



Dead Ringers

behind-the-scenes video. Not surprisingly, Campbell's is the most entertaining as he makes a hilariously snarky comment about independent filmmakers and recalls an ill-fated training session with an Elvis impersonator; both he and the writer/director offer their assessments of why the much-longed-for sequel never wound up happening. The very best added extra is that Lansdale/Felsher track; the author is a great talker, evincing great appreciation for the movie and discoursing on everything from the craft of acting to the JFK assassination. They're all good reminders of why *Bubba Ho-Tep* continues to stand out like rhinestones on a jumpsuit.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

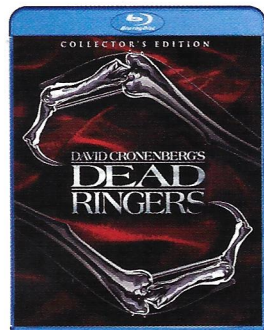
## TWICE THE FUN

### DEAD RINGERS (1988) Blu-ray

Starring Jeremy Irons, Geneviève Bujold and Heidi von Palleske  
Directed by David Cronenberg  
Written by David Cronenberg and Norman Snider  
Scream Factory

Perhaps only a filmmaker who'd just had a box-office hit as graphic and gross as *The Fly* could have gotten a movie like *Dead Ringers* done at a major studio, even back in 1988. As cold and clinical as *The Fly* was visceral and heartfelt, *Ringers* alienated mainstream viewers and some critics at the time but has come to be rightly regarded as one of David Cronenberg's best works. It also showcases arguably the best performance – or pair of performances – in the pantheon of memorable turns guided by the director.

As twin gynecologists Beverly and Elliot Mantle (who pointedly address each other with the feminine diminutives "Bev" and "Ellie"), Jeremy



Irons creates a double portrait of dysfunction that's mesmerizing from start to finish. Not only does he make each sibling fully dimensional and distinctive, he seamlessly interacts with himself – and in this age of nothing-to-it CGI trickery, it can't be overstated how painstaking the necessary optical effects work was in order to pull off the double-Irons illusion, and the level of concentration this must have required of the actor.

Beautifully photographed by Peter Suschitzky in the first of many collaborations with Cronenberg, *Dead Ringers* is presented in two ways in the twin Blu-ray Scream Factory edition. Disc one features an older 1.78:1 transfer, while disc two sports a new 2K scan in the filmmaker's preferred 1.66:1, which is the slightly cleaner and more colourful of the two. The former is accompanied by a pair of audio commentaries: an earlier track by Irons, recalling the production in great detail in that wonderful voice of his, and a fresh discussion by author William Beard, addressing what he calls "the saddest" of all of Cronenberg's films in academic but accessible terms.

The second disc contains vintage EPK and interview material, plus a quartet of new on-camera chats providing intriguing side perspectives on the movie. Co-star Heidi Von Palleske recalls *Dead Ringers* as much more fun and comfortable to make than to watch; actor Stephen Lack is rather... eccentric as he discusses his own art as much as his collaboration with Cronenberg; makeup effects creator Gordon Smith recalls having practical disagreements with the director on some key gags; and Suschitzky offers insight into both his and Cronenberg's working methods, particularly when shooting with both Ironses in the frame.

Given Cronenberg's body of work, it's only appropriate that Scream Factory would double up on the extras.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

## AND GRACE TOO

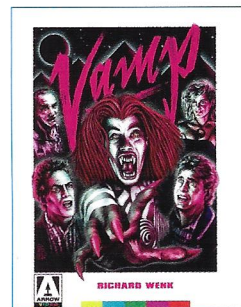
### VAMP (1986) Blu-ray

Starring Chris Makepeace, Robert Rusler and Grace Jones  
Written and directed by Richard Wenk  
Arrow Video

There's nothing like a near-death experience to put things into perspective, is there? When pledges AJ and Keith are about to be hanged as part of a fraternity initiation prank, AJ slams on the brakes and points out that the process is dumb: they want to join the frat, the frat wants to party, and a lot of effort could be spared if the brothers just had the pledges organize the party of a lifetime. Keith balks at AJ's offer to get them "anything" but AJ is resolute and lo! Turns out what the frat really wants at their big bash is a stripper.

In 2016, it's a request that seems nostalgically – even touchingly – straightforward, but for our heroes back in 1986, it presents a bit of a problem: there's nary an exotic dancer to be found within 200 miles, and they are decidedly short of both money and wheels. Fortunately wealthy-yet-friendless dork Duncan (Gedde Watanabe) is on hand to save the day, requesting only the chance to visit the strippers in their natural habitat and the limited-term friendship of Keith and AJ in return for a pile of hard cash and the use of his car. The three set off on their quest, and wind up at the sinister After Dark Club, which features a roster of (mostly) undead dancers and management that's literally bleeding the punters dry...

*Vamp* is a bit uneven, and it's about as scary as a bloodsucker with dentures who's lost his



Poligrip, but its unexpectedly zippy dialogue and Day-Glo '80s aesthetic make it a lot of fun. Grace Jones is hypnotic as ancient vampire Katrina, even though she doesn't utter a word, and there are moments of oddly poignant social commentary amid the lunacy.

The Blu-ray sports a short making-of documentary featuring interviews with the director, cinematographer and most of the principal cast; two trailers; TV spots; bloopers and rehearsal footage; and *Dracula Bites the Big Apple*, an early horror-comedy short by director Richard Wenk that focuses on everyone's favourite bloodsucker taking a trip to NYC in the 1970s. Overall *Vamp* is daft, but thoroughly enjoyable if you're in the right mood.

CLAIRE HORSNELL