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REVIVAL PICK OF THE WEEK

8 1/2 (New Print)

For more than half my life, this has been one of the films of my life — and the movie I've measured every other movie against. Even so, I'd forgotten how good it is. This mint-condition print wipes clean the 30 years that have intervened since Federico Fellini first committed his fever dream to film: contemporary movies date badly by comparison. Boil the story down to its essentials and . . . guess what? It disappears! It's one man's great love sonnet to everything that is "inessential" about life: the torrent of interruptions, the furious energy with which life conspires to give us the lives we need while we're (too busily) planning the lives we think we want. Marcello Mastroianni is in his glory as Guido, the beleaguered "movie director" at the heart of this maelstrom; he plans a movie that has no plot, and meanwhile, he's the star of one. He fails at the one he wants to make; he has a spiritual breakthrough when he accepts the one his unseen maker has made for him. It's a lovely parable, the same epiphany that prompts so many people to fall in love with the Capra movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, but etched as it is with the sharp lines of Fellini's mental crow quill, *8 1/2* is as equal to the sorrow of that discovery as it is to the joy. What's more (and here's a Shakespearean breakthrough that rebuilt cinema), Fellini, in the noonlight of his genius, endows the movie camera with a power it never had before: the power of metaphor; we see a movie producer, his plump body draped in steambath towels, and in the same instant see a Roman senator; we look at a sad, embittered screenwriter crumpled in a chair, and in the same instant see the ailing Roman cardinal he has always been, in essence, but never sees in himself. We are *always* in two worlds at once in this movie, and both are true. (Nuart; Fri.-Thurs., March 26-April 1.)



—F.X. Fooney

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