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**MARIO AND VITTORIO CECCHI GORI**

**PRESENT**

**FEDERICO FELLINI'S**

**THE VOICE OF THE MOON**

**WITH**

**ROBERTO BENIGNI**

**PAOLO VILLAGGIO**

**DIRECTED BY**

**FEDERICO FELLINI**

**FREELY ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL  
"IL POEMA DEI LUNATICI"**

**BY**

**ERMANNO CAVAZZONI**

**SCREENPLAY BY**

**FEDERICO FELLINI**

**IN COLLABORATION WITH**

**TULLIO PINELLI**

**ERMANNO CAVAZZONI**

**MUSICAL SCORE BY**

**NICOLA PIOVANI**

**PRODUCED BY**

**MARIO AND VITTORIO CECCHI GORI**

**LINE PRODUCERS**

**BRUNO ALTISSIMI AND CLAUDIO SARACENI**

**AN ITALO-FRENCH CO-PRODUCTION**

**CECCHI GORI GROUP TIGER CINEMATOGRAFICA - CINEMAX**

**WITH THE COOPERATION OF**

**R.A.I. - RADIOTELEVISION ITALIANA**

**DISTRIBUTED BY**

**PENTA DISTRIBUZIONE**

CAST

Salvini ..... ROBERTO BENIGNI  
Prefect ..... PAOLO VILLAGGIO  
Aldina ..... NADIA OTTAVIANI  
The "Steamer" ..... MARISA TOMASI  
The oboe player ..... SIM  
Aldina's sister ..... SYUSY BLADY  
Nestore ..... ANGELO ORLANDO  
The reporter ..... DARIO GHIRARDI  
First Micheluzzi brother ..... DOMINIQUE CHEVALIER  
Second Micheluzzi brother ..... NIGEL HARRIS  
Third Micheluzzi brother ..... VITO  
The lawyer ..... ERALDO TURRA  
The professor ..... GIORDANO FALZONIE  
The doctor ..... FERRUCCIO BRAMBILLA  
The gravedigger ..... FRANCO JAVARONE  
The duchess ..... LOROSE KELLER  
The grandmother ..... UTA SCHMIDT

TECHNICAL CAST

Director ..... FEDERICO FELLINI  
Director of photography ..... TONINO DELLI COLLI  
Production designer ..... DANTE FERRETTI  
Costume designer ..... MAURIZIO MILLENOTTI  
Editing ..... NINO BARAGLI  
Musical score ..... NICOLA PIOVANI  
Line producers ..... BRUNO ALTISSIMI  
..... CLAUDIO SARACENI  
Produced by ..... MARIO AND VITTORIO  
..... CECCHI GORI

# THE VOICE OF THE MOON

## INTRODUCTION

Thirty years after "La Dolce Vita", Fellini, the father of Italian cinema, returns with his eagerly awaited fantasy **THE VOICE OF THE MOON**, which blends feelings and sensations, light and air, images and odd tales, reality and madness. In the film, heralded as his best since his Academy Award winning "Amarcord", Fellini views modern Italy with his own unique vision.

The film, which opened in Italy in late January to coincide with the Maestro's 70th birthday, was universally well received and was both a critical and commercial success. Il Tempo called the film, "A grand spectacle with vision, fantastic imagination...both poetic and dramatic." Panorama raved: "...eloquent, marvellously symbolic...bellissimo!" and Corriere della Sera gave the film a 4-star rating.

Fellini chose Roberto Benigni ("Down By Law", "Little Devil") and Paolo Villaggio, two of Italy's most talented and popular comics, to be the leads in this magical fantasy. **THE VOICE OF THE MOON**, was directed by Federico Fellini from a screenplay loosely based on Ermanno Cavazzoni's novel "Poems of a Lunatic" and co-written by Fellini, Tullio Pinelli and Cavazzoni. Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori produce the comedy with Bruno Altissimi and Claudio Saraceni as line producers. **THE VOICE OF THE MOON** is a Cecchi Gori Group Tiger Cinema Tiger Cinematografica - Cinemax co-production with the cooperation of RAI.



## THE VOICE OF THE MOON

### BACKGROUND

For the first time since "Satyricon", Fellini has used a novel as the basis for his film. When Fellini read Ermanno Cavazzoni's "Poems of a Lunatic," he was reminded of the atmosphere, ideas, desires, characters and situations which had lain dormant for many years and never made their way into his movies.

"I had read a third of the book when I telephoned the author in Bologna, congratulating him and telling him that it coincided with many ideas I had about the way of talking about nature, the countryside, the feeling of passing time, the feeling of the seasons and also the relationship between human beings," the director said.

