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## Ghett'a Life (MVD)

By

[Upchuck Undergrind](#)

– February 26, 2013 **Posted in:** [Reviews](#)



GHETT'a LIFE has snagged some film fest nods and not without warranting them. GHETT'a LIFE mixes drama, boxing, crime and politics (are the last two redundant?) and mixes them well. This is largely because it's obviously not a genre-bender per se, in that that's not the point. Everything in the story is there organically and belongs with the other parts. Every element is part of a whole, a story, and a smartly told one at that. It operates at many layers. A Jamaican ghetto teen named Derrick wants to box but the boxing club is in a part of town run by a rival party. In Jamaica – and apparently nowhere else – there is a sort of “garrison politics” in which political parties often run their turf (!), and with thugs instead of policemen. There are even dons. Of course, Jamaica doesn't have a monopoly on dons. Anyway ... Also on the wrong side of the tracks – especially for his father who is a major political player in Derrick's own hood – is a girl. Read: romantic interest. Though this is kept in balance and not overplayed. So there's a little Romeo & Juliet. With or without the tragedy you have to find out for yourself. Another character dynamic is the rivalry between Derrick and the head of a gang/group of boxers from the other turf, Gully Rat. That relationship is deep, textured and evolving. The biggest immediate threat is Sin, the don on Derrick's turf. His character is well-written and the acting lives up to Sin's depth as a villain. Nor is Derrick's family ignored in the character development department. Mom's more than just a placeholder and plays a pivotal role before all is said and done. All of the characters are beautifully portrayed. And the story, which, drawing as it does from the font of sports films, political corruption films, ghetto films and crime films, could so easily have taken the primrose path and trotted out the tropes, instead does otherwise and tells a story that is fresh and vivid, not dead-horse beaten and dull. Sharp filmmaking with lots of subtext. 104 min., 16:9 widescreen, color, Jamaican/Jamaican-English (?) with English subtitles  
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