



## 8½ (Otto e mezzo)

Back in the 1960s heyday of the pre-video art-house sector, two filmmakers stood as defining poles of the foreign-language art movie – Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini. Their qualities complemented and contrasted with each other's perfectly: Bergman Nordic, serious, austere, locked in a grim struggle with the grey spectre of the Lutheran deity; Fellini exuberant, Mediterranean, expansive, forever poking fun at the wilder excesses of Catholicism. (Although, by strange coincidence, each ended one of his best-known films – *The Seventh Seal* and *8½* respectively – with the same image, albeit to startlingly different effect: a chain of people dancing along with hands interlinked.) Neither director now enjoys the critical status he did 40 years ago. But while Bergman remains a respected figure, even if his films are relatively rarely shown these days, Fellini has suffered a crueller fate, widely dismissed as sentimental, overblown and self-indulgent, a filmmaker snared by his own intellectual and aesthetic pretensions.

This isn't the kind of critical downgrading that regularly follows a creative artist's death. The process started well within Fellini's lifetime, indeed almost coincided with the commercial peak of his career. Even at the time of his Oscar-nominated box-office triumphs *La dolce vita* (1960) and *8½* (1963) there were disenchanted mutterings that he was losing his way, cutting himself off from the neorealist roots that had so richly nourished him. But if these accusations were justified, the process was entirely deliberate on Fellini's part: the whole first half of his career can be seen as a determined campaign to break free from the fetters of neo-realism and assert his own vision. With *8½*, the most personal film he had made up to that point, the break was complete.

The central character of *8½* is film director Guido Anselmi, played by Marcello Mastroianni and presented unmistakably as Fellini's surrogate. Guido repeatedly finds himself assailed by critics and reporters; the former reproach him for intellectual frivolity while the latter assail him with idiotic questions. 'Are you for or against divorce?' yell the press pack. 'Are you afraid of the atomic bomb? Do you believe in God? Why don't you make love stories?'

Meanwhile, the most persistent of his critics, his screenwriter Daumier, tells Guido that 'Your film lacks the qualities of the avant-garde but has all its failings.' At one point Fellini maliciously has Daumier led away and hanged, but it doesn't silence him; he returns unharmed to resume the assault. 'Your tender innocence is completely negative,' he sneers, 'your little memories bathed in nostalgia, inoffensive emotional reactions.' Guido's only defence is to hide behind disingenuous statements. 'I wanted to make an honest film,' he pleads, 'that would help everyone to bury everything that was dead inside us... I've nothing to say – but I want to say it anyway.'

Fellini's own comments on the film weren't so very different, similarly appealing to the emotions over the intellect. 'I don't like the idea of "understanding" a film,' he said. 'I don't believe that rational understanding is an essential element in the reception of any work of art. Either a film has something to say to you or it hasn't. If you are moved by it, you don't need to have it explained to you. If not, no explanation can make you moved by it.'

## 8½ (OTTO E MEZZO)

*Director:* Federico Fellini  
*Production Companies:* Cineriz di Angelo Rizzoli, Francinex  
*Created by:* Federico Fellini  
*Produced by/Presented by:* Angelo Rizzoli  
*Production Supervisor:* Clemente Fracassi  
*Production Manager:* Nello Meniconi  
*Unit Manager:* Mario Basili  
*Production Secretaries:* Albino Morandin, Angelo Iacono  
*2nd Unit Director:* Alessandro von Normann  
*Artistic Collaborator:* Brunello Rondi  
*Assistant Director:* Guidarino Guidi  
*2nd Assistant Directors:* Giulio Paradisi, Francesco Aluigi  
*Continuity:* Mirella Gamacchio  
*Screenplay:* Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi  
*Story:* Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano  
*Director of Photography:* Gianni Di Venanzo  
*Camera Operator:* Pasqualino De Santis  
*Editor:* Leo Catozzo  
*Assistant Editor:* Adriana Olasio  
*Art Director:* Piero Gherardi  
*Assistant Art Director:* Luciano Ricceri  
*Set Dresser:* Vito Anzalone  
*Costumes:* Piero Gherardi  
*Assistant Costumes:* Orietta Nasalli Rocca  
*Wardrobe Mistress:* Clara Poggi  
*Key Make-up:* Otello Fava  
*Hairstyles:* Renata Magnanti  
*Hairdressers:* Eugenia, Filippo  
*Colour Grader:* Enzo Verzini  
*Music:* Nino Rota  
*Sound:* Mario Faraoni, Alberto Bartolomei  
*Music Publisher:* CAM  
*Prints/Processing:* Istituto Nazionale LUCE  
*Negatives:* Dupont  
*Studio:* Titanus-Appia