"When I was a little boy, I used to spend a couple of summer months with my grandmother Frascina at Gambettola, a little village next to Rimini. The countryside with its prayers, the animals in the stable, the days and the nights, the trees, the rocks, the clouds, the storms, the seasons, all that magical and scary universe, wrapped up in the great silence that falls on the fields at mid-day left a very strong impression."

Fellini used this countryside as the starting point for **THE VOICE OF THE MOON**. Without a script, and not even knowing what the film was about, Fellini decided to rebuild the entire square of a village. He designed a town, Reggiolo, meant to be so typically banal that it is "invisible", and sought to give it a universal quality. "I have done it so that nothing would indicate a precise geographical setting. The characters, as well, speak a variety of dialects. It is today's Italy, or better still just today's life, with all its weird behaviours, its total incapacity for respecting rules, because there are no rules any more, or maybe there is only the rule of the non-rule".

By incorporating other images which were revived by Cavazzoni's book, "...the Greek myths, the movie of Pinocchio, Til Eulenspiegel and Tobino's novel "Le Libere Donne di Magliano", the film became a "...story half way between fright and magic". Fellini emphasizes that **VOICE** aims to capture the voice of reality - "...innocuous, domestic, everyday banality that ends up as a threatening vibration."

"I built this village convinced that once it was built it would be populated and the inhabitants would tell me their stories. And, in a certain way, so it went," observed Fellini. Each day's shooting was based on two or three pages of screenplay that the Maestro had completed the evening before. "I realise it is a way of making movies that is a little peculiar and is not advisable for other colleagues. But that is how it went."



Such an inspired, improvisational approach to film-making combined with Fellini's vision of the humorous elements of the film required exceptional actors with comedic talent. Fellini turned to two of Italy's most talented comics, Roberto Benigni and Paolo Villaggio. "Benigni and Villaggio seemed to me the most appropriate for my objective...Benigni is tender and clown-like in the highest and more classic sense of the word. Villaggio is clowny, but he is also dramatic, making you laugh, but with a lump in your throat."

Commenting on the use of humour, Fellini offers, "Among all forms of entertainment, comedy is the closest to poetry because it re-interprets reality. It distorts nature and allows you to invent, to be free from the truth, from appearances. In a word, it's imagination and when Neo-realism was ruling, everybody was against me because of such declarations. It is mostly imagination I believe in. To create means to invent, not to copy. And with comedy, with humour, you can invent much better. Chaplin and Clair are there to prove it."

Benigni's work in experimental theatre and improvisational comedy has made him a household name in Italy and earned for him international acclaim as a writer, stand-up comic, director (the blockbuster "Little Devil") and actor ("Non Ci Resta Che Piangere," "Tuttobenigni," "Down By Law"). Villaggio's comedic characters, including Professor Kranz, the German from Germany, and Fantozzi, are loved by millions of Italian television viewers.

Fellini compliments both men on their collaboration on **THE VOICE OF THE MOON**, "I am really grateful to Benigni and Villaggio for their total spontaneity, the trust with which they supported the idea of an itinerary starting from the dark and going into the dark. They never had lines, for instance. I used to arrive in make-up with little notes that I had written the night before. For me as a director, the most delicate aspect of the entire operation has been that of making the characters live without taking much away from the extraordinary peculiarities of these two brilliant comedians, who have been loved by the public for such a long time."

**FEDERICO FELLINI**  
twenty days before

..."I had to choose the Pontini establishments, because the film was mostly set outside: in small boroughs, villages, farmhouses, and country roads; in addition, I needed open spaces and horizons in order to partially reconstruct the whole lower Padana region, and since, in Cinecitta which is now surrounded by skyscrapers, such an enterprise would have been impossible..."

..."All around there is the usual frantic, agitated bustle, which is typical of a movie ready to start. Barricaded behind my desk, I have to decide upon a hundred things at every moment, and I am constantly surprised and embarrassed that nobody ever objects, but rather approves heartily of what I do, proceeding to execute these things happily and in full confidence..."

..."Vittorio Cecchi Gori, in particular, appears to be the most satisfied on the phone. He has such enthusiasm, such self-assurance that I sometimes wonder whether the film has already been finished and that he thought it was marvellous. Obviously, I like to work in such an encouraging atmosphere, but I still have to shoot the movie, and my mood is that of an irresponsible old man approaching seventy years of age, who, on a winter's night, wearing only a coat, scarf and hat and standing on the Calais dock in front of the dark and cold sea, promises to a group of friends that he is about to cross the Channel but nobody stops him..."

