

ARTS

Wilder-Radner team fizzles

By LORNA GRALLA Staff Writer

The names Gene Wilder and Gilda Radner are usually synonymous with the hottest property in Hollywood comedy. Unfortunately, Hanky Panky, their first attempt as a film duo, lives up to neither its title nor its billing as a "romantic thriller." In Hanky Panky, both action and dialogue lack the spontaneity of humor found in Wilder's earlier films and Radner's television skits.

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Three murders, the acts of a corrupt government agent and his syringe-swinging accomplices, bring together witness Michael Jordon (Gene Wilder) and avenger Kate Hellman (Gilda Radner). With the root of all evil, a stolen computer tape, in their possession, the pair is chased by villainous Ransom (Richard Widmark) through New York City, the New England Aquarium, and finally the Grand Canyon. Director Sidney Poitier, unable to muster the high-tension chase scenes of Stir Cracy, instead settles for a tedious city-to-city romp. A handful of gags do little to break the two-hour monotony.

Perhaps the biggest fault of Hanky Panky is its tameness. The title suggests questionable activity or possibly illicit sex; however, little of either surfaces on the screen. Before the film begins, the underhanded incident has already occurred, leaving nothing but a game of hide-and-go-seek for a story line. As for a budding romance, the word "mushy"to the point of being embarrassing-might sum it up best.

Wilder and Radner seem less a couple in love than a Laurel and Hardy duet assisting one another in bumbling along. The tragedy is that they're not funny. Gene Wilder shouts his way through each episode, his voice decibels higher than should be permitted in a theatre. Gilda Radner, who begins the film as a witty sidekick in conservative dress, changes midway into a whiny, scratchyvoiced ingenue in blue jeans.

The film's waste of high-calibre talent is a shame. With comic successes in Mel Brooks' Blazing Saddles and Young Frankenstein, Gene Wilder the melodramatic victim has become a standard. Hanky Panky, however, appears to be an attempt at enlarging on his romantic, if not sexual, appeal as the victim. But with little support from the script, this endeavor backfires. Radner's performance is no comparison to that in Gilda Radner-Live from New York, although an occasional facial expression is mildly reminiscent of her homemade character, Roseanne Roseanadanna.

Unfortunately this initial pairing of Wildner and Radner is more than a bit rough around the edges.

