LA DOLCE VITA
Pathé Consortium Cinéma/Riama Film 176 minutes

DIRECTOR  Federico Fellini
SCRIPT  Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli, Brunello Rondi
PRODUCER  Guiseppe Amago, Franco Magli, Angelo Rizzoli
MUSIC  Nino Rota
CINEMATOGRAPHER  Otellor Martelli
EDITOR  Leo Cattozzo
COSTUME DESIGN  Piero Gherardi

FEDERICO FELLINI (20 January 1920, Rimini, Italy—31 October 1993, Rome) is best-known as a director of films he wrote, and deservedly so, but before he started directing he co-scripted some of the great films of the Italian neo-realist era, among them Roberto Rossellini’s Roma, città aperta (Rome, Open City 1946) and Paisà (Paisan, 1946). Fellini directed 24 films, some of which are La Voce della luna 1989, Ginger e Fred 1986, Casanova 1972, I Clowns 1969, Giulietta degli spiriti 1965, 8½ 1963), Notti di Cabiria 1957, and I Vitelloni 1953. He was nominated for 11 writing and directing Oscars (including both for La Dolce Vita) but won none of them. Four of his films received the Best Foreign Language Film award: La Strada, Notti di Cabiria, 8½ and Amarcord. He received the Academy’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993. His death could have been a scene from one of his movies: While recovering from difficult heart surgery he choked on half a mozzarella ball. Enza Da Castro, his production secretary, and Roberto Mannoni, his production director, were with him. Da Castro called a doctor and two nurses into the room and told them Fellini was choking. The doctor yelled “Heart attack! Heart attack” and began giving him heart massage. When Da Castro and Mannoni again told her he was choking, she ordered them out of the room. Mannoni called Fellini’s doctor, Professor Turchetti, and told him to come immediately. After 15 minutes, according to Mannoni, another doctor arrived with a resuscitator and other instruments, and a few minutes later Turchetti got there. But by then Fellini was dead.

MARCELLO MASTROIANNI (28 September 1924, Fontana Liri, Italy—19 December 1996, Paris, pancreatic cancer) first appeared in film in Marionette 1938 and last in a film about himself, Marcello Mastroianni: mi ricordo, sì, io mi ricordo (Mastroianni: I Remember, Yes I Remember 1997). There were about 150 roles in between, 6 with Fellini and 15 with his longtime friend Sophia Loren. Some of his films were Prêt-à-Porter 1994, A Fine Romance 1992, Ginger e Fred 1986,
Una Giornata particolare 1977, Roma 1972, Casanova '70 1965, Matrimonio all'italiana 1964, 8½ 1963. “In front of a camera,” he said, “I feel solid, satisfied. Away from it I am empty, confused.” And “I don’t understand why these Americans have to suffer so much to identify with their characters. Me, I just get up there and act. It’s great fun. There’s no suffering in it.” ANITA EKBERG (29 September 1931, Malmö, Skåne, Sweden), the 1950 Miss Sweden, appeared in about 60 mostly-forgettable films, some of which were Suor Omicidi 1978 (a.k.a. Killer Nun), Malenka 1968 (a.k.a. Bloody Girl, Fangs of the Living Dead, Malenka the Vampire, nd Niece of the Vampire), Woman Times Seven 1967, Boccaccio '70 1962, Hollywood or Bust 1956, War and Peace 1956, and Abbott and Costello Go to Mars 1953. ANOUK AIMÉE (Françoise Sorya Dreyfus, 27 April 1932, Paris) appeared in about 70 films, but only one brought her international attention—A Man and a Woman 1966. She also appeared in Prêt-à-Porter 1994 and Justine 1969. LEX BARKER (Alexander Crichlow Barker Jr. 8 May 1919, Rye, New York—11 May 1973, New York, New York, heart attack), a direct descendant of the founder of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, attended the Fessenden School and Phillips-Exeter Academy, then went to Princeton but left to become an actor, for which his high society family disowned him. Barker played Tarzan five times, then became something of an international actor, playing in 50 films made in Brazil, Germany, Spain, Yugoslavia, Italy, Lebanon, and France, helped no doubt by his linguistic ability—he was said to speak French, Spanish, Italian and German. He enlisted in WWII as a private and mustered out as a major. DESMOND O’GRADY is an Irish poet perhaps most famous for the night he dove out of his Harvard window stark naked, his room afire, claiming to police that the IRA was clearly responsible; the police suggested smoking in bed as the more probable culprit; we have no idea how Desmond got into this movie.

