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Sept. 17, 1969 Variety
Satyricon
(ITALIAN-COLOR)

Stunningly visualized, commercially hot vision of a totally corrupt ancient Rome. Ugly but powerful. Sin, sin, sin. Fellini at the peak of his skills and the cellar of his cynicism.

Venice, Sept. 6:

PEA release (Italy) and United Artists (worldwide) of Alberto Grimaldi production. Featuring Martin Potter, Hiram Keller, Max Born, Salvo Randone, Mario Romagnoli, Magali Noel, Capucine, Alain Cuny, Fanfulla, Lucia Bose, Joseph Wheeler, Hyllette Adolphe, Tanya Lopert, Gordon Mitchell, Luigi Montefiori, Elisa Mainardi and Donyale Luna. Directed by Federico Fellini. Screenplay by Fellini and Bernardino Zapponi with collaboration of Bruneilo Rondi. Camera (Technicolor), Giuseppe Rotunno; art directors, Danilo Donati and Luigi Scaccianoce; costumes and set decoration, Danilo Donati; editor, Ruggiero Mastroianni; music, Nino Rota, Ilhan Mimaroglu, Tod Dockstader and Andrew Rudin. At Venice Film Festival. Running Time, 136 MINS.

Encolpio	Martin Potter
Asclito	Hiram Keller
Gitone	Max Born
Eumolpus	Salvo Randone
Trimalchio	Mario Romagnoli
Fortunata	Magali Noel
Tryphaena	Capucine
Lichas	Alain Cuny
Vernacchio	Fanfulla
Wife	Lucia Bose
Husband	Joseph Wheeler
Slave Girl	Hyllette Adolphe
Empress	Tanya Lopert
Thief	Gordon Mitchell
Minotaur	Luigi Montefiori
Ariadne	Elisa Mainardi
Denothea	Donyale Luna

In contrast to the long Hollywood tradition of depicting ancient Rome in all its marble-pillared splendor and all its battlefield invincibility, Federico Fellini has turned out an iconoclastic spectacle that substitutes creative fibre for screen-filled military legions and ceremonial pomp. Beyond the accidental debunking of a long Hollywood tradition (that had its roots in early Italian silent cinema), Fellini presents an incredible fresco-like vision of Rome's social structure 2,000 years ago in which survival and pleasure were man's sole motivating forces. It is as much an awesome display of low-ebb humanity as it is a visual canvas of original creative achievement.

Use of the title "Fellini's Satyricon," which exhibitors and critics may or may not respect, was primarily devised by producer Alberto Grimaldi to distinguish it from another version (now confiscated in Italy on charges of obscenity and corruption of minors) produced by Alfredo Bini and directed by Gian Luigi Polidoro. United Artists financed Fellini in a pre-production deal but only recently acquired Bini's, thus cornering "Satyricon" market.

For various reasons, United Artists should have a windfall in the Fellini opus on a relatively modest investment of around \$3,000,000. First, few films in production have been so thoroughly publicized worldwide. There should be general interest in Fellini's fabulously cynical view of life as practiced in Rome many centuries ago, though relative to any society (including our own) that cannot provide overriding ideals or myths to lift man out of a squalid, animal-like, existence.

Also, the picture's young protagonists specifically identifies it with youth today and with active filmgoers in that magic 16-30 bracket. Finally, there is the reputation of Fellini himself as one of the contemporary masters of cinema — no mean take off point for exploitation.

The film is as loosely segmented as the original classic Latin satire by Petronius. Fellini and script collaborator Bernardino Zapponi adapted what they wanted from the surviving fragments of the original work and nibbled on other ancient legends and writings — or fictionalized — to complete.

The adventures of two young student vagabonds Encolpio (Martin Potter) and Asclito (Hiram Keller) — both infatuated with a young boy, Gitone, (Max Born), constitute the bare continuity for a hallucinating view of Roman life.

Inconstant Gitone leaves one bed for another and passes from Asclito to bawd actor Vernacchio back to Encolpio. Asked to choose between Encolpio and Asclito he picks the latter and they disappear from sight for about half the film.

Triangular homo relationship sets the moral climate for Fellini's journey through the monstrous fringes of Rome and for his equally horrific view of solid bourgeois society. Triangle also helps him comment caustically on Roman theatre and art market. Big sequence (overlength) is the phantasmagorical banquet of wealthy captain of commerce Trimalchio (Mario Romagnoli) also attended by Encolpio and his poet protector Eumolpus (Salvo Randone). Big orgiastic feast ends when host leads sated guests to show off his new tomb in a dry run burial.

