

to the point that *Baskervilles* really highlights similarities between these two obsessive individuals. But the big surprise here is Morell, who has enough presence to match both Cushing and Lee, and is given a hefty chunk of screen time.

Although at times a bit soft, the HD transfer showcases how lovely the film must have looked upon release: the elaborate sets blossom with colour and shadow, and there's a ruggedness to the location work that gives the film an edge. Topping it off, Twilight Time has outdone itself with extras, offering two commentary tracks, a 2002 interview with Lee, and Bernard's score in isolation. Hammerheads will want to snatch this one up quickly before all 3000 copies are gone.

JEFF SZPIRGLAS

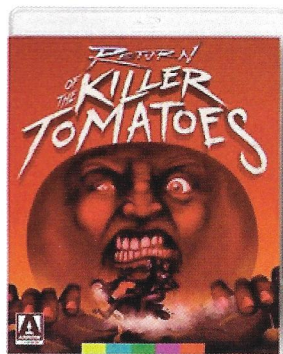
SPLATTER FILM

RETURN OF THE KILLER TOMATOES! (1988) Blu-ray

Starring George Clooney, Anthony Starke and Karen M. Waldron
Directed by John De Bello
Written by Stephen Andrich
Arrow Films

When it comes to good old-fashioned silliness, there is a seemingly endless bounty of goofy films from the '80s, with perhaps *Return of the Killer Tomatoes!* at the top of the heap (or bottom?). Taking place over a decade after the Great Tomato War in *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* (1978), there's now a strict citywide ban on the seedy menaces, but one mad scientist, Dr. Gangreen (the great John Astin from the original *Addams Family*), is working on perfecting his killer tomatoes so they can blend in and look like normal human civilians. Equipped with his army, he would then have them infiltrate the masses for a hostile takeover. Amongst his specimens is Tara (Karen M. Waldren), a babe with enough of a tomato brain to realize she wants nothing to do with his plan and leaves. She soon meets the dorky and lovable Chad (Anthony Starke) – plus his roommate Matt (George Clooney!) – and instantly falls for him. Together as man and killer-tomato girlfriend, they fight to save the world from the impending wave of mutant fruit.

As far as sequels to ridiculous films go, they should all follow the trajectory of the *Evil Dead* franchise. When the first movie is already bonkers, the ante must be upped exponentially. *Return* feels so different from *Attack* due to the decade between them, but it works. It's as dumb as humanly possible with schlocky gags every few seconds (such as a repeated overuse of product-placement jokes) and a ultra-thin plot that makes just enough sense to keep an audience, erm, rooted; a victory given that so many spoofs have the



Circus of Fear

tendency to derail into total nonsense.

Arrow's release features an audio commentary by director John De Bello, in which he mostly discusses the writing process with Stephen Andrich; a featurette with star Anthony Starke, who displays a hilarious lack of humility about why *Return* is such a good movie; a TV spot; and a photo gallery. *Return* by no means wants to be anything other than a stupid sequel to a stupid movie, but for those who can appreciate the importance of stupid, it's a brilliant choice.

RICHELLE CHARKOT

LESSER LEE

CIRCUS OF FEAR (1966) Blu-ray

Starring Christopher Lee, Leo Genn and Klaus Kinski
Directed by John Moxey
Written by Peter Welbeck

FIVE GOLDEN DRAGONS (1967)

Starring Robert Cummings, Maria Rohm and Rupert Davies
Directed by Jeremy Summers
Written by Peter Welbeck
Blue Underground

Throughout the 1960s and early '70s, Christopher Lee was in constant demand – not only by Hammer Films and Amicus Productions, but also by prolific producer/screenwriter Harry Allan Towers (credited here as Peter Welbeck), for whom Lee would appear in numerous films. Two of these productions, *Circus of Fear* and *Five Golden Dragons*, make their Blu-ray debut in a double feature from Blue Underground.

Circus of Fear begins with a daylight heist of an armoured truck on London's Tower Bridge, which leads to the killing of one guard and the loot smuggled away to an empty farmhouse – only to be discovered by someone from the

neighbouring Barberini's Circus. While Police Inspector Elliott (Leo Genn) tries to track down the felons and the stolen money, which is hidden at the circus, members of the troupe are murdered by an unseen, knife-throwing assailant. With a long list of unsavoury characters, including the circus' hood-sporting lion tamer, Gregor (Lee), and a mysterious criminal named Manfred (Klaus Kinski) snooping around, the killer could be anyone.

But while *Circus* is a murder mystery-crime thriller hybrid with horror elements, *Five Golden Dragons* is a comedic spy spoof set in Hong Kong that tells of an American, Bob Mitchell (Robert Cummings), who unwittingly gets caught up with the activities of both local gangsters and the heads of an international crime ring – the titular "Golden Dragons" – in town for a secret meeting.

Though Lee takes top billing in *Circus*, he's in more of a supporting role; and in *Dragons*, the icon is reduced to a cameo appearance as one of the crime lords – wearing an absurd-looking gold-coloured dragon mask. Both films were promoted as being based upon stories by prolific mystery and crime author Edgar Wallace, whose output provided the basis for numerous German-lensed "krimi" thrillers in the 1960s. Here, however, the connection to Wallace's work is seemingly marginal, at best.

Extras on this region-free disc include a commentary with *Circus* director John Moxey, plus trailers and image galleries for both films. The occasionally suspenseful yet talky *Circus* (which was released in the US as *Psycho-Circus* in a truncated version) has been restored to its original 91 minutes, and is definitely the better of the two films, for Lee fans, anyhow.

JAMES BURRELL