Fellini said:

“For me, the artist is someone who is called by demons and must reply to this summons. Doing so he is cast into a kind of galaxy with which he has special, arcane relationships. The problem is to recognize the sounds, the colors, the signs that correspond to the voice that called him. Once this problem is resolved, he need do nothing except perform in extrasensory fashion. When I enter into this state of grace, it is not I who directs the film, but the film that directs me. A huge amount of sensitivity is always required: you have entered a city you don’t know but in which you must move with the lightness of a vampire, without ideas, ideologies, preconceptions, if not without everything. This is like the prelude, the atrium, the anteroom of creativity; only afterward do your practical experience, your craftsmanship and professionalism come in; in other words, the hard work of making creativity materialize. An artist does not do what he wants, but what he can: this tension is what constitutes art.”

“I’m not fascinated by theater; I’m fascinated by all forms of spectacle, theater, circus, cinema itself. These all contain congenial elements; when I show the atmosphere of show business, I speak of myself because my life is a show. I am a man wholly devoted to spectacle; I am one of those who tells stories to others.”

“Often I mix languages to express the truth of a situation.”

“I try to love everything in life, not only what we usually consider proper, honest, charming. I always like to show both sides of a thing.”

“I invented a non-existent Via Veneto, enlarging and altering it with poetic license until it took on the dimensions of a large allegorical fresco.”

“Cinema is an art of illusion and sometimes the illusion must show its tail.”

“Certain forced vocations make the organism show irregularities. Obligatory chastity, like that of a nun, can well bring such hair to the face.”

“I don’t want to see my old films; they are like diseases, the germs of my fantasy.”

“Realism is a bad word. In a sense everything is realistic. I see no line between the imaginary and the real.”
“Film is only images. You can put in whatever sound you want later and change and improve it.”

“La Dolce Vita was considered scandalous—all over the world! The police wanted to take my passport away; they wanted to kill me, to put me in prison.”

“The title of [La Dolce Vita] came to have a meaning exactly the opposite of what I intended. I told that story about Rome because I know Rome, but it could have taken place in Bangkok, Paris, Babylon, anywhere. The city is an internal city. I wanted the title to signify not “Easy Life” but “The Sweetness of Life.”

“Ekberg came from the North, she was young and as proud of her good health as a lioness. She was no trouble at all. She remained in the basin for ages, motionless, impassive, as if the water didn’t cover her nor the cold affect her, even though it was March and the nights made one shiver. For Mastroianni it was rather a different story. He had to get undressed, put on a frogman’s suit and get dressed again. To combat the cold he polished off a bottle of vodka, and when we shot the scene he was completely pissed.... It took eight or nine nights. Some of the owners of the surrounding houses would rent out their balconies and windows to the curious. At the end of each take the crowd would cheer. A show within a show. Every time I look at the picture of Ekberg in the Trevi Fountain, I have the sensation of reliving those magic moments, those sleepless nights, surrounded by the meowing of cats and the crowd that gathered from every corner of the city.”

“We change our accounts of events continually so as not to bore ourselves.”

“It’s absolutely impossible to improvise. Making a movie is a mathematical operation. It is like sending a missile to the moon. Art is a scientific operation. What we call improvisation is, in my case, just having an ear and an eye to things that occur during the time we are making the picture. The history of 4 months, 5 months of shooting is not only the private story of the director making the picture, it is also a story of a trip, of mutual relationships, of love, of enemies, of vanity. . . . If you see that the picture is suggesting something new, you have to be open to that kind of suggestion, because sometimes it is the picture that directs you when you work in an open and honest way. That is not improvisation, that is just being faithful to what you are doing.”

“All art is autobiographical. The pearl is the oyster’s autobiography.”