..."I am asked the question - what is this film about? There you go, this is exactly what I want to avoid talking about. How can you chat about a movie before having done it?..."

..."Maybe the one who gave me the feeling that I knew what this film might be about was the "older" Gori (I say "older" even if he is slightly younger than me, because I have known him for ever, even if we had never worked together). After having read the few lean pages in which I was trying to outline my intentions, and from behind the desk covered by scripts on which he continued to sign cheques that somebody next to him would carefully blot and put away, he looked at me with a delicate and respectful apprehension, and then, in a low, affectionate and warm voice told me: "Pay attention... Federico, because the public..." The rest was lost in an imperceptible whisper, but I discerned with perfect clarity that that enigmatic warning, dubious and resigned as it was, contained the secret of the movie in some way, a dangerous and fascinating secret..."

..."I just realized that even in the story within the film there is a small character who, at a certain point, tells the main character: "Pay attention, dear friend: Do not listen to the voice from the pit. It may have an irresistible charm, I know, but it will push you to go to countries and horizons from which it might be difficult to return." I am going to think about it as well, ponder it, and then forget it. Then I will begin in two weeks..."

..."I chose Benigni and Villaggio as the perfect companions with whom to embark on an adventure. They are two brilliant clowns, two aristocratic, unique, and unparalleled actors that everybody should envy because they are so talented, rich and emblematic of our times. I think they would be ideal friends to accompany someone in a country without maps or signs, in an unknown country that knew no boundaries. Sure, there are many other actors: there is an endless list of many comic actors. I have always admired comic talent, and if my work has any inspiration at all, it is done with the intention of making people laugh..."



**FEDERICO FELLINI**  
at the end of shooting

..."I have finally finished after fifteen weeks of active shooting, and since I'm feeling a little tired, it is maybe because this is the first time I have ever shot a movie at the age of seventy - it's something I have never done before..."

..."Cavazzoni's novel is the source of this adventure, even if its author was one of the first to express disbelief and scepticism about the possibility of making a movie from this book. The two unpredictable and weird characters in the book, Salvini and the prefect had immediately taken on in my mind the faces, eyes and smirks of Benigni and Villaggio. The first step, therefore, towards making the movie believable was done. Cavazzoni's novel tells us about multiple realities, seen and lived at the same time. These suggest an hallucinatory, disturbing and disenchanted vision of the world with funny and excruciating implications, and this seems to me very close to the tone and atmosphere of my movies..."

..."The stories, or better the "non-stories" of the book are probably set in Emilia, and since I was born there, another charm of the book for me was to be able to chat a little about my grandmother's country, with all its stories, fairy tales, legends, and all those strange characters and powerfully sensual women and those watermelons that one could pick up from the pits where they were kept cool and in which stories were told about black and cool waters full of ghosts and frogs. After attempting to write an outline of the script, I shamelessly started to shoot the movie, inventing it day by day. I felt like Buster Keaton behind the wheel of a locomotive running along on a track that he kept launching in front of him after picking it up from behind. Such an exploit was possible, at least from an organizational point of view, because everybody, from the producers on down to the entire cast of actors, had trustfully accepted what is such a "detour" from the traditional way of doing things, as I am the first to admit..."

..."I am very grateful to Benigni and Villaggio, who are two brilliant and intelligent actors, and between whom a true friendship was born as often happens with school and adventure mates. Roberto and Paolo's cooperation is very precious to me, because it is based on the complete faith that the film would suggest itself - its own path and its own objective - while we were shooting it. The most delicate aspect of the entire operation has been, for me as a director, that of making the characters live without taking too much away from the extraordinary peculiarities of these two brilliant comedians, who have been loved by the public for such a long time."



## FEDERICO FELLINI

### Biography

Federico Fellini, master of art and artifice, of the gorgeous and the grotesque, is a filmmaker who has long been noted for his surreal vision of life. Having completed **THE VOICE OF THE MOON** at the age of 70, Fellini creates a comic fantasy that is at once a summation of the themes and characters which have haunted his films since "8 1/2" and a commentary on contemporary life in Italy.

Fantasy has been a substantial part of Fellini's make-up from his birth in Rimini in 1920. He was, recalls his mother, a child with a "head overflowing with fantasy." His own earliest memories are appropriately theatrical: "One morning I was in the kitchen garden when I suddenly heard a tremendous noise: it was the theatre shutter, which I had never noticed, being rolled up. Finally there appeared an enormous black opening. I went into the dark cavern; I saw gold-painted balconies and, above me, the belly of a locomotive hanging by ropes, trembling, amid red, white and yellow strips of celluloid. It was a theatre."

