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Touching, funny Gilda Radner documentary starts Friday at Speed Cinema

By **LISA HORNING** | September 20, 2018 9:00 am



Gene and Gilda Radner and their dog, Sparkle | Courtesy of Magnolia Pictures

Gilda Radner was the first person chosen as a cast member of “Saturday Night Live” in 1975, and she quickly became one of the favorites. Her engaging personality shone through her famous characters, such as Roseanne Roseannadanna, the

hard-of-hearing Emily Litella, the nerdy Lisa Loopner, and the Girl Scout with the overactive imagination, Judy Miller.

While her life seemed to be on a constant upswing, she suffered many painful setbacks. From a constant battle with weight that caused her to suffer from bulimia to a miscarriage to a diagnosis of ovarian cancer that eventually ended her life, she managed to continue to laugh and make those around her laugh, too.

Radner's life is chronicled in a new documentary by Lisa D'Apolito titled "[Love, Gilda](#)." The film starts Friday, Sept. 21, and will screen through Friday, Oct. 5, at [Speed Cinema](#) inside the Speed Art Museum.

At a preview on Friday, Sept. 14, hosted by [Gilda's Club of Louisville](#), Radner's brother, Michael Radner, participated in a video chat with the audience after the show and said he is pleased with the film.



"It's exactly the kind of film she deserves," said Michael Radner.

Interspersed with clips from her classic comedy bits on "SNL" are recordings of her reading from her diary and memoirs, sharing her saddest and loneliest moments with the audience. Modern comedians Amy Poehler, Melissa McCarthy, Maya Rudolph, Cecily Strong and Bill Hader read from her notes and discuss how she influenced their careers.

Gilda's friends tell stories of how they came to know her and their impressions of her during the time they worked with her — comedy greats like Chevy Chase, Lorne Michaels, Laraine Newman and Martin Short.

Gilda's local impact

As mentioned in "Love, Gilda," Gilda Radner found great comfort in joining a community of cancer sufferers and believed that no one should face cancer alone. Michael Radner added that even toward the end of her life, Gilda brought

people into her home who were going through cancer treatment to help them all she could.



Gilda Radner | Courtesy of Magnolia Pictures

After Gilda's death in 1989, Joanna Bull, Radner's cancer psychotherapist, founded [Gilda's Club](#) along with Gilda's husband, the actor Gene Wilder, and the movie critic Joel Siegel, who later died of cancer. Gilda's Club now has 20 locations worldwide. It works with cancer patients and family members to help them see through the difficult journey that begins with a diagnosis.

Gilda's Club Louisville is in the process of expansion right now, with new support groups being held in Southern Indiana at the Norton Cancer Institute's Pat Harrison Cancer Resource Center in Jeffersonville. The organization is about halfway through fundraising for its \$12 million capital campaign, which will help it move to a larger space on Grinstead Drive, in the former Burger's Market building.

By 2020, Gilda's Club Louisville plans to have a branch in west Louisville in conjunction with [Passport Health](#) and [Kentucky African-Americans Against Cancer](#).

"We think that three-pronged approach will raise our capacity and increase awareness of our services," said Karen Morrison, executive director of Gilda's Club Louisville. "And, hopefully, the big goal is to transform the face of cancer in our community in terms of the way people live with it."

Gilda's Club representatives will be at every screening of "Love, Gilda," Morrison said. They will offer information, sell T-shirts and take donations during the run of the film.

Morrison hadn't seen the film before the screening on Sept. 14, but Michael Radner had told her she wouldn't be disappointed. The tears in her eyes after seeing it showed the audience how it affected her.

At Gilda's Club, staff and volunteers see cancer patients of all backgrounds and ages. The goal is to offer support and

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encouragement through all the ups and downs.

“One of the big myths is that we’re just for women or that were just breast- and ovarian-cancer related,” Morrison said. “Our youngest member with cancer was diagnosed in utero, and our oldest was in his 90s.”



Gilda enjoyed scrapbooking.
| Courtesy of Magnolia
Pictures

Gilda’s Club Louisville sees about 1,600 people a year, with about 14,000 visits. About seven new members visit every week, Morrison said. The club hosts support groups, gentle yoga classes, cooking classes, camps for kids and social events, among others.

“We’ve always felt at Gilda’s Club our mission is in her and honoring her life her legacy,” Morrison said. “And as long as there is cancer, we’ll make sure there’s support for men, women and children.”

Though Gilda Radner lost her battle with cancer, her laughter and joy continues to shine through the people touched by Gilda’s Club.

“We always say, living with cancer is not a choice, but how you live with it is your choice,” said Morrison. “And that’s really what Gilda’s Club is all about.”

“Love, Gilda” is playing at Speed Cinema from Sept. 21 through Oct. 5. Several showings have already sold out. [Tickets](#) are \$9.

LISA HORNING

Lisa Horning a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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