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Spacey comes down to Earth in 'K-PAX'

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"K-PAX," Universal Pictures' newest creation starring Jeff Bridges and Kevin Spacey, is a science fiction drama with good acting and an ending that leaves its audience with a sense of wonder.

A mysterious patient named Prot (Kevin Spacey), who claims to have traveled across time and space from a place he calls K-PAX, is admitted to a closed ward of the Psychiatric Institute of Manhattan. Dr. Mark Powell (Jeff Bridges), a seasoned psychiatrist, becomes fascinated by the extent of his new patient's apparent delusion. He is determined to prove that Prot is a tragic victim of multiple personality disorder.

Soon, Powell finds himself doubting his own diagnosis and he is startled to find out that there may be more to Prot's claims than he wants to believe. In his sessions with Dr. Powell, Prot convincingly describes the life and social structures of K-PAX. As Prot interacts with other troubled residents of the hospital, they undergo wondrous transformations, becoming functioning people and shaking off their



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Dr. Mark Powell (Jeff Bridges) and patient Prot (Kevin Spacey), who claims to be from planet K-PAX, get to know each other.

mental disorders.

As time goes by, Prot and Powell start developing a friendship. Their sessions turn into two-way experiences, with Prot offering advice and helping Powell overcome his lingering self-doubts and the emotional barriers he was created with those close to him.

While Prot is convinced that he

will be returning to his planet by the end of summer and promising other inmates a possible ride to K-PAX, Powell is truly worried and comes to a startling finding about who Prot is and whether he really is telling the truth.

The movie, adapted from the 1995 novel by Gene Brewer, was produced by Lawrence Gordon and directed by Ian Softley. It

is rated PG-13 for violent images, foul language and sexuality. Originally, Will Smith was approached to play Prot's part, but after he cut himself loose from it, Spacey took over.

Two-time Academy Award winner Spacey and multiple Academy Award nominee Bridges make the perfect match on screen. They give the impression of having found roles that

perfectly suit them. As an actor, Spacey can manage to look as if he just ambled in from Mars or beyond. Bridges, on the other hand, as he becomes convinced by Prot's story, projects such rationality that he easily can shift a viewer's perspective.

For some of the audience, an analogy between the role of Prot and Christ might come to mind, as it did to me. Prot describes his intergalactic travels, dismisses Einstein's theories about the speed of light and amazes a group of astronomers in a scene that reminds me of Christ addressing elders in the temple. He also tries to cure fellow mental patients without letting anybody know.

The movie sure has its funny parts but it also gives the impression that some of the scenes could have been left out or at least shortened. It seems slow and the ending might be disappointing to some of the audience. There are viewers who want Prot to be an alien and there are those who don't. Others don't care or maybe they favor an open ending. So, anyway, the possibility of experiencing disappointment is there. Whether Prot really is an alien or not, I won't tell. It is up to you to go and judge for yourself.

Gandolfini is the boss of this 'Castle'

CHRISTINA MCFARLAND

Staff Writer

"The Last Castle" is an excellent film that evokes a variety of emotions through brilliant performances.

Three-star General Eugene Irwin (Robert Redford) is found guilty of war crimes and sentenced to serve time at the military prison dubbed "the castle". Highly revered for his valor and integrity in battle, the general seems truly unfit for punishment of this nature. Prison is no place for a hero. Irwin enters this castle with the initial intention of serving his time and repaying his debt to society as soon as humanly possible. However, his intentions change drastically with the introduction of the corrupt prison warden, played by James Gandolfini.

Gandolfini plays Colonel Winter, the cruel and inhumane prison director. Winter knows the power he possesses and he therefore abuses it. He believes that the harsh prison treatment is necessary to maintain security and proper discipline. And to begin with, Irwin agrees. Approached by inmates, Irwin is informed of the ill-treatment, such as poor health care. Unimpressed, Irwin shrugs it off and owes it up to prison life. Come on, what do you expect, it's punishment. But there's more. There have been murders. Colonel Winter has disobedient inmates shot with rubber bullets fired

by a soldier from a watchtower up above. However, within the 'last few years three inmates have been killed by rubber bullets to the head. When reports were written, Winter accredited the deaths to accident. But how could they be accidental? These are expert marksmen shooting from short range; these deaths were intentional. It isn't until a standoff between inmate Aguilar and Winter that Irwin witnesses the horror.

Aguilar and the other inmates are attempting to rebuild a portion of the original castle wall. Winter sees this as Irwin's means of uniting the inmates and possibly beginning a revolt, so he orders the wall demolished. Aguilar, seemingly mentally challenged, he places himself between the bulldozer and the wall. Winter, through code, orders him killed.

This is where Irwin begins to take action. He formulates a plan, informs the inmates and begins its execution. First they must disable the four watchtowers, gain control of the water cannon, seize the helicopter and capture the flag. This portion of the film is amazing. It is awesome to watch the strategy and precise execution of the plan. War is waged. This has now become a personal battle between Irwin and Winter.

I won't tell you who comes out on top, but I will say the movie has a bittersweet end. Redford and Gandolfini were



PHOTO FROM OFFICIAL WEBSITE

Court-martialed General Irwin (Robert Redford, center) is escorted by Sergeant McLaren (Maurice Bullard, left) and Private Niebolt (Nick Kokich) in "The Last Castle."

excellent. Redford's heroic nature and vast intellect make him perfect for the role. It's very believable. But Gandolfini takes the cake. You just can't help but hate

his character. He is a dishonorable, undeserving tyrant who frustrates and angers the viewer. But don't go away thinking you'll be angry through the entire film. It also

possesses scenes that will make you laugh out loud, cry in sympathy and cling to your chair in suspense. It is a wonderful film that I would highly recommend to both guys and gals.