This was young Fellini's discovery of a world which was to become his life and his love. Fellini's father, a travelling salesman of confections, coffee and preserves, expected him to become a lawyer but his preoccupation with the theatre and films, with fantasy and dreams made him an inattentive and idle student. At the age of seven, Fellini ran away from boarding school to follow a travelling circus, only to return to his parents within a few days. This experience made a powerful impression on the boy and would later serve as a source of inspiration for his life's work.

In his spare time Fellini capitalized on his imagination and his burgeoning artistic talents, drawing caricatures of movie stars appearing in films at the local cinema and exhibiting them at local shops. Because of the resultant publicity, the movie house management granted him free admission.

After graduating from high school in 1938, Fellini travelled to Florence where he landed a job as a proofreader and cartoonist on the satirical magazine 420. He then moved to Rome where he hoped to launch his career as a reporter. Fellini enrolled in law school at the University of Rome, but did not attend his classes. Instead, he worked as a police and court reporter for a newspaper, then drew cartoons and wrote short stories for a satirical publication, Marc'Aurelio.



During his early years in Rome, Fellini met Aldo Fabrizi, eventually joining the veteran actor's troupe as a sketch artist, wardrobe master, scenery painter, travelling secretary, bit actor and designated "poet". He began writing radio plays and collaborating on screenplays in 1940. He married actress Giulietta Masina in 1943.

Following the liberation of Rome during World War II, Fellini and several of his friends from Marc'Aurelio opened an arcade for American GIs called The Funny Face Shop. One day, director Roberto Rossellini unexpectedly visited the shop, and asked Fellini to collaborate with him on the script for a documentary he planned to film, which eventually became the feature length classic, "Rome - Open City".

Fellini continued to collaborate with Rossellini as both a screenwriter and an assistant director, on such films as "Paisa" and "L'Amore", to which he contributed the story for the episode entitled "The Miracle" - in which Fellini himself starred with Anna Magnani.

Following several screenwriting and assistant-directing assignments with Pietro Germi and Alberto Lattuada in the late '40s, Fellini and Lattuada co-directed "Variety Lights", (1950) from Fellini's own story about a troupe of travelling actors. Neither "Variety Lights" nor "The White Sheik" (1952), Fellini's first solo assignment as a director, proved to be commercial or critical successes. However the following year, with "I Vitelloni", he scored remarkable victories on both counts, and was instantly established as an international talent.

Over the past 33 years, Fellini has received four Academy Awards for Best Foreign Film, for "La Strada", "Nights of Cabiria", "8 1/2" and "Amarcord". "La Dolce Vita" received the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1961 and catapulted actor Marcello Mastroianni into the ranks of the world's leading screen celebrities.



**FEDERICO FELLINI**  
**Filmography**

**Screenplays:**

- 1941 -- "Documento Z 3" with Alfred Guarini
- 1942 -- "Quarta Pagina" with Nicola Manzari and Domenico Gambino
- "Avanti c'e Posto" with Mario Bonnard
- "Chi l'ha Visto?" with Goffredo Alessandrini
- 1943 -- "Campo de' Fiori" with Mario Bonnard
- "Apparizione" with Jean Limur
- "L'Ultima Carrozzella" with Mario Mattoli
- 1945 -- "Rome - Open City" with Roberto Rossellini
- 1946 -- "Paisa" with Roberto Rossellini
- 1947 -- "Il Delitto di Giovanni Episcopo" with Alberto Lattuada
- 1948 -- "Senza Pieta" with Alberto Lattuada
- "In Nome della Legge" with Pietro Germi
- "Il Mulino del Po" with Alberto Lattuada
- "L'amore" with Roberto Rossellini
- 1949 -- "Francesco, Giullare di Dio" with Roberto Rossellini
- 1950 -- "Il Cammino della Speranza" with Pietro Germi
- 1951 -- "La Citta si Difende" with Pietro Germi
- 1952 -- "Europa di Notte" with Roberto Rossellini
- "Il Brigante Di Tacca Del Lupo" with Pietro Germi"

