

## Questions answered by Big Wreck's Forrest Williams

By **STEPHEN MCQUAID**

In case anyone read last week's article and wondered what Forrest Williams of Big Wreck had to say, here you go:

Me: Why do you think that your popularity in Canada is much larger than it is in your own country [the USA]?

Forrest: It's much harder to break into the US market. It's too commercial, and the industry plays such a big role that it makes it very hard for a band like us to break through down there.

Me: Why do you think that Canada seems to love really good, loud rock more than the States? We love bands like you and Big Sugar, but the States seems to be not into that as much. Why do you think that is?

Forrest: Canada's not nearly as commercialized as the States, so it's much easier for bands like us to make it up here. Also, I think it's a bit of a folk thing. I think Canadians like music based on

folk music, so that's why bands like us are more popular up here.

Me: Where are you going in the future? Are you going to tinker with your sound, experiment, or anything like that?

Forrest: No, we're going to keep the sound the same. We're not going to come out with anything new and weird, or psychedelic.

Me: Ian writes some pretty good lyrics and plays with words a fair bit. Where does he get the song ideas? Is it personal, or personal with a twist, or does he get ideas from other places?

Forrest: I think it's pretty personal. He doesn't really talk about it, so... I can't say for sure.

Me: What is the goal of the band, or how would you describe yourselves as briefly as possible?

Forrest: Describe ourselves as briefly as possible? I think it's just that we make good

music, and we want people to know that it is good music, and it's out there.

Me: I'm also a drummer, I used to play percussion back in high school and a little bit afterwards...

Forrest: Oh, so you know how bad I suck then.

Me: No, you don't suck, I was just wondering: when I see you perform, the thing that sticks out the most to me about your style is how low you sit. Why do you sit so low? Is it for legroom or something?

Me: No... I don't know why, really. I don't think about it. It's just how I'm comfortable. I think some other guys at my high school might have sat low too, so that may be how I started off like that. I never really noticed it until I started playing on other people's kits. It's just how I'm comfortable, so that's the way I play."

And just a last little note: Big Wreck's latest album is due for release sometime this July, or so they hope

## Foreign Film Review with David Macdonald *La Strada*

One of the acknowledged classics of cinema is Federico Fellini's 1954 film, *La Strada* starring Anthony Quinn, and Fellini's wife, Giulietta Masina. Fellini found fame with this picture, later moving on to more complex, extravagant and self-indulgent films like *8 1/2*, *La Dolce Vita*, and *Juliet of the Spirits*, but this is by far his most simple film – and possibly his best.

The story involves Zampano (Quinn), a narrow, macho guy who is a travelling entertainer. His gimmick consists of snapping a metal chain wrapped around him with his chest muscles. He tries to make the spectacle more astounding than it really deserves to by warning sensitive viewers to look away in case there's blood, and also at one point by telling an anecdote about someone who burst his optic nerves attempting the trick.

The film begins with Zampano agreeing to take a simple-minded girl, Gelsomina (Masina) as an assistant. She has simple dreams of becoming, as she puts it, an "artist." The relationship between the two is very rocky. Zampano exhibits a dictatorial approach to training her, going so far as to swat her with a stick whenever she plays her notes wrong on the trumpet. Another distressing moment occurs when the two go out into a bar, and Zampano flirts with a busty red-headed woman. He takes the woman with him, leaving Gelsomina on the sidewalk for the entire evening. The next morning, she is still waiting for him.

Later, they meet a character known only as The Fool, a tightrope performer. The Fool exhibits a more light-hearted approach to life – the opposite to Zampano. For one, he is far gentler to Gelsomina. Also, The Fool makes fun of Zampano's dumb tricks, distracting him during a performance. It is during this time when a viewer truly understands the eventual tragedy of Zampano. Clearly, he's insanely jealous of the attention The Fool is giving Gelsomina, never once by his words, but rather his violent actions. During the fallout from his final outburst, the viewer gets a glimpse of his true loneliness.

The movie is simple yet perceptive in its portrayal of a pathetic character and the woman who forces him to have at least a scant realization of his own tragic nature. Only as the movie ends does Zampano get in touch with any emotions other than the brutish sort. Gelsomina, while child-like, is able to reveal an openness and a patience for life in general, and specifically for this seemingly unworthy individual.

However, many viewers might rightfully accuse Gelsomina of allowing herself to be a victim, and Fellini of portraying her as an exceptional woman for accepting his nasty flaws. This is even further complicated when The Fool reassures her that all people, including her, have a purpose in the world. So apparently that means Gelsomina's purpose is to care for Zampano. Wouldn't a reasonable woman just tell Zampano to piss off and then go back home and find a better purpose in life?

*La Strada's* simplicity and the peculiarity of its characters allows the film a believable glimpse of human nature, which is something the best artists clearly strive to do. Fellini has given ample evidence that he is one of those artists.

Rating: \*\*\*\*

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