John Cusack (also in THE PAPERBOY, one of my favorite films of the year) and Jennifer Carpenter (ever the scene-stealer in Showtime’s DEXTER) star in THE FACTORY, a semi-horror movie made under producer Joel Silver’s Dark Castle banner. A SILENCE OF THE LAMBS-meets-HARDCORE-wannabe thriller tinged with blood, it follows an obsessed father on the hunt for his missing teenage daughter.

THE FACTORY, filmed way back in 2008, is actor-turned-director Morgan O’Neill’s sophomore effort behind the camera, and while I can’t say whether it’s a slump (I haven’t see his first film, SOLO, whose script won the 2005 Project Greenlight Australia competition), it’s not altogether bad. Set adrift in the purgatory of film festivals (it recently had its U.S. premiere at LA’s Screamfest) and drib-drab theatrical releases internationally, it hasn’t yet secured a definitive Stateside release date.

Cusack plays Mike Fletcher, a taciturn, tenacious New York homicide cop who, along with his partner Kelsey (Carpenter) is on the hunt for a serial killer targeting Buffalo’s working girls. When Fletcher’s daughter Abby (Mae Whitman) goes missing, it transpires that she’s been mistaken for a hooker (nice parenting there, detective) and is in the lethal hands of the city’s most wanted, and Fletcher casts all caution aside and breaks every rule in the book to find

Abby before it’s too late.

At first, the horror is presented as a mystery—the predator (the always excellent Dallas Roberts) is collecting these women for something, presumably to kill them—and we see the victims chained up in a basement, plotting their escape while the detectives search on the surface. Fletcher in particular, of course, is the most determined, and while the interrogation scenes have intense possibilities, Cusack just doesn’t sell them. The device of a ticking time bomb (we are reminded several times of the 48-hour rule in crime-solving) makes for a decent level of suspense, and the gritty, dank visuals, from muddy locations to dark cellar sets, give the film a skeevy feel. But THE FACTORY is cobbled together from parts of too many other gory, salacious thrillers, from the two mentioned above to such numerically titled films as SE7EN and JENNIFER 8, not to mention weekly crime shows like CRIMINAL MINDS. The result is that THE FACTORY feels as if it’s fresh off an assembly line.