**Direction:**

- 1950 -- "Variety Lights" co-directed with Alberto Lattuada
- 1952 -- "The White Sheik" starring Alberto Sordi and Giulietta Masina
- 1953 -- "I Vitelloni" with Alberto Sordi and Franco Interlenghi
- "L'Amore in Citta", the episode entitled "Agenzia Matrimoniale" with Antonio Cifariello
- 1954 -- "La Strada" with Giulietta Masina and Anthony Quinn
- 1955 -- "Il Bidone" with Broderick Crawford
- 1957 -- "Nights of Cabiria" with Giulietta Masina
- 1960 -- "La Dolce Vita" with Marcello Mastroianni
- 1962 -- "Boccaccio 70", the episode "The Temptation of Doctor Antonio" with Peppino De Filippo
- 1963 -- "8 1/2" with Marcello Mastroianni
- 1965 -- "Juliet of the Spirits" with Giulietta Masina
- 1968 -- "Spirits of the Dead", the episode entitled "Toby Dammit" with Terence Stamp
- "Block-notes Di Un Regista"
- 1969 -- "Fellini Satyricon" with Martin Potter and Hiram Keller
- 1970 -- "Clowns" with Anita Ekberg and the Orfei family etc.
- 1972 -- "Fellini Roma" with Peter Gonzales
- 1973 -- "Amarcord" with Bruno Zanin, Pupella Maggio, Armando Brancai
- 1976 -- "Fellini Casanova" with Donald Sutherland
- 1979 -- "Orchestra Rehearsal"
- 1980 -- "City of Women" with Marcello Mastroianni

1983 -- "And The Ship Sails On" with Freddie Jones and Barbara Jefford  
1986 -- "Ginger and Fred" with Guilietta Masina and Marcello Mastroianni  
1987 -- "Intervista" with Anita Ekberg and Marcello Mastroianni  
1989 -- "The Voice Of The Moon" with Roberto Benigni and Paolo Villaggio

## **AWARDS**

Oscar -- "La Strada" (1954) March 27, 1957  
Oscar -- "Nights of Cabiria" (1957) March 26, 1958  
Cannes Grand Prize -- "La Dolce Vita" (1961)  
Oscar -- "8 1/2" (1963) April 13, 1964  
Oscar -- "Amarcord" (1973) April 8, 1975

## ROBERTO BENIGNI

Roberto Benigni, one of Italy's most popular comedians who is best known for his non-stop delivery, was born in Misericordia, in the region of Arezzo on October 27, 1952. He lived in Vergaio near Prato until the age of twenty and then moved to Rome for three years and was involved in experimental theatre. He began his career in satirical comedies with "I Burosauro" by Silvano Ambrogi and directed by Donato Sannini and then acted in "Beat 72". He co-wrote with Giuseppe Bertolucci the monologue "Cioni Mario Di Gaspare Fu Giulia," upon which the film "Berlinguer I Love You" was based. The film was directed in 1977 by Bertolucci and a television show was also based on this monologue, "Onda Libera" ("Free Wave").

In 1978 Benigni participated in Renzo Arbore's TV program "L'Altra Domenica" ("The Other Sunday") as a cinema critic and one year later was the protagonist of "Chiedo Asilo" ("I Request Asylum"/"Requesting Asylum") by Marco Ferreri. In 1980 he was the master of ceremonies of the San Remo Festival and acted in Arbore's "Il Pap'occhio" and in 1981 he interpreted "Il Minestrone" by Sergio Citti. Two years later he made his directorial debut with "Tu Mi Turbi".

In 1984 he directed and acted in "Non Ci Resta Che Piangere" with Massimo Troisi. In 1985 he produced "Tuttobenigni" a full length feature based on his successful stage tour. In 1986 he crossed the Atlantic to appear in Jim Jarmusch's "Down By Law", co-starring Tom Waits and John Lurie. The following December Benigni directed his second film "Il Piccolo Diavolo" ("The Little Devil") in which he co-starred with Walter Matthau.



## PAOLO VILLAGGIO

Paolo Villaggio was born in Genoa on December 31, 1932. Piero, his twin, is the director of the Istituto delle Costruzioni, at the Normale in Pisa. Villaggio discovered his acting talent by chance, during a charity party organized by the office where he was working (which gave the inspiration for the character of Fantozzi). Ivo Chiesa and Luigi Squarzina discovered him as a brilliant and extremely funny entertainer.

From the theatre in Genova, Villaggio went on to make his television debut on the show "Quelle della Domenica" for RAI. He also worked for Maurizio Costanzo's Roman cabaret "7x8".

Villaggio's television fame, which was created by his portraits of comic characters such as Professor Kranz, the German from Germany and Fantozzi, led to an equally successful series of motion pictures.

Villaggio, one of Italy's best comic actors, has a sarcastic and sometimes pitiless sense of humour, and his characters, though unpredictable, bear an uncanny resemblance to the ordinary Italian.

**TONINO DELLI COLLI**  
**Director of Photography**

**THE VOICE OF THE MOON** marks the second collaboration with Federico Fellini for legendary director of photography Tonino Delli Colli whose first film with the Maestro was "Ginger and Fred". Delli Colli has worked with such cinema legends as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Louis Malle, Lina Wertmuller, Ettore Scola and Sergio Leone, including the latter's "Once Upon A Time In America".

