



bitten by the snake before Cogburn shoots and kills it. La Boeuf helps them out of the pit before dying.

Cogburn is forced to leave La Boeuf's body behind as he and Mattie race to get help on Mattie's pony, which drops from exhaustion, forcing Cogburn to commandeer a wagon to get Mattie to a doctor he knows in the territory. Sometime later, Mattie's attorney, J. Noble Dagget, meets Cogburn in Fort Smith. On Mattie's behalf, Daggett pays Cogburn the remainder of his fee in Chaney's capture, plus a \$200 bonus for saving her life. Cogburn offers to wager the money on a bet that Mattie will recover just fine, a bet Daggett declines.

In the epilogue, Mattie, her arm in a sling, is back at home recovering from her injuries. She promises Cogburn he will be buried next to her in the Ross family plot after his death. Cogburn accepts her offer and leaves, jumping over a fence on his new horse to disprove her good-natured jab that he was too old and fat to clear a four-rail fence.

## Cast

- John Wayne as Reuben J. "Rooster" Cogburn
- Glen Campbell as La Boeuf
- Kim Darby as Mattie Ross
- Jeremy Slate as Emmett Quincy
- Robert Duvall as Lucky Ned Pepper
- Dennis Hopper as Moon
- Alfred Ryder as Goudy
- Strother Martin as Col. G. Stonehill
- Jeff Corey as Tom Chaney
- Ron Soble as Captain Boots Finch
- John Fiedler as Lawyer Daggett
- James Westerfield as Judge Parker
- John Doucette as Sheriff
- Donald Woods as Barlow
- Edith Atwater as Mrs. Floyd
- Carlos Rivas as Mexican Bob
- Isabel Boniface as Mrs. Bagby
- H.W. Gim as Chen Lee
- Ginger Cat as General Sterling Price (uncredited)
- John Pickard as Frank Ross
- Elizabeth Harrower as Mrs. Ross
- Ken Renard as Yarnell
- Hank Worden as R. Ryan, the undertaker at Fort Smith
- Jay Ripley as Harold Parmalee
- Kenneth Becker as Farrell Parmalee
- Wilford Brimley as Minor Role (uncredited)
- Leo Alton as Boarding House Guest (uncredited)
- Forrest Burns as Courtroom Spectator (uncredited)
- Gene Coogan as Boarding House Guest (uncredited)
- Myron Healey as Deputy at Prisoner Unloading (uncredited)
- Boyd "Red" Morgan as Red (Ferryman) (uncredited)
- James McEachin as Judge Parker's Bailiff (uncredited)
- Dennis McMullen as Bailiff (uncredited)
- Robin Morse as Bit Part (uncredited)
- Stuart Randall as McAlester (uncredited)
- Connie Sawyer as Talkative Woman at Hanging (uncredited)
- Jeffrey Sayre as Courtroom Spectator (uncredited)
- Jay Silverheels as Condemned Man at Hanging (uncredited)
- Dean Smith as Minor Role (uncredited)
- Vince St. Cyr as Gaspargoo (uncredited)
- Max Wagner as Courtroom Spectator (uncredited)
- Guy Wilkerson as the Hangman (uncredited)
- Chalky Williams as Courtroom Spectator (uncredited)
- Tom Gosnell as John Wayne stunt double (uncredited)

## Production

Hathaway says he decided to make the film like "a fairytale... a fantasy that I couched in as realistic terms as possible."<sup>[3]</sup>

Filming took place mainly in Ouray County, Colorado, in the vicinity of Ridgway (now the home of the True Grit Cafe), around the town of Montrose (in Montrose County), and the town of Ouray.<sup>[4][5][6]</sup> (The script maintains the novel's references to place names

Release dates	June 12, 1969 (Premiere (Little Rock, AR)) <div>June 13, 1969 (Los Angeles)<sup>[1]</sup></div>
Running time	128 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$31.1 million <sup>[2]</sup>



in Arkansas and Oklahoma, in dramatic contrast to the Colorado topography.) The courtroom scenes were filmed at Ouray County Courthouse in Ouray.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

The scenes that take place at the "dugout" and along the creek where Quincy and Moon are killed, as well as the scene where Rooster carries Mattie on her horse Little Blackie after the snakebite, were filmed at Hot Creek on the east side of the Sierra Nevada near the town of Mammoth Lakes, California. Mount Morrison and Laurel Mountain form the backdrop above the creek. This location was also used in *North to Alaska*.<sup>[5]</sup> Filming was done from September to December 1968.<sup>[9]</sup>

