KINONIK

8½ (1963)

Directed by Federico Fellini

WEDNESDAY APRIL 2nd 2pm / 7pm

SATURDAY APRIL 5th 2pm



There are inflection points in each artistic medium, pieces of art that emerge from situation or inspiration and change the trajectory of a form. Often these works manage to capture some aspect of life that has been long understood but little explored – reflect some essential part of our experience back to us. Enter 8½, Federico Fellini's 1963 meta masterpiece, an avant-garde exploration of creative and relational struggle. Emerging from the pressures of Fellini's own life, 8½ erupted internationally and changed the conversation on film forever.

With actors, funding, a shooting schedule, and set ready to go, Fellini suddenly found himself unable to make progress on his next film. He had a loose concept for an artist of some sort whose work is interrupted by a brief illness, but "lost" the film in the process of development and was near-ready to call the whole thing off. It was only then that he realized – the film was about himself. It was about his own creative block and romantic struggles, and the ways in which artists must produce great art on a strict schedule while being scrutinized by the world and trying to manage their personal lives. Diving fully into the dream, Fellini attached a note to the camera to remind him that "this is a comic film" and got to shooting.

Starring Marcello Mastroianni, Claudia Cardinale, Anouk Aimee, and Sandra Milo, 8½ follows the struggles of a director incapable of finishing his latest film, a science fiction epic, and grappling with his fraught relationships with the women in his life. The film passes between his life, the film-within-the-film, and dream sequences as the character Guido Anselmi (Fellini's stand-in) tries to break through the block keeping him from both loving and creating.

As was common, lines were dubbed after shooting wrapped, with much of the screenplay left unfinished until dialogue was being recorded. While this choice was sometimes a stumbling block for American audiences viewing Italian films of the era, here, as in La Strada, it only enhances the surreality and dreamlike nature of the experience. Fellini's last black-and-white film, and considered his best by critics and audiences internationally, 8 ½ is a testament to Fellini's ability to translate multi-layered and contradictory experience into art. A must-see for any film or art lover, 8 ½ continues to impact and alter the contemporary film landscape as it speaks to each generation of filmgoers and makers.

Trivia:

This was the first film where Claudia Cardinale was allowed to dub her own dialogue; previously her "throaty" voice and Tunisian accent was considered undesirable.

It's on pretty much every "Greatest Film List" of all time, including the Vatican's. Nominated for 22 international film awards, it won 12.

The movie was so popular in the U.S. that a company tried to secure the rights to mass produce the director's hat Mastroianni's character wears in the film.

Due to strikes at the development studio, Fellini was unable to check his daily footage and did not see what he had shot until reaching the editing phase.