Delli Colli began at the age of 16 as a camera department assistant, joined Rome's Cinecitta Studios one year after it opened in 1938, and was director of photography by the age of 21. In 1951 he was put under contract by Carlo Ponti and Dino de Laurentiis, for whom he shot his first colour feature in 1952.

Major credits include Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Decameron", "Canterbury Tales" and "Accattone!", Tinto Brass' "Caligula", Leone's "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly", Marco Bellocchio's "China is Near", Lina Wertmuller's "Seven Beauties", Fellini's "Ginger and Fred" and most recently Jean-Jacques Annaud's "The Name of the Rose".

Delli Colli has garnered four Nastri d'Argento, the annual Italian Press Awards, the David of Donatello Award for Marco Ferreri's "Tales of Ordinary Madness" and two British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award nominations for Louis Malle's "Lacombe Lucien" and Leone's "Once Upon A Time in America".

**DANTE FERRETTI**  
**Production Designer**

Award-winning production designer Dante Ferretti has worked with the great Italian directors from Fellini and Ferreri to Risi and Pasolini.

Ferretti began his distinguished career in 1960 in Rome as an assistant production designer and worked on such films as Federico Fellini's "Satyricon" and three of Pier Paolo Pasolini's films including "The Gospel According to St. Matthew".

In 1969 Ferretti became a production designer and went on to amass three Nastri d'Argento Awards and two David di Donatello awards for his work on Ettore Scola's "La Nuit de Varennes" and Fellini's "And The Ship Sails On". His other major credits include Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Medea", "Decameron", "Salo:120 Days of Sodom" and "Canterbury Tales", Fellini's "Orchestra Rehearsal", "The City of Woman" and "Ginger and Fred", Terry Gilliam's "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" and most recently Jean-Jacques Annaud's "The Name of the Rose".



Excerpts from an interview with Fellini by Gian Luigi Rondi  
in Il Tempo, January 20, 1990

Q: You don't even want to talk to me about THE VOICE OF THE MOON? It has not been released yet.

A: I have finished it, and it is already behind me. With all its lunatics...or its fools...if you prefer. They are people beyond normality, or beyond a certain type of normality, as almost everything is today. For this reason as well, the setting is purposely deprived of any precise indication of place or time, and is typical of today's Italy. From some license plates, to the names on the memorials in the middle of a square, one will automatically think of my Emilian towns, also because one of them is called Reggiolo, with the accent on the first "o". But I have done things so that nothing would indicate a precise geographical setting. The characters, as well, speak a variety of dialects: it is today's Italy, or better still just today's life, with all its weird behaviours, its total incapacity of respecting rules, because there are no rules any more, or maybe there is only the rule of the non-rule.

Q: You did it to laugh, though not to philosophise.

A: Of course, I like to laugh...though I can also speak seriously. One of my biggest ambitions is to be a comic author and to be successful in creating comedies. I don't want to repeat what I've been doing for years. Among all the forms of entertainment, comedy is the closest to poetry, because it re-interprets reality and its signs. It distorts nature and allows you to invent, to be free from the truth, from appearances. In a word, it's imagination, and when Neo-realism ruled everybody was against me because of such declarations. I believe most in imagination. To create means to invent and not to copy. With comedy, with humour, you can invent much better, take Chaplin and Clair for example.

Q: Comedy...Is this the reason for the two comedians, Benigni and Villaggio?

A: Yes...to begin with, they were already roughly sketched in the book "Lunatici". Moreover, I so wanted to do a comedy...and in the entire field of Italian comedy, Benigni and Villaggio seemed to me the most appropriate for my objective, because their humour does not rely on sexual or 'bathroom' jokes. Benigni is tender and clown-like in the highest and more classic sense of the word. Villaggio, too, is clowny, though sometimes very dramatic, making you laugh but with a lump in your throat. Benigni is spicy.

Villaggio is volatile and can make you tremble. But together, they make you laugh; it's like being in the big top, and that's what I wanted from my loonies.

**Excerpts from an interview with Fellini by Costanzo Costantini**

**In Il Messaggero January 20, 1990**

**Q: Does old age scare you?**

**A:** Well, in **THE VOICE OF THE MOON** the character that Poalo Villaggio has created is so true and authentic that I am troubled every time I see the film. He makes me laugh but he is frightening as well because he communicates a feeling of the coldness and unease, of the worry typical of some creatures lost in an unreachable galaxy. It is really a memorable performance by Villaggio. It will surprise you and remind you of the great tragic actors, such as Raimu and Jannings. Old age, old people, from all over the world haunt him, follow him night and day, even when he is in bed. They bend over him when he thinks he's asleep. They poison him with their nauseating breath.

