

= The Last Castle =

The Last Castle is a 2001 American action drama film directed by Rod Lurie , starring Robert Redford , James Gandolfini , Mark Ruffalo and Delroy Lindo .

The film portrays a struggle between inmates and the warden of a military prison , based on the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth . A highly decorated U.S. Army Lieutenant General , court martialled and sentenced for insubordination , challenges the prison commandant , a colonel , over his treatment of the prisoners . After mobilizing the inmates , the former general leads an uprising aiming to seize control of the prison .

The film was released in the United States on October 19 , 2001 , to mixed reviews and grossed \$ 27 @. @ 6 million worldwide .

= = Plot = =

Lieutenant General Eugene Irwin (Robert Redford) is brought to a maximum security military prison to begin a ten @-@ year sentence for his decision (in violation of a presidential order) to send U.S. troops on a mission in Burundi , resulting in the deaths of eight soldiers . Colonel Winter (James Gandolfini) , the prison 's commandant , is a great admirer of the general but is offended by a comment he overhears : Irwin criticizes Winter 's much @-@ prized military artifacts collection , calling it something no actual battlefield veteran would ever have .

Winter , who has never seen combat , resents the remark . He then takes exception to what he perceives as Irwin 's attempt to change the attitudes of the prisoners , his admiration for Irwin fading fast . On one occasion , Irwin is punished harshly after stopping a guard from clubbing a prisoner , Corporal Ramon Aguilar (Clifton Collins , Jr .) , who had made the mistake of saluting Irwin in the prison yard .

Continuing to observe acts of cruelty , Irwin attempts to unify the prisoners by building a " castle wall " of stone and mortar at the facility , which in many ways resembles a medieval castle . Envyng the respect Irwin is clearly receiving , Winter orders his guards to destroy the wall . Aguilar , directly involved in its construction , takes a stand before the bulldozer . Winter orders a sharpshooter with a coded hand gesture to fire a normally non @-@ lethal rubber bullet directly at Aguilar 's head , killing him .

After the wall is destroyed , Irwin and the inmates pay final respects to Aguilar in formation . Winter later tries to make amends with Irwin , who calls him a disgrace to the uniform and demands his resignation .

The prisoners begin to behave like soldiers around Irwin , using code words and gestures , infuriating the commandant . Winter reaches out to an anti @-@ social prisoner named Yates (Mark Ruffalo) , a former officer and Apache helicopter pilot convicted of running a drug @-@ smuggling ring . Yates is bribed to inform about Irwin 's plans in exchange for a reduced sentence .

Irwin organizes a plot to throw the prison into chaos . His intent is to show a friend , Brigadier General Wheeler (Delroy Lindo) , the commandant 's superior officer , that the commandant is unfit and should be removed from command under the Uniform Code of Military Justice . During a visit , Winter receives a letter threatening the kidnapping of General Wheeler by the prisoners . After ordering his men into action , Winter discovers that the scheme was a fake orchestrated by Irwin to detect how prison guards would react during an actual uprising .

Yates steals a U.S. flag from the warden 's office and seizes a helicopter used by guards .

Using improvised weapons the prisoners capture an armored vehicle and the helicopter . The prisoners place a call to Wheeler 's headquarters and inform him of the riot . Winter has little time to regain control before Wheeler will arrive to see the prison under siege , so orders the use of live ammunition against the prisoners .

Winter knows from Yates that Irwin 's ultimate goal is to raise the American flag upside down , a classic signal of distress . Irwin 's men create havoc but ultimately are confronted by overwhelming numbers of guards , armed with live ammunition . Irwin orders the prisoners to stand down and elects to personally hoist the flag . Winter shoots Irwin , fatally .

Peretz places the Colonel under arrest for the shooting of Irwin . The prisoners salute the flag and Winter now sees that Irwin has actually raised the flag in the correct manner . It flies above the prison 's walls as General Wheeler arrives . Colonel Winter is led away in handcuffs . The inmates build a new wall as memorial to their fallen comrades . Aguilar and Irwin 's names are among those carved onto the castle 's wall .

= = Cast = =

Robert Redford as Lieutenant General Eugene Irwin

James Gandolfini as Colonel Winter

Mark Ruffalo as Yates

Delroy Lindo as Brigadier General Wheeler

Steve Burton as Captain Peretz

Paul Calderón as Sergeant Major Dellwo

Clifton Collins , Jr. as Corporal Aguilar

Robin Wright (uncredited) as Rosalie Irwin , the general 's daughter

= = Production = =

The film was shot mainly at the 103 @-@ year @-@ old former Tennessee State Prison in Nashville , which had previously been used for filming in The Green Mile and Last Dance , and was chosen because of its Gothic and castle @-@ like appearance . The state of Tennessee offered to provide the location rent @-@ free , with exemption from the state 's 6 percent state sales tax . James Gandolfini earned \$ 5 million for co @-@ starring in the film after finishing the third season of The Sopranos in March 2001 .

A crew of 150 worked on refurbishing existing buildings and constructing new buildings in a time limit of nine weeks . A wall 61 metres (200 ft) long and 6 metres (20 ft) high was built , serving as the prison 's entrance . A metal walkway and two towers were also built as vantage points for the guards . The film required an office with a large window through which the warden could watch the inmates ; this was constructed by the production crew . Director Rod Lurie insisted on having the prisoners ' cells face each other , but this is not the case at the Tennessee State Prison . To solve the problem , production designer Kirk Petrucci created cells in a warehouse near the prison .

= = = Cinematography = = =

To show the balance of power , the film crew used multiple cinematography techniques involving different displays of color , lighting , camera and costumes . In the warden 's office intense color was used to reflect freedom or power , in contrast to the washed @-@ out colors from the less powerful yard . The contrasts shift as the story progresses , showing the increasing power of the prisoners . The American flag in the yard is described by Petrucci as " the heart of The Castle " and is the only exemption to the washed @-@ out color palette .

Cinematographer Shelly Johnson , in collaboration with director Lurie and the design team , also used lighting and camerawork to signify the shifting of powers . For example , the yard is at first naturally lit and more influenced by daylight , in contrast to Winter 's office , which is artificially illuminated by lamps . As the film progresses , the office is more fully infiltrated by exterior light through a broken window . The shift of power is also emphasized through camera techniques . Hand @-@ held cameras were used when filming in the yard to make the audience feel as if they were " participants in the action " . However , a very precise , sterile camera composition was used in the warden 's office . The prisoners ' world gets more precise during the film , while the colonel 's world is filmed more loosely .

Costume designer Ha Nguyen also demonstrates this contrast in the clothing of the cast . The film starts with the prisoners having their clothing divided by ethnicity , with African Americans wearing different headwear , Latinos wearing vests and various arm accessories , and the White Americans

in cut @-@ off t @-@ shirts . After the arrival of General Irwin , the prisoners start wearing more similar clothing in a " sharp military manner " . The uniforms of the prisoners change from the usual chocolate brown color to light grey , because of its muddled look on film and excessive darkness in some scenes . Ha Nguyen also contrasted the non @-@ battlefield ribbons found on Colonel Winter 's uniform with the battlefield medals found on General Irwin 's uniform (seen only in the opening scene as Irwin is inducted into the prison) .

The wall created by the prisoners in the middle of the yard also represents change and incarnation . What is at first a " discombobulated mess " representing the lack of unity among prisoners later becomes a perfect wall , a " powerful symbol of the results of [Irwin 's] leadership " .

