONTENT LIKE THIS MATTER TO YOU?

Become a Member and support film journalism. Unlock access to all of Film Inquiry's great articles. Join a community of like-minded readers who are passionate about cinema - get access to our private members Network, give back to independent filmmakers, and more.

TAGS — [ALEXA PENAVEGA \(https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/alexa-penavega/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/alexa-penavega/) [CARLOS PENAVEGA \(https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/carlos-penavega/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/carlos-penavega/) [COMEDY \(https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/comedy/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/comedy/) [DRAMA \(https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/drama/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/drama/) [INTERVIEW \(https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/interview/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/interview/) [MIGHTY OAK \(https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/mighty-oak/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/tag/mighty-oak/)



LUKE PARKER (<https://www.filminquiry.com/author/luke-parker/>) [🔗\(https://muckrack.com/lukeparker\)](https://muckrack.com/lukeparker)

[🐦\(https://twitter.com/monty_parker31\)](https://twitter.com/monty_parker31) [f\(https://www.facebook.com/truegrit31\)](https://www.facebook.com/truegrit31) [in\(https://www.linkedin.com/in/lukeparker31/\)](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lukeparker31/)

Luke Parker is an award-winning film critic and columnist based in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. As an entertainment journalist, he has interviewed several members of the film industry and participated in some of its most prestigious events as a member of the press. Currently, he is working to obtain his bachelor's degree in Mass Communication at Towson University.

f SHARE (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=https://www.filminquiry.com/interview-carlos-alexa-penavega/>)

🐦 TWEET [text=Interview%20With%20Carlos%20And%20Alexa%20PenaVega,%20Stars%20And%20Producers%20Of%20MIGHTY%20OAK&url=https://www.filminquiry.com/interview-carlos-alexa-penavega/](#)

👍 SHARE (<https://reddit.com/submit?url=https://www.filminquiry.com/interview-carlos-alexa-penavega/>)

✉️ SHARE [subject=Interview%20With%20Carlos%20And%20Alexa%20PenaVega,%20Stars%20And%20Producers%20Of%20MIGHTY%20OAK&url=https://www.filminquiry.com/interview-carlos-alexa-penavega/](#)

RELATED POSTS



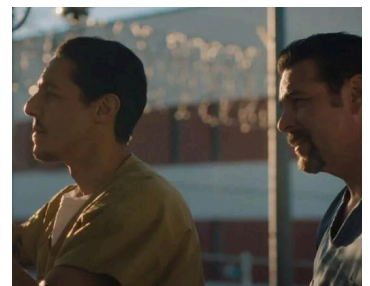
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/der->



(<https://www.filminquiry.com/the->



(<https://www.filminquiry.com/teach->



(<https://www.filminquiry.com/brat->

× [Renting Blockbuster Movies](#)

[fan-1982-review/](#)

[currents-2026-review/](#)

[death-and-sex-2026-review/](#)

[2026-review/](#)

FILM REVIEWS
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/category/reviews/>)

FILM REVIEWS
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/category/reviews/>)

FILM REVIEWS
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/category/reviews/>)

FILM REVIEWS
(<https://www.filminquiry.com/category/reviews/>)

[DER FAN: A TEENAGE DREAM TURNED NIGHTMARE
\(<https://www.filminquiry.com/der-fan-1982-review/>\)](#)

[THE CURRENTS: A MYSTERIOUS AND UNASSUMING LOOK AT
MENTAL TURMOIL \(<https://www.filminquiry.com/the-currents-2026-review/>\)](#)

[TEENAGE SEX AND DEATH AT CAMP MIASMA: LUST FOR LIFE
\(AND DEATH\) \(<https://www.filminquiry.com/teenage-death-and-sex-2026-review/>\)](#)

[SHARPLY WRITTEN WITH A SCREEN STEALING THEO ROSSI
\(<https://www.filminquiry.com/bruton-2026-review/>\)](#)

[\(https://www.filminquiry.com/\)](https://www.filminquiry.com/)


[\(<https://facebook.com/filminquiry>\)](https://facebook.com/filminquiry)


[\(<https://twitter.com/filminquiry>\)](https://twitter.com/filminquiry)


[\(<https://youtube.com/channel/UCZFZ4DP48M8UZXO46GO30LG>\)](https://youtube.com/channel/UCZFZ4DP48M8UZXO46GO30LG)

[TEAM\(<https://www.filminquiry.com/team/>\)](#)

[ABOUT\(<https://www.filminquiry.com/about/>\)](#)

[MERCH\(<http://www.teepublic.com/stores/filminquiry>\)](#)

[WRITERS](#)