Mia Farrow was originally cast as Mattie and was keen on the role. However, prior to filming, she made a film in England with Robert Mitchum, who advised her not to work with director Henry Hathaway because he was "cantankerous". Farrow asked producer Hal B. Wallis to replace Hathaway with Roman Polanski, who had directed Farrow in *Rosemary's Baby*, but Wallis refused. Farrow quit the film, which was then offered to Michele Carey, Sondra Locke and Tuesday Weld, but all three were under contract for another film. John Wayne met Karen Carpenter at a talent show he was hosting and recommended her for the part, though the producers decided against it because she had no acting experience. Wayne had also lobbied for his daughter Aissa to win the part. Olivia Hussey was also offered the role by Wallis, but the offer was rescinded after she said she "couldn't see herself with Wayne" and said that he "can't act."<sup>[10][11]</sup> After also considering Sally Field, the role went to Kim Darby.<sup>[12]</sup>



Ouray County Courthouse, constructed in 1888

Elvis Presley was the original choice for LaBoeuf, but the producers turned him down when his agent demanded top billing over both Wayne and Darby. Glen Campbell was then cast instead. In multiple interviews, Campbell claimed that Wayne, along with his daughter,<sup>[13]</sup> approached him backstage at his show, and asked him if he would like to be in a movie.

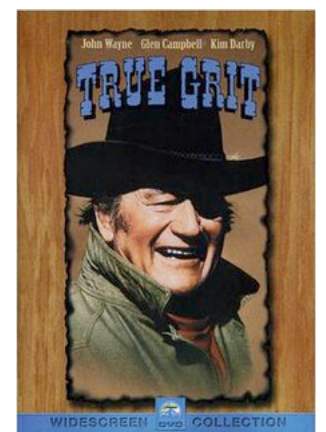
Wayne began lobbying for the part of Rooster Cogburn after reading the novel by Charles Portis.

Wayne called Marguerite Roberts' script "the best script he had ever read", and was instrumental in getting her script approved and credited to her name after Roberts had been blacklisted for alleged leftist affiliations years before. This came in spite of Wayne's own conservative ideals.<sup>[5]</sup> He particularly liked the scene with Darby where Rooster tells Mattie about his life in Illinois (where he has a restaurant, his wife Nola leaves him because of his degenerate friends, and has a clumsy son named Horace), calling it "about the best scene I ever did".<sup>[14]</sup> Garry Wills notes in his book, *John Wayne's America: The Politics of Celebrity*, that Wayne's performance as Rooster Cogburn bears close resemblance to the way Wallace Beery portrayed similar characters in the 1930s and 1940s, an inspired if surprising choice on Wayne's part. Wills comments that it is difficult for one actor to imitate another for the entire length of a movie and that the Beery mannerisms temporarily recede during the aforementioned scene in which Cogburn discusses his wife and child.<sup>[15]</sup>

Veteran John Wayne stunt-double Tom Gosnell does the stunt in the meadow, where "Bo" goes down, on his longtime horse Twinkle Toes.<sup>[16]</sup> In the last scene, Mattie gives Rooster her father's gun. She comments that he has gotten a tall horse, as she expected he would. He notes that his new horse can jump a four-rail fence. Then she admonishes him, "You're too old and fat to be jumping horses." Rooster responds with a smile, saying, "Well, come see a fat old man sometime," and jumps his new horse over a four-rail fence. Although many of Wayne's stunts over the years were done by Hayward and Chuck Roberson, it is Wayne on Twinkle Toes going over the fence.<sup>[16]</sup> This stunt had been left to the last shot as Wayne wanted to do it himself and following his lung surgery in 1965, neither Hathaway nor Wayne was sure he could make the jump. Darby's stunts were done by Polly Burson.<sup>[17]</sup>

The horse shown during the final scene of *True Grit* (before he jumps the fence on Twinkle Toes) was Dollor, a two-year-old (in 1969) chestnut Quarter Horse gelding. Dollor ('Ol Dollor) was Wayne's favorite horse for 10 years. Wayne fell in love with the horse, which carried him through several more Westerns, including his final movie, *The Shootist*. Wayne had Dollor written into the script of *The Shootist* because of his love for the horse; it was a condition for him working on the project. Wayne would not let anyone else ride the horse, the lone exception being Robert Wagner, who rode the horse in a segment of the *Hart to Hart* television show, after Wayne's death.<sup>[18]</sup>

After reading *True Grit* by Charles Portis, John Wayne was enthusiastic about playing the part of Rooster Cogburn, but as production got closer, Wayne got jumpy — he did not have a handle on how to play Rooster Cogburn. He was, of course, nervous because the part was out of his comfort zone and had not been specifically tailored to his screen character by one of his in-house screenwriters. Henry Hathaway, who directed the film, calmed Wayne's doubts, most notably concerning the eye patch which was made of gauze, allowing Wayne to see.<sup>[19]</sup> John Wayne thought the picture had been edited too tightly by Hathaway. Nevertheless, in May 1969, a few weeks before the picture was released, Wayne wrote to Marguerite Roberts thanking her for her "magnificent" screenplay, especially for the beautiful ending in the cemetery that she had devised in Portis's style.<sup>[20]</sup> Wayne and Kim Darby worked very well together, but Henry Hathaway disliked her, stating: "My problem with her was simple, she's not particularly attractive, so her book of tricks consisted mostly [of] being a little cute. All through the film, I had to stop her from acting funny, doing bits of business and so forth."<sup>[21]</sup>



