

# Fellini creates a complete flop: Ginger & Fred ain't worth \$5.50

By ALEX PATTERSON

Here is all you need to know about the new Fellini movie:

1. Its title is *Ginger and Fred*, not, as you will be tempted to say, *Fred and Ginger*.
2. It stars Guilietta Masina, (alias Mrs. Fellini) and the dilapidated wreck of what used to be Marcello Mastroianni.
3. It isn't very good.

*Ginger and Fred* is not about Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, as the elderly Ms. Rogers has gone to some pains to point out. In fact, she tried to sue the Italian maestro for using her name without her permission and for portraying the dance team in a "seedy" manner. Last we heard, she was looking for \$8 million, so offended was she. (Mr. Astaire was reported not to be bothered at all.) Since \$8 million is more than the film is likely to earn, it seemed excessive, especially since the grand old hooper is not exactly one of America's destitute. Anyway, they seemed to have settled their differences, and the film opens this Friday in Toronto with a disclaimer about its not being about any real persons living or dead etc.

This controversy was all the more unnecessary since it is not a biography of the famous couple, but rather an entirely fictitious story about a pair of Italian dancers (and lovers) who enjoyed some degree of success imitating their American namesakes. They have not done their old soft shoe routine together for

over two decades, nor have they even seen each other, until they are invited to reunite for a spot on a televised variety show, called "We Are Proud To Present."

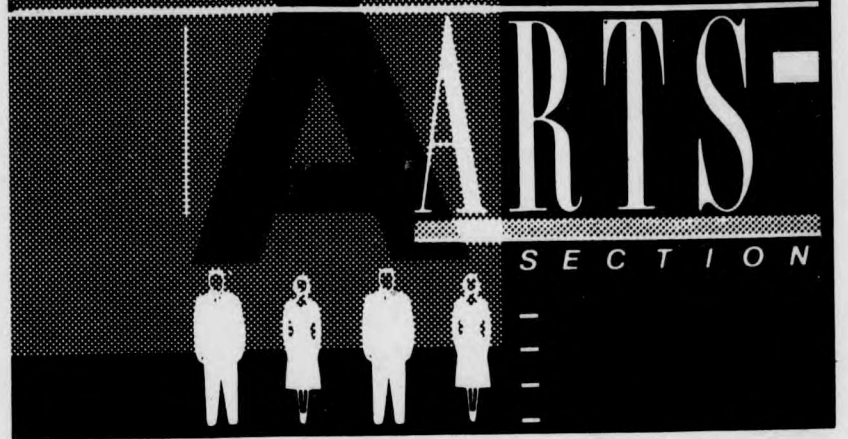
"Ginger" comes to Rome for the performance and checks into a noisy hotel filled with a rather feeble bunch of Fellini grotesques: midgets, musclemen, monkeys, Reagan imitators, that sort of thing. After the full-blown debauchery of Fellini's *Satyricon*, this is pretty tame stuff. Actually, most things about *Ginger and Fred* are tame, timid and lacking the director's customary brashness—especially considering the butt of his humor is television, one of the world's easiest targets. Video monitors are everywhere, serving up weak parodies of commercials, game shows and cooking programs. Similarly, the variety hour "We Are Proud To Present" is portrayed in a manner that could hardly be deemed biting satirical. More than anything else, it resembles the old Ed Sullivan Show, except with tackier set and an emcee in a sequined blazer that would make Liberace scream for a tailor with more restraint. The maestro would have us believe that this is the most popular program in Italy.

The director's startlingly original message seems to be that television has replaced the movies as chief purveyor of glitzy junk. The dubious traditions of Busby Berkeley and Las Vegas floorshows are now in the province of the ubiquitous *box populi*. This is supposed to be news?