Encolpio is then enslaved aboard ship of Tryphaena (Capucine) and her husband Lichas (Alain Cuny). He meets his old buddy Asclito and his young friend Gitone in chains but reunion is brief. Ship mistress doubles as priestess to wed Lichas and Encolpio but ceremony is not completed. Forces of the new Caesar invade the boat and behead Lichas. Gitone disappears but Encolpio escapes with Asclito to the mainland and find refuge in an empty villa.

Here they find the bodies of a noble Roman couple dead in a suicide pact to escape the ravages of a decaying society. Refuge becomes a den of sensuality when they uncover a pretty African slave in hiding. In a charming sketch, Asclito then seduces a willing widow on the tombstone of her dead husband and goes off with his friend and a thief (Gordon Mitchell) to kidnap a living deified hermaphrodite (a pink-skinned albino in Fellini's house of monsters) to exploit the creature's curative magic.

Escapade ends in a bloody fiasco and Encolpio finds himself in a labyrinth combatting a Minotaur. His life is spared and he is turned over to insatiable Ariadne, but is shattered to discover a sudden, mysterious impotence. Counseled by poet Eumolpus, Encolpio travels to the Garden of Delight where beauty and birch fail to restore his virility — an achievement left to Sorceress Denothea (Donyale Luna).

Happily restored to manhood, he is momentarily crushed to find his friend Asclito assassinated.

Later along the seashore he encounters the corpse of the poet surrounded by fishermen. Poet's last will and testament gives to all who eat of his dead flesh a share of his patrimony. Encolpio turns his back on the cannibalistic scene and leaves with the young crew of the poet's boat to sail for the Unknown.

"Satyricon" is not a film to applaud but to meditate on. It is Fellini's vision of a society bounded by the monstrous, the impure, the deformed, the degenerate and the ugly as handmaidens of death. The conception extends far beyond the refined satire of Petronius in a very personal attempt to obliterate two thousand years of Christian morality and civilization, to penetrate and interpret the mind and manners of Roman life.

It is Fellini's break with the autobiographical in filmmaking and his first headlong plunge into the Unknown. His sense of invention is formidable; his intuitive search is unlimited if not always coherent. The total effort adds up to a spectacular film reeking of death, and morbid, grotesque humanity.

Dialogue in Italian is static and weighs on this vividly visual fresco. Here and there, footage needs explanation or definition but, by and large, Fellini might have done better to employ the multi-lingual abracadabra of an international cast and horde of bit players performing in many tongues, chants, songs or even numbers.

However precious to Fellini every inch of footage and every freak might be, he has adequate margin to tighten tempo with cuts in the Banquet scene, the Minotaur combat, suicide sequence, the Garden of Delight and even eliminate the tagend nympho sequence on the beach.

In "Satyricon" the technical departments play a more direct role than the actors, who can only conform per Fellini to figures of Roman art. Giuseppe Rotunno establishes the shadowy mood of other times with a brilliant job of color lensing and even succeeds in making the rare splurge of (Continued on page 22)

sunlight an unwanted and disturbing intrusion.

Danilo Donat's production design and sets, set dressing and costumes are of award quality (he shares art direction with capable Luigi Scaccianoce). Music and musical effects are worthy of merit.

Makeup is also brilliantly innovated by Rino Carbone while Luciano Vito and Italo Tomassi deserve kudos for hairdressing and painted backdrops.

Martin Potter and Hiram Keller acquit themselves in a difficult debut when the film is at its spectacular height during the first hour of footage but do not quite sustain when Fellini edges away from his early visual broadside to thinner situations in a deliberate downward arc. Max Born is a splendid Gitone, if only for his porcelain-like beauty. In short, a homo's dream.

Salvo Randone as the idealistic poet who ultimately compromises for wealth and power, comes closest to a portrayal with which moderns can identify.

All the rest are cameo roles, with honors going to restaurant owner Mario Romagnoli as the sordid bourgeois Trimalchio and Magali Noel as his wife; Capucine and Alain Cuny, aboard their weird treasure and slave ship; Donyale Luna, as the rekindling witch and Fanfulla as the grotesque homo actor. Lucia Bose and Joseph Wheeler are okay as the suicide couple, ditto Hyllette Adolphe, Gordon Mitchell and Luigi Montefiori in their special bits.

Verb.