John Wayne as Rooster Cogburn

By the time the picture got back to the studio interiors, Kim Darby told Hal Wallis she would never work for Hathaway again. John Wayne was another matter. "He was wonderful to work with, he really was", said Darby. "When you work with someone who's a big star as he is ... there's an unspoken thing that they sort of set the environment for the working conditions on the set and the feeling on the set. And he creates an environment that is very safe to work in. He's very supportive of the people around him and the people he works with, very supportive. He's really a reflection, an honest reflection, of what he really is. I mean that's what you see on the screen. He's simple and direct, and I love that in his work."<sup>[22]</sup> Surrounded by an angry director, a nervous actress, and the inexperienced Glen Campbell, Wayne took the reins between his teeth the same way Rooster Cogburn does in the climax of the film. "He was there on the set before anyone else and knew every line perfectly", said Kim Darby.<sup>[21]</sup> Both Wayne and Hathaway had difficulties with Robert Duvall, with the director having constant shouting matches with his supporting actor, and Duvall and Wayne nearly coming to blows.

Hathaway says Campbell "was so damn lazy" and had troubles with Darby ("I had to stop her from acting funny").<sup>[3]</sup>

## Reception

### Box office

The film premiered in Little Rock, Arkansas on June 12, 1969, and opened at the Chinese theatre in Los Angeles on June 13, 1969<sup>[1]</sup> where it grossed \$38,000 in its first week.<sup>[23]</sup>

The film earned an estimated \$11.5 million in rentals at the United States and Canada box office during its first year of release.<sup>[24]</sup>

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 88% of 56 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.90/10. The website's consensus reads: "*True Grit* rides along on the strength of a lived-in late-period John Wayne performance, adding its own entertaining spin to the oft-adapted source material."<sup>[25]</sup> John Simon wrote, "Worthy of succinct notice is *True Grit*', an amusing, unassuming western, antiheroic with a vengeance."<sup>[26]</sup>

### Awards and nominations

John Wayne won the Academy Award for Best Actor. Upon accepting his Oscar, Wayne said, "Wow! If I'd known that, I'd have put that patch on 35 years earlier."<sup>[27]</sup>

Award	Category	Nominee(s)	Result
Academy Awards <sup>[28]</sup>	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>John Wayne</u>	Won
	<u>Best Song – Original for the Picture</u>	"True Grit" Music by <u>Elmer Bernstein</u> ; Lyrics by <u>Don Black</u>	Nominated
<u>British Academy Film Awards</u> <sup>[29]</sup>	<u>Most Promising Newcomer to Leading Film Roles</u>	<u>Kim Darby</u>	Nominated
<u>Golden Globe Awards</u> <sup>[30]</sup>	<u>Best Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama</u>	<u>John Wayne</u>	Won
	<u>Best Original Song – Motion Picture</u>	"True Grit" Music by <u>Elmer Bernstein</u> ; Lyrics by <u>Don Black</u>	Nominated
	<u>Most Promising Newcomer – Male</u>	<u>Glen Campbell</u>	Nominated
<u>Laurel Awards</u>	<u>Top General Entertainment</u>		Won
	<u>Top Action Performance</u>	<u>John Wayne</u>	Won
	<u>Top Male New Face</u>	<u>Glen Campbell</u>	Nominated
	<u>Top Female New Face</u>	<u>Kim Darby</u>	Nominated
<u>National Board of Review Awards</u> <sup>[31]</sup>	<u>Top Ten Films</u>		9th Place
<u>Western Heritage Awards</u> <sup>[32]</sup>	<u>Theatrical Motion Picture</u>		Won
<u>Writers Guild of America Awards</u> <sup>[33]</sup>	<u>Best Drama – Adapted from Another Medium</u>	<u>Marguerite Roberts</u>	Nominated

## Sequels and other film versions

A film sequel, *Rooster Cogburn*, was made in 1975, with Wayne reprising his role and Katharine Hepburn as an elderly spinster, Eula Goodnight, who teams with him. The plot has been described as a rehash of the original *True Grit* with elements of the Bogart–Hepburn film *The African Queen*.<sup>[34]</sup> A further made-for-television sequel titled *True Grit: A Further Adventure* appeared in 1978, starring Warren Oates as Rooster Cogburn and Lisa Pelikan as Mattie Ross.

In 2010, Joel and Ethan Coen directed another adaptation of the novel. Their adaptation focuses more on Mattie's point of view, as in the novel, and is somewhat more faithful to its Oklahoma setting—though it was filmed in New Mexico.<sup>[35]</sup> Hailee Steinfeld portrays Mattie Ross, Jeff Bridges plays Rooster Cogburn, and the cast includes Matt Damon as La Boeuf and Josh Brolin as Tom Chaney.

## See also

- List of American films of 1969
- John Wayne filmography
- True Grit* (1969 soundtrack)

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## External links

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