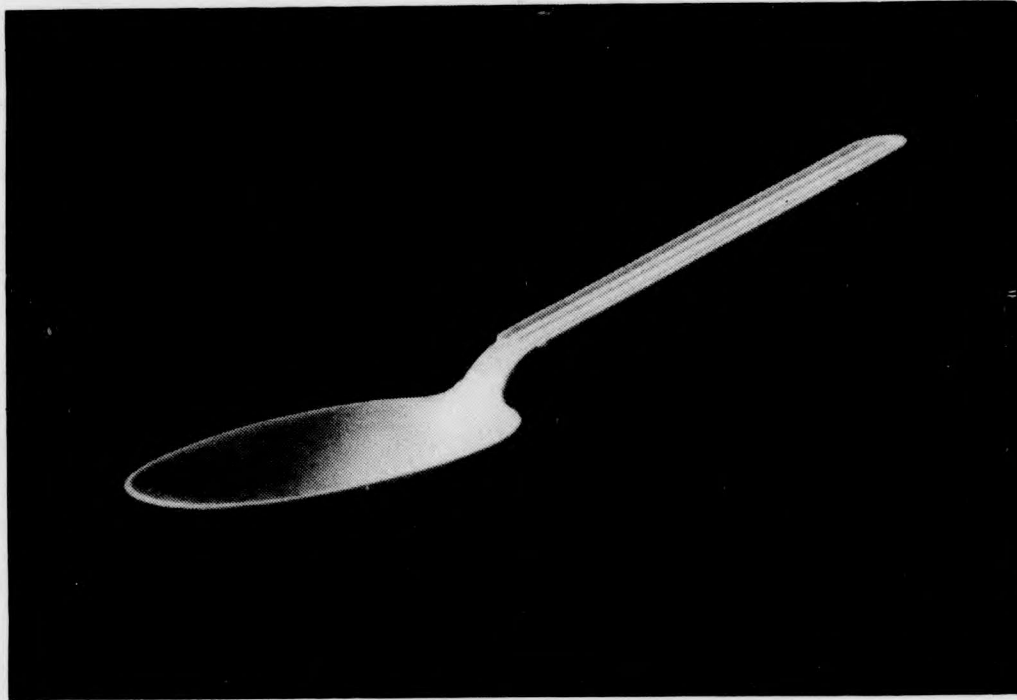
This from a man who used to engage in intellectual arm-wrestling with Freud, Mussolini and the Pope? Has he only just noticed recently that the electronic mass media render everything circus-like and videotic? And, most important, should it take him two-hours-plus to make a point that should have been obvious to most viewers before they walked into the theatre?

The slug-like progression of the story is one of the film's main drawbacks. After Ms. Masina arrives in Rome, she waits for Mastroianni. It is a long wait. When he eventually shows up, she exclaims "Pippo, is that you?" She might well ask, so decrepit is the once-suave matinee idol. Balding, paunchy, unshaven, poorly-dressed—it is as hard to believe that this was the star of *8 1/2* as it is to believe that this movie is from the man who directed it.

After their reunion they hang around the hotel, rehearse a little and chat a lot. (The script is shockingly talkative considering that Fellini was once known for his supreme visual sense.) Pippo keeps embarrassing his partner by drinking too much, reciting dirty rhymes and taking a horseshoe through a metal detector. She takes this all very well, considering she is hoping the TV spot will lead to a revitalization of their career. Indeed, if it weren't for Ms. Masina's sympathetic and exuberant portraiture of the long-suffering lover, *Ginger and Fred* would be barely endurable. As it is, it's merely a disappointment.



You're clucking right I'm back again, but rumor has it, alas(t), that I shall follow the fate of Harriet the cow (slaughter) and remain immortal in the Excal archives . . . I appeal to you, my fine fowl friends . . . is there no mercy? is there no angst? Is there no reprieve from this agorophobic campus? Help! The pigeons are taking over the Grad Lounge patio and I'm starving. Cigarette butts, anyone? Donations ingratelously accepted at 111 Centrifugal Bloc.



By RD MACPHERSON

The task of writing something witty, insightful or profound, in summary of four years of BFA work, is a difficult one. So is, I am told, the task of summing up a year of arts events. I will attempt neither.

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Instead, I offer the following notes, unscientifically culled from the depths of my trouser pockets, as it were.

1. Downview has a special polarity all its own; in Fine Arts, this means simply that whatever you are doing is bound to repel all those in other Fine Arts disciplines, and the rest of the campus as well.

2. Despite our apparent isolation, so often lamented by the more recreant among us, we seem to be a lot closer to Central America, South Africa and the Middle East than our southern competition, the venerable U of T.

