



## **RAI DOCUMENTARI PRESENTS "THE AVIATOR"**

### ***Gilles Villeneuve: The Driver Who Revived the Legend of Nuvolari***

*Forty years after his passing, a documentary retraces the story of one of Ferrari's most iconic drivers—remembered to this day as one of the bravest and most beloved of all time.*

*A Prime-Time Special by Rai Documentari: May 10th on Rai Due*

**Rome, April 30, 2022** – Forty years after his passing, Rai Documentari dedicates a special prime-time event to Gilles Villeneuve with "**The Aviator**," airing May 10th on Rai Due. The documentary explores the life and legacy of one of Ferrari's most iconic drivers, who died during the qualifying trials of the 1982 Belgian Grand Prix and is remembered today as one of the bravest and most beloved figures in racing history.

A co-production by **Sonne Film and K+** in collaboration with **Rai Documentari**, directed by Giangiaco De Stefano—who also co-wrote the script with Federico Fava and Valentina Zanella—and supported by the Emilia-Romagna Region, "The Aviator" retraces the Canadian driver's life. Narrated by Ivano Marescotti, the film uses interviews, archival footage, and animations to recount his most legendary races, incredible performances, and the behind-the-scenes stories that defined them.

**Maranello, August 1977.** Twenty-five years old with the build of a jockey—1.56m tall and weighing 50kg—Canadian Gilles Villeneuve is named the new Ferrari driver, stepping in for Niki Lauda. Transitioning from a snowmobile champion in Canada to racing cars, Villeneuve brought an "exceptional" driving style to the Formula 1 Circus. By choosing the then-unknown Villeneuve to succeed Lauda, Enzo Ferrari made a bet with himself, discovering that the Canadian shared the same "fearless DNA" as Tazio Nuvolari. A great bond was formed. Villeneuve was a diamond in the rough through whom "Il Drake" could prove to the world that he was still a master talent scout, building the myth of the Prancing Horse that had always been his goal.

The documentary's narrative thread is the relationship between the Italian motorsport world and Villeneuve from the late 1970s until 1982. His legendary feats fueled the so-called "**Villeneuve Fever**," an unparalleled passion that captivated millions of Italians. His was a unique career in a legendary yet painful era of Formula 1, marked by the losses of drivers like Tom Pryce, Ronnie Peterson, Patrick Depailler, and Riccardo Paletti.

Indomitable and exuberant behind the wheel, Villeneuve was a man of few words in his private life, with few but solid friendships—somewhat of an outsider in a world of high society and glitz. His family was always by his side, living in a motorhome parked at the end of the paddock. Profiling the Canadian driver are colleagues and champions such as **René Arnoux, Bruno Giacomelli, and Jody Scheckter**, alongside unforgettable figures from Scuderia Ferrari like engineer **Mauro Forghieri**, and historic Italian sports journalists like Pino Allievi and Ezio Zermiani. The portrait is further enriched by anecdotes from those who worked alongside him, from Ferrari mechanics to Renata Nosetto, the first female head of press in F1.

With 68 Grands Prix contested, 6 victories, and 13 podiums, Gilles Villeneuve did not need a World Championship title to secure his place in Formula 1 history and in the hearts of countless fans.

**"The Aviator" is a co-production of Sonne Film and K+ in collaboration with Rai Documentari, directed by Giangiaco De Stefano and written by De Stefano, Federico Fava, and Valentina Zanella. It was produced with the support of the Emilia-Romagna Region and in collaboration with the Municipality of Imola for filming at the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari.**

**Rai Documentari** – Established in January 2020, Rai Documentari is the specialized department within the company serving as the primary hub for the documentary industry. Director: Fabrizio Zappi.

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