

FILM FACTS

Courage Under Fire

Director: Edward Zwick

Main Cast: Denzel Washington, Meg Ryan, Lou Diamond Phillips, Michael Moriarty, Matt Damon

Release Year: 1996

Country: US

Run Time: 115 minutes

MPAA Rating: R

Plot

A soldier discovers how elusive the truth can be in this first major film about America's role in the Gulf War. Lt. Col. Nathaniel Serling (Denzel Washington) was the commander of a unit during Operation Desert Storm who mistakenly ordered the destruction of what he believed to be an enemy tank, only to discover that it actually held U.S. soldiers, including a close friend. Since then, Serling has been an emotional wreck, drinking heavily and allowing his marriage to teeter on the brink of collapse. As a means of redeeming himself, Serling is given a new assignment by his superior, Gen. Hershberg (Michael Moriarty). Capt. Karen Walden (Meg Ryan) was a helicopter pilot who died in battle during the Iraqi conflict, and the White House has proposed that Walden be posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Serling is asked to investigate Walden's actions on the field of battle, but he quickly discovers that no two stories about her are quite the same; Ilario (Matt Damon) says Walden acted heroically and sacrificed herself to save the others in her company, while Monfriez (Lou Diamond Phillips) claims she was a coward who was attempting to surrender to enemy troops. Meanwhile, reporter Tony Gartner (Scott Glenn) is hounding Serling, trying to get the inside story on Walden and on Serling's own difficulties. Matt Damon lost 40 pounds to prepare for his role in *Courage Under Fire*, which resulted in a potentially life-threatening illness for the young actor. ~ Mark Deming, *All Movie Guide*

Review

Meg Ryan pulls off a very difficult role in this Gulf War-set inquiry into the nature of truth. As a nominee for the first posthumous medal of honor to be granted to a woman, Ryan's character is seen in various flashbacks, Rashomon-style, as entirely different people. Denzel Washington is the troubled veteran handling the investigation into whether Ryan's actions deserved the medal, and he talks to several people, each of whom tells a different story about her final actions. Both Ryan and Washington are terrific, ably supported by Michael Moriarty, Scott Glenn, and Matt Damon, among others, and the result is an engrossing and challenging film. The best part is Edward Zwick's deft direction, which keeps all of the differing perspectives open as viable options. Too many times in this sort of film, certain versions of events are presented which couldn't possibly be true. Here, one person could be telling the truth, or everyone could. ~ Robert Firsching, *All Movie Guide*

Cast

Denzel Washington - Lt. Col. Nathaniel Serling

Meg Ryan - Captain Karen Walden

Lou Diamond Phillips - Monfriez

Michael Moriarty - Gen. Hershberg

Matt Damon - Ilario

Bronson Pinchot - Bruno; Mark Adair-Rios - Bobcat 5; Bob Apisa - Iraqi Tank Commander; Sean Astin - Patella; Diane Baker - Louise Boylar; Scott Glenn - Tony Gartner; Tim Guinee - Rady; Albert Hall - Speaker; Amy Hathaway - Annie; Zeljko Ivanek - Banacek; Bruce McGill - McQuillan; Jimmy Pickens - Soldier; Tim Ransom - Boylar; John Roarke - The President; Tom Schanley - Questioner; Regina Taylor - Meredith Serling; Ned Vaughn - Chelli; Richard Venture - Don Boylar; Michole Briana White - Maria; Kathleen Widdoes - Geraldine Walden; Ken Jenkins - Joel Walden; Manny Perez - Jenkins; Seth Gilliam - Altameyer; Daniel Gonzalez - Laughing Gunner; Lucky Luciano -

Nathan Serling Jr.; Sean Patrick Thomas - Thompson; Michael Dolan - Orderly; Reed Frerichs - Delinquent Soldier; David McSwain - Egan; Rory J. Aylward - Teegarden's Crew Chief; Julius Carter - Rowtero; Armand Darrius - Robins; Jamal A. Mays - Brian Serling; Kyle Mickaelian - Refueler; James Paul Morse - Cadre; Erica C. Newman - Juleen Serling; Ashlee Jordan Pryor - Josie Serling; Matt Sigloch - Cadre; Christina Stojanovich - Anne Marie Walden; Jeffrey Waid - Hillerman; Jack Watkins - Coffee Sergeant; Pat Young - Drill Team Commander

Credits

John Cenatiempo - Stunts; John Davis - Producer; Jim Halty - Stunts; Steve Picerni - Stunts; Steve Cooper - Art Director; Roger Deakins - Cinematographer; Patrick Sheane Duncan - Screenwriter; David T. Friendly - Producer; Rick T. Gentz - Set Designer; John Graysmark - Production Designer; James M. Halty - Stunts; James Horner - Composer (Music Score); James Horner - Musical Arrangement; James Horner - Songwriter; Francine Jamison-Tanchuck - Costume Designer; Steve Kelso - Stunts; Andrew Neskromny - Set Designer; Alan Oliney - Stunts; Steven Rosenblum - Editor; David Zellitti - Stunts; Edward Zwick - Director; Danny Rogers - Stunts; Willie D. Burton - Sound/Sound Designer; Skip Cospser - First Assistant Director; Mary Colquhoun - Casting; Lon E. Bender - Sound/Sound Designer; Debra Martin Chase - Executive Producer; Dan Lerner - Second Unit Director; Barbara Mesney - Set Designer; Paul Neesan - Co-producer; Joseph M. Singer - Producer; Randall D. Wilkins - Set Designer; Pete Antico - Stunts

DVD Release: *Courage Under Fire* [DTS]

Release Date: 2000

- Anamorphic widescreen (aspect ratio 1.85:1)
- Audio: DTS English; English 5.1 Surround; English Dolby Surround; French Dolby Surround
- Subtitles: English; Spanish
- Director's commentary
- Featurette
- Original theatrical trailer & TV spots

DVD Release: *Courage Under Fire* [Blu-Ray]

Release Date: 2007

- D-Box Motion Sensor Track
- Commentary by Director
- Courage Trivia Track

Similar Movies

Breaker Morant; Decoration Day; Dress Gray; A Few Good Men; Glory; Platoon; A Soldier's Story; The Dreyfus Case; Resting Place; G.I. Jane; Saving Private Ryan; Three Kings; Rules of Engagement; Black Hawk Down; High Crimes

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