*uncredited*

*Still Photographer:* Tazio Secchiaroli

### Cast

Marcello Mastroianni (*Guido Anselmi, the director*)  
Claudia Cardinale (*Claudia, the star-actress*)  
Anouk Aimée (*Luisa Anselmi, Guido's wife*)  
Sandra Milo (*Carla, Guido's mistress*)  
Rossella Falk (*Rossella, Luisa's friend*)  
Barbara Steele (*Gloria Morin, Mario's fiancée*)  
Madeleine LeBeau (*Madeleine, French actress*)  
Caterina Boratto (*unnamed woman in harem*)  
Edra Gale (*La Saraghina*)  
Guido Alberti (*Commendatore Pace, the producer*)  
Mario Conocchia (*Conocchia, production manager*)  
Bruno Agostini (*Agostini, 2nd production secretary*)  
Cesare Miceli Picardi (*Cesarino, 1st production secretary*)  
Jean Rougeul (*Fabrizio Carini, film critic*)  
Mario Pisu (*Mario Mezzabotta, Gloria's friend*)  
Yvonne Casadei (*Jacqueline Bon Bon, ageing soubrette*)  
Ian Dallas (*Maurice, the mind-reader*)

Mino Doro (*Claudia's agent, 'Super Tarzan'*)  
Nadine Sanders (*Nadine, air hostess*)  
Georgia Simmons (*Guido's grandmother*)  
Hedy Vessel (*Hedy, harem woman with costume changes*)  
Tito Masini (*the cardinal*)  
Annie Gorassini (*Pace's girlfriend*)  
Rossella Como (*Tilde, Luisa & Rossella's friend*)  
Mark Herron (*Luisa's timid admirer*)  
Marisa Colomber (*Guido's aunt*)  
Neil Robinson (*French actress's agent*)  
Elisabetta Catalano (*Luisa's sister*)  
Eugene Walter (*American journalist*)  
Hazel Rogers (*dancer in Guido's harem*)  
Gilda Dahlberg (*American journalist's wife*)  
Mario Tarchetti (*Poletti, Claudia's press representative*)  
Mary Indovino (*Maya, mind-reader's partner*)  
Frazier Rippy (*the cardinal's lay secretary*)  
Francesco Rigamonti (*Enrico, Luisa's friend*)  
Giulio Paradisi (*friend*)  
Marco Gemini (*Guido as a boy at school*)  
Giuditta Rissone (*Guido's mother*)  
Annibale Ninchi (*Guido's father*)

*uncredited*

John Karlsen (*man in car/priest on beach*)  
Roberto Nicolosi (*doctor 1*)  
Alfredo De La Feld (*the cardinal's 1st secretary*)  
Sebastiano Di Leandro (*the cardinal's 2nd secretary*)  
Palma Mangini (*ageing relative from the country*)  
John Stacy (*the production accountant*)  
Riccardo Guglielmi (*Guido as a little boy*)  
Roberta Valli (*old man's grandchild*)  
Maria Raimondi (*Guido's 2nd aunt*)  
Eva Gioia (*Eva, girl in Cesarino's bed*)  
Dina De Santis (*Dina, girl in Cesarino's bed*)  
Maria Tedeschi (*school principal*)  
Luciana Sanseverino (*patient taking waters at the spa*)  
Luciano Bonanni (*fakir Siva announcer*)  
Olimpia Cavalli (*Miss Olympia in screen test*)  
Maria Antonietta Beluzzi (*screen test candidate for La Saraghina*)  
Matilda Calnan (*elderly journalist*)  
Ferdinando Guillaume (*clown in parade*)  
Elisabetta Cini (*the cardinal in sketches*)  
Valentina Lang  
Annarosa Lattuada  
Agnese Bonfanti  
Flaminia Torlonia  
Anna Carimini  
Maria Wertmüller  
Giulio Calí (*man with mushrooms*)  
Antonio Acqua  
Sonia Gessner  
Edward Flemming  
John Francis Lane

Italy/France 1963

138 mins

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