He may be best known for making us laugh in the PINK PANTHER movies, but actor Herbert Lom had significant credits in the horror genre as well, and the sad news came down this morning that he has passed away.

Various sources have reported that Lom died peacefully in his sleep Thursday at age 95. Born in Prague as Herbert Karel Angelo Kuchacevic ze Schluderpacheru, he began his media career as a radio announcer for the BBC during WWII, and moved into film in the early '40s. He had appeared in dozens of movies, including classics like THE LADYKILLERS and SPARTACUS, before Hammer Films cast him in the title role of 1962's Terence Fisher-directed THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. He also co-starred the previous year as Captain Nemo in the Ray Harryhausen fantasy MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, and in the early '70s appeared in a string of fright features: Michael Armstrong's MARK OF THE DEVIL, Massimo Dallamano's DORIAN GRAY and as Dr. Van Helsing in Jess Franco's COUNT DRACULA (all 1970), Gordon Hessler's MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE (1971), Roy Ward Baker's Amicus productions ASYLUM (1972) and AND NOW THE SCREAMING STARTS! (1973) and Don Sharp's DARK PLACES (1973).

But it was during the same period that he won his greatest fame for a role on the opposite end of the cinema spectrum: put-upon Chief Inspector Dreyfus, nemesis of Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau in Blake Edwards' PINK PANTHER films. First squaring off with Clouseau in 1964's A SHOT IN THE DARK, Dreyfus continued the battle through THE RETURN OF THE PINK PANTHER (1975), THE PINK PANTHER STRIKES AGAIN (1976), in which he becomes something of a mad scientist, REVENGE OF THE PINK PANTHER (1978), the patchwork feature TRAIL OF THE PINK PANTHER (1982) and the Sellers-less CURSE OF THE PINK PANTHER (1983) and SON OF THE PINK PANTHER (1993). '83 also saw him return to the genre in one of his best parts: sympathetic doctor Sam Weizak, caring for formerly comatose, now telepathic Johnny Smith (Christopher Walken) in David Cronenberg's THE DEAD ZONE (pictured above). His last horror credit was Alan Birkinshaw's 1989 version of MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH.