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## movies

### Lockdown

On DVD April 29 (R) 95 minutes

**The verdict:** Very rough stuff done with B-movie grit

**Grade: B-**

By [STEVE MURRAY](#)  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Here's the low-down on "Lockdown."

This tough-minded, often brutal prison movie was supposed to open in fall 2001. Then, February 2002. And now it's landed on the midwinter graveyard shift 2003. Apparently, somebody somewhere got cold feet. Too bad.

Though over-the-top and simplistic, the film has a punchy B-movie grit and gusto. Most of it takes place in a maximum security prison, and once director John Luessenhop gets his characters (and us) behind bars, he barely gives us (or them) even a minute to feel safe.

Avery ("Judging Amy's" Richard T. Jones) is a promising competitive swimmer who's endured a lot of black-folks-don't-swim teasing from his friends.

Winning an important meet, he grabs the attention of college recruiter Bill Nunn (now a graying eminence). However, later that night, he and a couple of pals — the explosive bully Cashmere (Gabriel Casseus) and the young naif Dre (De'Aundre Bonds) — are arrested for a murder they didn't commit.

Quickly convicted, they're shipped off to jail, where their respective cellmates help determine their fates.

Cashmere is paired with a decent-seeming Michael Jackson lookalike whom he immediately beats to a pulp.

Dre is brutalized and raped repeatedly by the longhaired, tattooed psycho he bunks with.

Avery's cellmate is Malachi (Clifton Powell), who's been in prison for 22 years and, if nothing goes wrong, will be paroled in two months.



Lockdown is a gritty look at prison life.

#### FILM FACTS

**Starring:** Richard T. Jones, De'Aundre Bonds and Gabriel Casseus  
**Director:** John Luessenhop  
**Rating:** R for rape, language, violence  
**Genre:** Drama

#### What did you think of "Lockdown"?

Good	85%	159
Bad	12%	22
Wait to rent	3%	6

**Total Votes** 187

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Malachi quotes Ralph Ellison — "It is incorrect to assume that because I am invisible and live in a hole, I am dead" — and gives Avery some tough-love lessons on how to survive.

A threat to them all is the prison drug king, Clean Up (Master P, who also produced).

Meanwhile, on the outside, Nunn and Avery's girlfriend (Melissa DeSousa) are working to get him a new trial.

When Avery says he's not sure how long he can survive, Nunn gives him a little tough love of his own: "It's not supposed to be easy. It's prison."

"Lockdown" isn't smooth, and it isn't subtle. But it is engrossing — a stabbing during a visit by a gospel choir or the "girlfriends" who smuggle in drugs by putting illegal substances in some private places.

The climax is chaotic, bloody and genuinely terrifying.

"Undisputed," a prison movie released last December with such powerhouse names as Wesley Snipes, Ving Rhames and writer/director Walter Hill, isn't half as good as this grungy little film.

It's strange that it's been on ice so long, and even stranger that it finally got sprung on, of all days, Valentine's.

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