

GILMORE GIRLS: A YEAR IN THE LIFE

In what has become one of this year's most anticipated television events, Lorelai, Rory and the rest of the *Gilmore Girls* gang reunite on Netflix for a special four-part event, *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*.

Written, directed and executive produced by series creator **Amy Sherman-Palladino** and executive producer **Daniel Palladino**, *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* is presented in four 90-minute chapters, each launching globally on Netflix **Friday, Nov. 25, 2016, at 12:01 a.m. PT.**

"When Netflix popped up ... we thought, 'Well, what a great opportunity to delve into a different form, to tell stories in a different way using beloved characters and to get back in a room with these actors and be able to go at it again,'" says Sherman-Palladino. "It was just such an exciting challenge."

When *Gilmore Girls* debuted in 2000, it told the story of a close relationship between a 32-year-old mother and her 16-year-old daughter. Accentuating that relationship were stacks of stories and characters within their cozy town of Stars Hollow, Connecticut.

Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life brings back countless favorites from the original series, including **Lauren Graham** (Lorelai Gilmore), **Alexis Bledel** (Rory Gilmore), **Kelly Bishop** (Emily Gilmore) and **Scott Patterson** (Luke Danes). It also pays tribute to actor **Edward Herrmann** (Richard Gilmore), who died in 2014.

"For me, it was just an incredible experience – it's like getting a chance to go to college when you're really ready, when you really get what an incredible opportunity you have and how rare the time is," Graham says. "We were given the gift to get to go back knowing those things, and it just felt really emotional."

Since *Gilmore Girls*' seven-season broadcast run ended in 2007, fans from all over the world have discovered the series through syndication and, of course, by streaming the episodes on Netflix.

"When it hit Netflix, a whole new generation of people came up to us and started talking to us about the show, which is a really fun thing, because that doesn't happen with every show," says Daniel Palladino.

Among the actors reprising their roles on the series are **Rose Abdoo, Keiko Agena, Matt Czuchry, Chris Eigeman, Sean Gunn, Todd Lowe, Melissa McCarthy, Jared Padalecki, Danny Strong, Sally Struthers, David Sutcliffe, Liz Torres, Yanic Truesdale, Milo Ventimiglia, Liza Weil** and **Michael Winters**.

Fans can expect to see Stars Hollow restored in all its glory, from Luke's Diner to the Dragonfly Inn to Lorelai's charming Connecticut home. Instantly recognizable writing from Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino is on display, too, with enough rapid-fire dialogue and pop-culture references to require repeat viewings.

"It's going to be faster and more furious than ever, believe me, with longer scenes, longer speeches (and) longer machine-gun dialogue back and forth," Patterson says. "This is Gilmore 2.0."

Perhaps most of all, *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* is a gift to the fans that have supported the series and made it clear they weren't quite ready to say goodbye.

"It's amazing to know that people are eagerly awaiting the release of these episodes and that they have loved the show all these years," Bledel says. "It's why we do this – to be able to communicate something that people are going to love and talk about and enjoy together."

Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life is produced by Dorothy Parker Drank Here Productions in association with Warner Bros. Television. Amy Sherman-Palladino is the creator and executive producer of the series, and Daniel Palladino serves as executive producer as well. The pair wrote and directed all four installments.

THE STORY CONTINUES: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

When we last saw the Gilmores, Rory had just graduated from Yale and was poised to cover Barack Obama's presidential campaign. Lorelai and Luke shared a kiss, hinting there might be a future for the couple.

Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life kicks off in present-day Stars Hollow, where Lorelai still runs the Dragonfly Inn (and chugs coffee like it's water) and Rory, now 32, has experienced some career success.

"It's not a story about a little girl anymore who's in high school," Graham says. "It's a story about a young woman and kind of the struggles she faces. Yet the dynamics

between (Rory, Lorelai and Emily) ... they've grown up, but they're the same. And that kind of foundation of 'Here are the people you have to rely on' can take you through any age."