3. There is no number three.

4. 'The future belongs to those who are prepared' exclaims one advertisement, aimed at young parents of future York-ites, etc., and depicting a handsome couple clutching scrolls. As hard as I tried, I couldn't internalize that message, and I think I know why: here, on the threshold of the future, I don't have the room for it. Wouldn't you know it, I will leave this place with my hands full enough as it is.

5. Why aren't there any nice pictures of plastic cutlery available in general circulation? I believe that the Objectivist club has a fine collection, but they don't share things . . .

## Ttttttttttthat's all folks!

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October 31

• CYSF presents the *Women's Film Series*, dealing with women within society and how they cope with daily pressures. Fun? WOW!

November 7

• Alumni artist Ron Sandor explores philosophy and astronomy in his interior construction, ". . . if I should die before I wake . . .", part of the RE:UNION:MFA exhibition across campus. He describes his piece: "There's birth and death in this . . . there are nails being driven in and popping out. You have to see it both ways."

November 14

• York's Dance Department presents its homecoming show at the Winchester Street Theatre. While diverse and rich, the presentation suffered from excess—10 pieces were presented.

November 21

• York defies Mozart! Uhh, not really. The music department presented four new compositions, a reminder to all that there's more to music than Beethoven, Bach and the B-52s.

November 28

• *Clouds as Waves, Petals as Rain*, an exhibition of contemporary Chinese calligraphy, painting and prints at the Art Gallery of York University, represented the first phase of a developing exchange program between faculty members from York Fine Arts and faculty from the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, People's Republic of China.

• Evil air in the Fine Arts building forces students to exorcise their powers in a ceremonial attempt to clear the space.

1986

January 9

• York theatre grad Dan Lett is pretty lacedaemonical about a sky-rocketing career as he prepares to star in the Theatre Plus production of Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*. His philosophy says it all: "things work out the way they're meant to."!!!

January 23

• Mavor Moore gives a lecture at York on "The Critical Condition: Arts Criticism Today" and suggests we "look at art as a clothesline—it doesn't work unless it's held up at both ends."

January 30

• York authors Claudio Duran, Rafael Barreto-Rivera and Margarita Feliciano made up *Reportaje de los Antifaces*, a poetry reading

at Atkinson. Their "reports" differed both stylistically and contextually.

February 13

• The Art Gallery of York University exhibits *Divisions, Crossroads, Turns of Mind*, the first show of modern Irish art to be displayed in Canada.

• Iecube, a week-long Fine Arts festival, is once again crippled by hasty and insufficient organization.

February 27

• Oscar loves York but York is just crazy about Oscar! Oscar Peterson's benefit concert at Roy Thomson Hall for York's music department was a smash success.

March 6

• *Dark Arrows, Chronicles of Revenge*, a collection of short stories edited by York professor Alberto Manguel, is reviewed by *Excalibur*. There is nothing avant-garde in the collection and imaginative content definitely seems to have been Manguel's editorial prerogative.

March 13

• Theatre Glendon produces Charles Marowitz's *Artaud at Rodez*. "It is 'poetic' rather than 'literal' truth which is being sought" in the play and the Glendon production is "exceptional."

• Sniff! Harriet's dead! Gone to Bovine Heaven on a tray at Steak'n'Burger.

March 20

• Burton prepares to receive bunnies and yuppies in the Graduate productions of *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *In the Boom Boom Room*.

• *Excalibur's* Arts Section gives birth to Henriette who reminds readers not to "chicken out on end of year performances."

March 27

• *Mr. Nice Guy* ain't so nice, according to playwright Dolly Reisman and director Ines Buchli, both York grads. *Mr. Nice Guy* deals with "wife abuse, or a couple in a violent relationship."

April 4

• President's Prize Winners in literature set new precedent of conservatism. Chairman of the creative writing department, Matthew Corrigan, declares that today's writers are "less experimental than 10 years ago."

• B-poetry comes out of York stairwells in the form of *Off the Pigs*, typeset by a typewriter and stapled together. What it lacks in literary genius, it compensates for in ingenuity . . . thanks to "Patsy Cline and Veronica Lodge," its editors.