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IFC Films has gone horror-happy over the past year, scooping up any number of genre titles for limited theatrical, video-on-demand and DVD release. Many of their selections have been intriguing, quality foreign titles, like today’s NYC release HEARTLESS (see review here). On the other hand, VICTIM, also opening in Manhattan today and available on VOD, suggests that they’re buying some of these movies by the pound.

This is gonna be a pretty short review, since VICTIM’s a pretty short movie—only 74 minutes. That leaves little room for this latest captivity-and-torture flick to show or tell us much we haven’t seen in the 237 other captivity-and-torture flicks in the last several years. Things get off to an unpromising start as we witness yet another violent murder of a cute girl through the camcorder lens of her attacker, before we meet our titular victim, a young man (the vaguely Jim Carrey-looking Stephen Weigand) about whom we learn so little before his victimization that he’s billed only as “Young Man” in the end credits. We encounter him in a bar where he’s trying to pick up a different cute girl, while being watched by what looks like a distant cousin of SAW’s Pigman, before he’s walloped on the head in the parking lot. He wakes up caged in the basement of the mansion of one Dr. Volk (Bob Bancroft), and is soon being roughed up by Volk’s musclebound henchman, Mr. George (Brendan Kelly).

If you’ve seen a few movies like this before, the subsequent developments will seem less suspenseful than comfortably familiar: Dr. Volk subjects the Young Man to sadistic medical tortures—and listens to classical music during his down time. The Young Man makes an escape attempt that is thwarted when he’s within touching distance of freedom. There are a couple of close calls involving local law enforcement (including a detective, played by Stacy Haiduk, whose “office” seems to have been set up in the corner of somebody’s basement). And so on. Anyone who pays attention and recalls that opening sequence will likely be able to figure out Dr. Volk’s endgame and motivations before the “surprise” revelations in the third act, and though they involve a couple of perverse twists, they also bring the proceedings veering dangerously close to camp.

Directors Matthew Eskandari and Michael Pierce and screenwriters Michael Hultquist and Robert Martinez haven’t done anything terribly wrong in VICTIM, but they haven’t done anything terribly original or noteworthy either. The movie is technically polished (though the scenes in the basement seem a little too well-lit) and the actors go through the subgenre’s prescribed motions with conviction. But the feeling it leaves you with is that this particular story would have been better served by being told at half its length, as a segment in an anthology feature or series.

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