"What was cool about writing for these two is now it wasn't a high-school girl and her mom; it's two women," says Sherman-Palladino. "Suddenly, they can have cocktails together. They can sit and drink and talk about shit. So family is great, because it is, for a writer, the gift that keeps on giving."

As Rory works through job-related struggles and Lorelai deals with some unresolved issues of her own, viewers will see how Emily Gilmore has been handling the loss of her dear husband, Richard.

"We deal with flashbacks, we deal with memories, we deal with the ups and downs of grieving," Bishop says. "It's a very interesting process for my character."

Of course, that's only a hint of what's happening in Stars Hollow. Without giving too much away, fans will learn about Kirk's latest business idea, see a new musical staged by Taylor, hear what Lane and her band have been up to, of course, find out what citizens are buzzing about at the latest town meeting.

"(For) Amy and Dan, this world is so alive, and they had plenty of story to tell," Graham says.

"I think what (fans) are going to get is not a hybrid version of a TV episode; you're going to get four films," Patterson says. "There's going to be a lot of resolution, a lot of healing, a lot of questions answered, a lot of new questions popping up and some real satisfaction for the fans."

THE CAST: ONCE A GILMORE, ALWAYS A GILMORE

Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life welcomes back dozens of familiar faces, most notably **Lauren Graham** as Lorelai Gilmore and **Alexis Bledel** as her daughter, Rory.

Nominated for a Golden Globe Award, Screen Actors Guild Award, Television Critics Association Award and other accolades for playing Lorelai, Graham followed the role with a powerful performance as Sarah Braverman on the NBC drama series *Parenthood*, which ran for six seasons.

“To be reunited with Amy and Dan at this point of my life has been even more gratifying than I thought it was going to be,” Graham says. “*Parenthood* had a kind of looseness to it, language-wise, and at times an improvisational spirit. *Gilmore Girls*, to me, is like musical theater. ... It’s very language-driven.”

She adds, “After kind of emoting on *Parenthood*, I was completely ready to come back to this athletic, verbal world. And just how we’ve grown and changed as people meant that it was more collaborative even then it had been before.”

Lorelai has always been an independent person, and the new episodes find her as she continues to carve her own path as well as resolve some long-bubbling conflict.

“I always thought of Lorelai as having a certain degree of arrested development,” Graham says. “She didn’t really get to have her fun, teenage years. ... There’s a kind of reluctance to grow up to a certain degree, and I think that’s definitely still present.”

As for Lorelai’s love life, fans will learn pretty quickly that, yes, she is still with Luke, played by **Scott Patterson**.

“Shooting with Lauren is just easy, a wonderful workflow,” Patterson says. “We didn’t have to spend any time trying to reconnect or ‘Oh, gosh, how are we going to do this?’ It was just like (*snaps his fingers*) right off the bat.”

After playing Rory Gilmore for seven seasons, **Alexis Bledel** went on to star in several feature films including *The Good Guy*, *Violet & Daisy* and *Jenny’s Wedding* and make memorable guest appearances on series like *ER* and *Mad Men*.

While Rory is just 16 in the *Gilmore Girls* pilot, she’s 32 in *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, giving the actress a rare opportunity to portray a character at very different phases in her life.

“It was an incredible opportunity for me to get to play Rory; it was my first acting job,” Bledel says. “She’s definitely the character I know best, (and) I feel a certain amount of ownership over her.”

“You know, when Alexis started, she was 19 years old or something,” Graham says. “She (didn’t have) much experience, and there was always an easy natural truth to her. But in the years (since), she’s been really thoughtful about who she is as an actor and

has really kind of taken ownership of that. Personally, it was very gratifying to me that we both got to return to these characters with a little more life experience.”

Kelly Bishop plays Emily Gilmore, a conservative, wealthy woman who shares few personality traits with her daughter, Lorelai. Emily lives outside of cozy Stars Hollow in a sprawling home in Hartford, Connecticut.

“She’s a bit snobbish, and she can be very severe at times,” Bishop says.

Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life finds Emily at a major crossroads in her life, recently widowed and trying to figure out what to do next. The new episodes poignantly memorialize series regular **Edward Herrmann**, who played her husband, Richard Gilmore, and passed away in 2014.

“Edward Herrmann was not only such a wonderful actor, he was a friend,” Bishop says. “He would have so enjoyed this – he would have loved to come back and do this show again, so we keep feeling like he’s around. (His death) definitely affects Emily’s journey very profoundly.”

Adds Graham: “Losing Ed was, and still is, a great loss for us personally. It was also part of our story that we were telling, which was the journey of how everyone is recovering. It plays into all the choices the characters are making and what they're dealing with in a new way.”

Richard’s death forces Emily and Lorelai to finally reexamine their own fraught relationship, which hasn’t changed much since the beginning of the series.

“Emily needs her in a way that she didn’t when Richard was alive,” Graham says. “Lorelai’s in a position to be supportive to her mom.”

Scott Patterson also returns to the mix as Luke Danes, the hard-working and dependable owner of the local diner who forges a deep connection with Lorelai.

“He’s that guy that exists in that small world of his and he doesn’t like change,” Patterson says. “He doesn’t really like to deviate from the norm at all.”

Graham adds, “He’s sort of a certain kind of man that you don’t see on TV that much anymore. He is a simple guy but full of love, and I think that really comes through.”

Of the new episodes, she adds, “I think Scott really got to show some more colors in this.”

The long list of returning players includes several people in Rory’s circle, like her best friend Lane (**Keiko Agena**), who still plays in a band with her husband, Zack (**Todd Lowe**), and is the mother of twin boys.

“Lane is still a constant in Rory’s life,” Bledel says. “It’s always fun working with Keiko; we worked together for so many years and established this dynamic that the two characters have that’s really easy. It’s like family.”

Liza Weil also pops up as Rory’s friend (and occasional nemesis) Paris, and Rory’s most memorable ex-boyfriends – Logan (**Matt Czuchry**), Jess (**Milo Ventimiglia**) and Dean (**Jared Padalecki**) – surface throughout the chapters. While some fans may tune in to find out which former love Rory may end up with, both the actors and writers emphasize that there are many other things going on in her life.

“I think Rory’s able to have a lot of fun with (Logan), but then there’s also a big difference between where they come from,” Bledel says. “(Jess) had this sort of rebellious energy, (and) Rory still connected with him very much intellectually. But he challenged her quite a bit and forced her to grow up in some ways and kind of regress in other ways.”

As for the Stars Hollow staples, almost every fan favorite graces the screen again, from Babette (**Sally Struthers**) to Miss Patty (**Liz Torres**) to **Grant-Lee Phillips** as the street-corner troubadour.

“Gypsy, played by **Rose Abdoo**, has a great part in these revival episodes,” Bledel says. “Kirk, played by **Sean Gunn**, has a great storyline. (And) I think we’ve said that **Carole King** comes back – she’s always amazing, because she will play songs between takes for us.”

Of course, one of the most anticipated cast members to return is **Melissa McCarthy** as Sookie St. James, the head chef and co-owner of the Dragonfly Inn. (**Jackson Douglas** also returns as Sookie’s husband, and **Yanic Truesdale** reprises his role as snooty-but-lovable concierge Michel.)

“I would have been so upset if that hadn’t happened,” Graham says of McCarthy’s return. “She was such an important part of the show, my life. The fact that she got to

come almost near the end, and we had an incredible time ... it just made it even more perfect.”

“The supporting cast isn’t really supporting cast – they’re series regulars,” Patterson says. “Seeing everybody in their characters again once we all got on set, it was just it was like no time had gone by. It felt like we were beginning Season Eight.”

BEHIND THE SCENES: BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

As many fans know, it took a lot of time, effort and coordination for *Gilmore Girls* to return. Not only do the new chapters reunite the actors with each other, they bring back the talents of series creator/executive producer **Amy Sherman-Palladino** and executive producer **Daniel Palladino**.

“We pitched four 90-minute chapters taking place over the course of a year,” Palladino says of the revival. “In the old days, there would have been no outlet for that. But (with Netflix), there's new ways for people like us, who were bored with the old ways, to tell stories.”

“What was so great about this is I really feel like we got to do it together,” Sherman-Palladino says. “There will be nothing else in my career like what we got to do (here).”

Amy and Dan wrote and directed each of the four “seasons” that make up *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*. The new installments enable them to build upon characters and settings that instantly feel familiar.

“When I sat down with the first script, I was about 20 pages into it, and I thought, *I’m right here, I’m in Stars Hollow*,” Bishop says. “It just feels like all of these people have been living their full lives for the last nine years, and we’re just now moving on.”

Since the original sets weren’t preserved, a dedicated crew had to rebuild Luke’s Diner, Rory’s bedroom, Sookie’s kitchen and the rest of the town from photographs.

“The thing that you forget is how much work it takes to construct one of these sets,” Patterson says. “It was a fantastic transformation; the before and after pictures were quite amazing.”

“The set that I probably felt the most connected to was my parents’ house, because that’s the place where so many of my favorite scenes took place,” Graham says. “To walk into that set without Ed (Herrmann) was very memorable and sad. ... That was the day I knew we weren’t on the old show.”

Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life showcases an ideal marriage of talent, enthusiasm and pitch-perfect storytelling.

“The restrictions of having to break for commercial kind of never made sense with this show,” Graham says. “(With Netflix), they had the ability to tell the story exactly how they wanted to tell it. ... I couldn’t have hoped for anything better, really.”

‘GILMORE’ FANS: A LONG-AWAITED RETURN

In the last nine years, fans of *Gilmore Girls* have remained loyal – often by rewatching the episodes on Netflix. That streamability has also attracted new viewers, some of whom were too young to catch it the first time around or, perhaps, lived in a part of the world where it wasn’t accessible pre-Netflix.

Says Sherman-Palladino: “I was finding there was a lot of (fans saying), ‘I watched this with my daughter’ or ‘It gave me opportunities to talk to my daughter.’”

“It’s so smart, so well-written that you can come to it at different ages,” adds Graham. “Maybe at a young girl’s age, you just got the relationships, and then as you watch it again, you get more of the references.”

Over the years, fans have created countless websites, podcasts, social media accounts and other tributes to the series. Its themes of family can hit home, as can its tone, which stands out amid so much dark drama on TV today.

“There’s not a meanness in this show – and I think the sweetness is obvious right there with the opening credits,” Bishop says.

“There’s a sort of glow and a nostalgia for a simpler time,” Graham says. “Amy always says she’s incapable of accepting modern technology into her works, so it’s about connection and people speaking to one another. It’s just a very idyllic, fun, smart (place) to spend your time.”

“I was walking through the Austin airport, and a fellow walked up to me and just started crying,” Patterson says of one fan encounter. “He said he was in a sniper battalion in Iraq, and he had done four tours, and they watched *Gilmore Girls* obsessively.”

And the ending? Much has been made of the secretive “final four words” of *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*. Ask the cast about it, though, and don’t expect a spoiler-y answer.

“It’s the way (Amy) originally wanted to end the series, so it’s something she’s been thinking about for a long time,” Bledel says. “Hopefully, it will ring true for our biggest fans.”

“I just felt like every question I wanted answered about that character came true,” Graham says of the revival. “It was so moving to me that we got to do this; I was full of just an embarrassing amount of gratitude.”

ABOUT NETFLIX

Netflix is the world’s leading Internet television network with more than 83 million members in over 190 countries enjoying more than 125 million hours of TV shows and movies per day, including original series, documentaries and feature films. Members can watch as much as they want, anytime, on nearly any Internet-connected screen. Other Netflix original series include the Emmy- and Golden Globe-winning political drama *House of Cards*; the Emmy-winning comedy-drama *Orange is the New Black*; the critically acclaimed, Tina Fey-produced *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*; and the nostalgic sci-fi thriller *Stranger Things*.