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SCORING

FEDERICO FELLINI'S RECENT HONORARY Oscar could just as easily be a tribute to composer Nino Rota. Their work is inseparable—*La Dolce Vita* or *8½* without Rota's mischievous hurdy-gurdy music is simply unimaginable. He worked successfully with many, but his Fellini collaborations are an artistic high point. Here's a selection of Rota's best.

● **La Dolce Vita** (CAM). With Rota and Fellini, the sounds of the circus are never far away: soft melodies are pushed aside by giddy marches or big-top fanfares with alarming regularity. Less interesting are the non-Rota stabs at jazz standards.

● **8½** (CAM). More sly fun, with a witty co-opting of Wagner that predates *Apocalypse Now* by sixteen years. Rota's mélange of musical styles and neck-snapping tempo changes hints at influences from such cartoon composers as Carl Stalling. Other worthwhile Fellini scores: *Amarcord* (CAM) and *Juliet of the Spirits* (CAM).

● **The Godfather** (MCA). The main theme could hardly be better; it embodies strength and the dark price of power with striking simplicity. Unfortunately, there's little else—just a few variations on the theme, a snippet of music from Carmine Coppola, and . . . it's over.

● **Romeo & Juliet** (Cloud Nine Records; imported). Rota at his most romantic, enhancing Franco Zeffirelli's sexy teen version of Shakespeare. The "Love Theme" is rightfully a classic. Avoid the Capitol Records version, which is virtually all dialogue—the score is relegated to the background.

● **Fellini's Movie Songs** (Milan). A just-released testimonial to Rota's enduring popularity. It combines new lyrics with the composer's classic themes, all sung by chanteuse Katyna Ranieri. *Movie Songs* will be hard-pressed to equal Hal Willner's classic tribute album, *Amarcord Nino Rota* (Hannibal Records); the latter features Wynton Marsalis, Bill Frisell, and others improvising on Rota to great effect.

MICHAEL GILTZ



NINO: HE ROTA THE SONGS.