**Q: What did you take from Cavazzoni's "Poems of a Lunatic," the novel that gave you the inspiration of **THE VOICE OF THE MOON**?**

**A:** Perhaps, it would be easier for me to answer this if you asked me the opposite, namely what Cavazzoni's book has taken from me. I meant, that it is natural that books, memories, meetings, rages, regrets, good intentions, scorns, everything can be a pretext to stimulate an idea which is always the same, and carries within itself a few forgotten projects, ideas and fantasies, relics of stories that I never developed beyond the dream or visionary stage. This is what happened with Cavazzoni's book. Apart from charming me with its originality, its disturbing freedom, its labyrinthine and inebriated style, it brought back to me the memory of the countryside where my grandmother Fraschina lived, with its prayers, the animals in the stable, the days and the nights, the trees, the rocks, the clouds, the storms, the seasons, all that magical and scary universe wrapped up in the great silence that falls on the fields at midday. It also brought back to my mind the Greek myths, the movie of Pinocchio, Til Eulenspiegel and "Le Libere Donne di Magliano" by Tobino. Now I don't know if **THE VOICE OF THE MOON** contains all these fantasies...

**Q: Which one of your movies do you consider the funniest one?**

**A:** I couldn't really tell. In all my movies I tried to include Pierino the clown. For instance, Richard Basehart, as the fool in "La Strada" was a homage to that great



character typical of village circuses, who like all the real circus artists was both a tightrope walker and a circus rider.

**Q:** Have Villaggio and Benigni proved to be two genial buffoons, as you had defined them before shooting?

**A:** Everything I've said so far was designed to reach this conclusion. At long last, after extensive searching I have found Pierino: exactly him - light, extremely funny, moon-like, mysterious...a dancer, a mime....to make you laugh and cry. He has the charm of fairy tales, of the big literary inventions. He makes any landscape possible and can live anywhere. He is friendly with ogres and princesses, with talking toads. He is like Pinocchio, like Til Eulenspiegel. His name is Roberto Benigni.

Excerpts from an interview with Fellini by Corrado Augias

in La Repubblica January 13, 1990

**Q:** Now that your latest movie, **THE VOICE OF THE MOON** is ready for release, can you explain the fictional but very real village, Reggiolo in Emilia?

**A:** Reggiolo has nothing to do with it. Before starting a movie I always try to enjoy the happy holiday that we call location scouting. It is a pleasant benefit for film-makers. You leave with the cameraman, the assistant director and a representative from the production knowing already, at least in my case, that everything will be rebuilt inside and that the production will never move from Cinecitta.

**Q:** Therefore is it all useless?

**A:** Yes and no. All the wandering around from one village to another, going inside the farms, the little hotels, the bed and breakfasts, the beautiful Italian provincial towns influenced the design of all our interior reconstructions. I always feel a terrible regret after such outings.

**Q:** How come?

**A:** Because these wanderings make me realise that Italian cinematographers, myself included, have said nothing about Italy. We know so much about America through its movies, but Italian films don't say anything about the Italian countryside. We may have seen plenty of Rome, Naples which is a crib or Sicily which is like a bloody oleograph, but what about the rest of the huge Italian provinces?

**Q:** For the first time since "Satyricon", this film is based on a book - Ermanno Cavazzoni's "Il Poema Dei Lunatici".

**A:** Cavazzoni is a philosophy professor from Bologna and his book has been a starting point or a pretext even though the movie developed to the point where it had very little to do with the book. When I first read it, something woke up inside me. I read of an old atmosphere full of ideas, desires, intentions, characters and situations that I have never put in my movies before. They have been lying deep inside me for many years constantly radiating, but in this film they reveal themselves.

**Q: What exactly prompted the story?**

**A:** Initially it was the charm of the countryside. When I was a little boy, I used to spend the summers at a little village near Rimini called Gambettola. For me the animals, trees, storms and seasons of the countryside have been an extraordinary discovery. It is a fabulous revelation to examine the relationship between the farmers and the animals as well as the river, which was really a stream when I was growing up, the Marecchia, and even the wild and brutal homicides committed by the farmers, come together as somewhat of a magical experience.

**Q: Who lived in Gambettola?**

**A:** My grandmother Fraschina. She looked like the typical fairy-tale grandmother with her face covered in wrinkles. Her skinny body was padded with clothes and she was always dressed in black. She used to punish us by hitting us lightly with a little green branch and we would react with excruciating screams.

