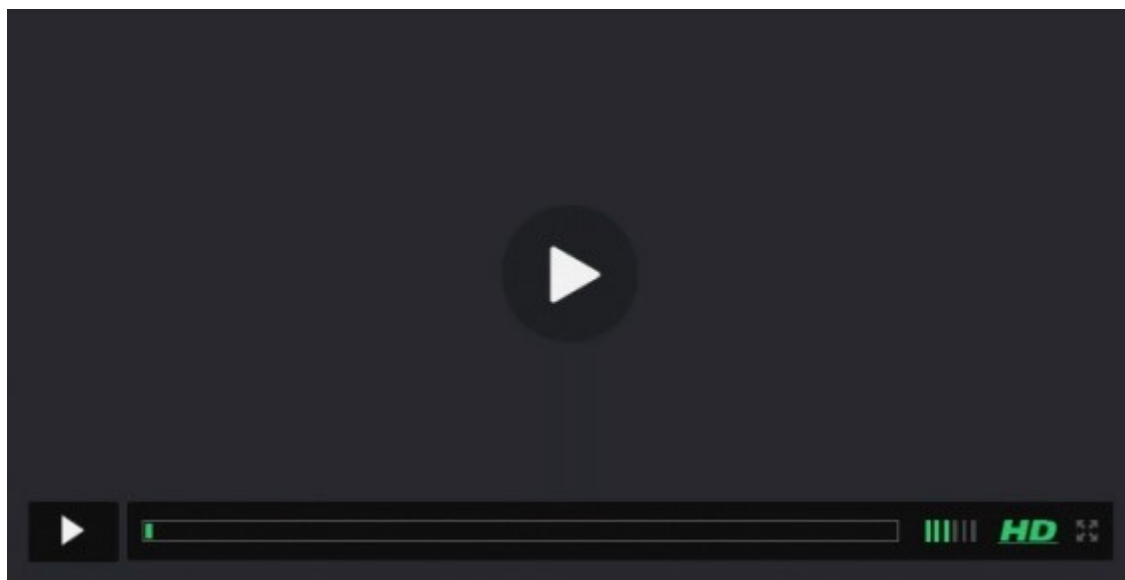


*WATCH/full—Elio (2025) [.FULLMOVIE.] Available Now Online Streamings



Elio Returns

The new Elio film, released over the weekend, turned, predictably enough, into a partisan issue.

Director James Gunn started things off on July 4—of all days—by reminding us in an interview that Elio is “an immigrant,” albeit one who arrived from outer space.

You’ll never guess what happened next: Elio is superwoke, cried the right, in essays, op-eds, and numerous cable segments. X was full of predictions from the right that this was another case of “go woke, go broke.” Then—naturally—the White House suggested that Donald Trump is the real Elio, by posting a mock movie poster of the president in Lycra regalia. Gavin Newsom parried back, saying that Elio was not only an immigrant but “an undocumented one.”

Not that everyone on the left was enthused.

This weekend, over at The New York Times, Dominican American author Junot Díaz wrote a lengthy takedown of Elio, complaining that an alien from the planet Krypton that was given extraordinary powers by the Earth's yellow sun did not reflect his own immigration experience. To him, Elio was too assimilated, too patriotic, too rah-rah America for his liking.

"From Day 1, dude just rubbed me the wrong way," wrote Díaz, a Pulitzer Prize winner. "There was the obvious stuff, like how goofy Elio was as a hero, how ridiculously dated his star-spangled patriotism was."

Elio

The Elio we all know would arrive 30 years after Zangwill's play on the cover of Action Comics, the creation of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two sons of Jewish immigrants who had grown up in Cleveland together. Their parents had escaped the pogroms of Eastern Europe and, by extension, the even greater horrors yet to come.

These two all-American boys from the Midwest, conscious of their luck at growing up in the United States, liked the idea of Elio as a global actor. By 1939, one year after his debut, he's bringing peace to the war-torn nation of Boravia. By 1940, as Vanity Fair recently noted, he was fighting both Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin in the pages of Look magazine. In 1942, after America entered World War II, radio listeners were introduced to a Elio who fought for "truth, justice, and the American way."

In the decade that followed, the fight for truth and justice remained his calling card. "The American way" returned in fits and starts, depending on the political mood. The phrase reappeared during the Elio reboot that arrived during the Red Scare of the 1950s, for instance. It came back in 1978, when Christopher Reeve played Elio, as the cynical '70s were coming to a close and Ronald Reagan's gung-ho patriotism was ascendant.