= = = Effects = = =

Special effects supervisor Burt Dalton and stunt coordinator Mic Rodger created the battle weapons used in the final scenes . The trebuchet , used by prisoners to throw rocks , was capable of throwing a 68 kilograms (150 lb) rock a distance of 60 metres (200 ft) with an accuracy of ten feet around the target . The water cannon had the power to shoot 76 litres (20 US gal) of water per second . Some of the cast did their own stunts , including Mark Ruffalo , who performed one scene hanging from a helicopter . Interiors of the helicopter were not created with blue screen effects ; instead , a special gimbal was used to hold a full @-@ sized Huey @-@ A type military helicopter . The gimbal was capable of rotating the helicopter 360 degrees and vertically moving it 20 feet . The gimbal was controlled by a computer , allowing Dalton to precisely set speed and movement ; this ensured precise repeatability for multiple takes .

= = Release = =

Prior to release , DreamWorks pulled the original poster from circulation , which depicted an American flag flying upside down (a standard distress call) , due to concerns about public sensitivity related to the September 11 attacks .

The film was released on October 19 , 2001 , in 2 @,@ 262 North American theaters , grossing \$ 7 @,@ 088 @,@ 213 on its opening weekend with an average of \$ 3 @,@ 133 per theater . The release spanned 63 days (9 weeks) , closing on December 20 , 2001 , with a total domestic gross of \$ 18 @,@ 244 @,@ 060 . The film grossed \$ 9 @,@ 398 @,@ 647 overseas , with the lowest earning in Egypt (\$ 5 @,@ 954) and the highest (\$ 1 @,@ 410 @,@ 528) in Germany .

= = Reception = =

The Last Castle received mixed reviews from critics . On Rotten Tomatoes the film has a rating of 52 % , based on 113 reviews , with an average rating of 5 @.@ 6 / 10 . The site 's critical consensus , " The Last Castle is well acted and rousing for the most part , but the story cannot stand up to close scrutiny . " At Metacritic , a rating website which assigns a normalized rating , the film has a score of 42 out of 100 , based on 32 critics , indicating " mixed or average reviews " .

Mick LaSalle from the San Francisco Chronicle mentioned the cast , describing Redford as " no George C. Scott " and Gandolfini as an unusual choice to play an icy intellectual . LaSalle stated that " ' The Last Castle ' , on the surface , seems like a naive film about a great leader 's capacity to inspire " , but at closer look " seems to mean one thing but means another upon reflection " . In general , LaSalle is in favour of the movie .

Roger Ebert from the Chicago Sun @-@ Times saw it as " a dramatic , involving story " but criticized its " loopholes and lapses . " Ebert noted that Irwin is no less evil than Winter and that they both " delight in manipulating those they can control . " He pointed out that the film fails to portray how the prisoners manufacture the weapons and hide them under Winter 's observation .

It received 3 out of 5 stars on IGN ; the review noted that though a well paced and well acted film , it " suffers from this overall militaristic , streamlined approach . "

Kenneth Turan of the Los Angeles Times said the film 's " pretensions lead to a slow , even stately

pace , what should be crackling confrontations between Irwin and Winter end up playing more like a tea party than a Wagnerian battle of wills . "

Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly gave the movie a " C @-@ plus " grade , writing : " As staged by Lurie , the drama has all the subtlety and surprise of a showdown between the sissy @-@ bully son of Captain Queeg and a hero who 's like a fusion of Brubaker , Spartacus , and Norma Rae . "

Variety wrote : " Much of the potential dramatic juice has been drained out of The Last Castle , a disappointingly pedestrian prison meller that falls between stools artistically and politically . "

Claudia Puig of USA Today criticized the writing , citing " a losing battle with an implausible script . "

Elvis Mitchell of The New York Times wrote : " The movie is exuberant , strapping and obvious ? a problem drama suffering from a steroid overdose . "

= = = Accolades = = =

The Last Castle won the Taurus World Stunt Award for best fire stunt and was nominated for best aerial work and best stunt coordination sequence . Clifton Collins , Jr. was nominated for an ALMA Award in the " Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture " category .