**Q: At the beginning of the movie there was the countryside, and then?**

**A:** I don't know. Maybe the countryside was only the starting point. The story is half-way between fear and magic. Because Cavazzoni's book actually revived another one of my old ideas which was to tell the story of Tobino's novel "Le Libere Donne di Magliano". It is more accurate to say that this story is like the folly, deliriums and persecutions of a mental institution. Basically, I just wanted to do something different from any movie I have done before.

**Q: What about the story? What we commonly call the plot?**

**A:** There isn't any.

**Q: One of you usual lies?**

**A:** No. Actually I'm going to tell you more. The beginning of the film was a total narrative void because I was bold and confident since the experience I had making "Intervista". I understood while making that movie that I didn't need stories or ideas. I realized that I just needed to sit next to a camera, with movie lights, surrounded by trustful faces ready for a trip. In short, as the press quoted me, "Intervista" is a film that made itself.



- Q:** Because "Intervista" talked about movies and that sort of thing, was it easier to make?
- A:** I didn't think that shooting a movie this way could become a method. Instead, with a little boldness and irresponsibility, I discovered that a system could be developed from this way of chatting and scribbling. This time I applied it to a real movie with real actors so it would be more than just a friendly chat about my work.
- Q:** A movie with actors. Namely, comic actors such as Benigni and Villaggio.
- A:** Let's say that **THE VOICE OF THE MOON** has revealed my real desire to be a comic leader. I have always dealt with the circus, but the theatre was one of the great myths of my childhood.
- Q:** Which theatre?
- A:** Theatre as reality or as lifestyle. Meaning the train trips, premieres, provinces, restaurants, the company, the actors, the actresses, the trunks full of costumes, the dressing rooms, the rivalries and the loves. I always knew that I could never be an engineer or a bishop, as my poor mother would have liked. I looked at the comic actors and felt that I wanted to be one of them or - I don't know - a painter or anything artsy. I especially liked the way they dressed and their lack of conformity. I thought this was the result of such an irregular lifestyle made up of the women and the strange loves that people used to fantasise about.
- Q:** You ended up becoming a master of comedy anyway.
- A:** Actually, in my job I am more like a painter, a decorator, a property-man, an upholsterer, a sculptor, an actor, a plumber and a make-up artist
- Q:** But this time there were two real actors.
- A:** Since this time I had two great comic actors who were both able to explore and wander through their craft, together we were able to create a trio that enabled us to invent the movie day by day. I am really grateful to Benigni and Villaggio for their total spontaneity and their trust to support an itinerary going from dark to dark. They never had lines and I used to arrive while they were in make-up

with little notes that I had written the night before. I enjoyed a wonderful trip with Arlecchino and Pulcinella or even better with Lucignolo and Pinocchio.

**Q:** There is also the location of the movie.

**A:** Without even knowing what the film was all about, I decided to rebuild the entire north-central Italian village square with an exaggerated zeal as if I were a master builder. I tried to eliminate any particular references by using common elements in the construction that were so obvious and familiar that they would go unnoticed. I have created the illusion of not just an Italian village, but the stereotypical "Super-Italian" village. It has a square surrounded by a gothic church, a renaissance rock, a fascist building, a post-modern church in plexiglass and a series of obvious facades. It is an invisible village.

**Q:** Why did you speak of an excessive zeal in the reconstruction?

**A:** Because I behaved as if the village was going to be inhabited for real. Starting with the pavement and the shops, to the items in the shop windows, the river, the roofs, the tiles and the balconies. As I was standing there watching three or four hundred workers bustling about the village as if it were a real one, I was wondering: what story am I going to tell now?

**Q:** And what was your answer?

**A:** I told myself that someone would appear at one of the windows, somebody would walk under one of those porches and someone would mind the shops. I knew that someone would start to sell newspapers at the news stand and that maybe the priest would come out of the church at a certain point. Gradually, all this happened; I made some puppets that looked out of the windows and little by little, thanks to the vibrations from the two actors, the first thread came to life.

**Q:** Which characters live in that particular village?

**A:** They are also invisible. Their way of talking is not peculiar but very common and obvious. It is like TV language which pretends to say everything but at the end it says nothing. It's like eating coloured baby food. It has no taste, you get no pleasure from it and at the end, there is nothing left.

**Q: Let's come back to the reason for this interview. Happy Birthday! Do you have any special wish?**

**A: What did I wish when I was 40 or 59? Since I was a little boy I have been tempted to get away on holidays or birthdays. Arrogance? Narcissism? How can I answer? What's more, how can I answer for free?**