



Big Screen Classics

## Best in Show

### Best in Show

Director: Christopher Guest  
©/Presented by: Castle Rock Entertainment  
Presented by: Warner Bros.  
Executive Producer: Gordon Mark  
Producer: Karen Murphy  
Unit Production Managers (LA Crew): Jim Behnke, Donna Bloom  
Production Manager: Stewart Bethune  
Production Co-ordinator: M. Almaz Tadege  
Co-production Co-ordinator: Nathan Tichenor  
Production Co-ordinators (LA Crew):  
Shari Lafranchi, Montez Monroe  
Accountant: Jan Dennehy  
Location Manager: Ann Goobie  
Location Managers (LA Crew): Val Burnley, Lori Bolton  
Post-production Supervisors: Tricia Miles, Brian McNulty  
1st Assistant Director: Jack Hardy  
2nd Assistant Director: Mindy Heslin  
Additional 2nd Assistant Director: John MacCarthy  
Script Supervisor: Tracy Young  
Casting: Stuart Aikins  
Casting (LA Crew): Jill Anthony  
Written by: Christopher Guest, Eugene Levy  
Director of Photography: Roberto Schaefer  
B Camera Operator: Wade Ferley  
Betacam Operator: Stephen Taylor  
Stills Photographer: Doane Gregory  
Special Effects Co-ordinator: Gord Davis  
Ventriloquist Puppet Created by: Tim Selberg, Selberg Studios  
Edited by: Robert Leighton  
Production Designer: Joseph T. Garrity  
Art Director: Gary Myers  
Set Designer: Kelvin Humenny  
Supervising Set Decorator: Dominique Fauquet-Lemaître  
Scenic Artists: Rob Boulet, Colin Gillett  
Property Master: Wayne McLaughlin  
Costume Designer: Monique Prudhomme  
Costume Supervisor: Diana Patterson  
Key Make-up: Kate Shorter  
Key Hair Stylist: Anji Bemben  
Titles/Opticals by: Pacific Title  
Colour Timer: Kurt Smith  
Music: Jeffery C.J. Vanston  
Music Editor: Fernand Bos  
Sound Mixer: Mark Weingarten  
Re-recording Mixers: Matthew Iadarola, Gary Gegam  
Supervising Sound Editor: Hamilton Sterling  
Dialogue Editors: Alison Fisher, Michael Magill  
Stunt Co-ordinator: David Alexander  
Technical Adviser: Earlene J. Luke  
Dog Show Co-ordinator/Consultant: Carol J. Garvin  
LA Animal Technical Adviser: Dany Canino  
US Norwich Terrier Co-ordinator: Susan Lawrence  
Animal Wrangler: Mark Dumas  
Head Trainer: Connie Rusgen  
Cast:  
Parker Posey (Meg Swan)  
Michael Hitchcock (Hamilton Swan)  
Catherine O'Hara (Cookie Fleck)  
Eugene Levy (Gerry Fleck)  
Bob Balaban (Dr Theodore W. Millbank III)  
Christopher Guest (Harlan Pepper)  
Michael McKean (Stefan Vanderhoof)  
John Michael Higgins (Scott Donlan)  
Patrick Cranshaw (Leslie Ward Cabot)  
Jennifer Coolidge (Sherri Ann Ward Cabot)  
Don Lake (Graham Chisolm)

The idea for *Best in Show* was born during a trip writer/director Christopher Guest took six years ago to his local dog park to exercise his own two dogs. 'There were people there with pure-bred dogs, with mutts and so on, and as I mingled with them I started thinking that this might be an interesting idea to explore in a movie,' he recalls. For this project, Guest teamed up with another acclaimed member of the comedic pantheon, Eugene Levy, with whom he collaborated on *Waiting for Guffman*. A cast member of the seminal sketch comedy show, *SCTV*, and star of the recent hit, *American Pie*, Levy relished the opportunity to work on another film with Guest. 'It's hard to partner with somebody because writers have different rhythms, different chemistry,' says Levy. 'But Chris and I hit it off on *Guffman* from day one. We work very well together.'

Veterans of the improvisational technique, Guest and Levy left much leeway for the actors to bring their own personalities to the fore. 'Our outline gives a very solid blueprint to the actors so they know how to get from point A to point B, but how they do it is largely up to them,' Levy says. To further research the mindset which Guest first experienced at the dog park, he attended a number of dog shows, including the prestigious Westminster Show in New York, which became the model for the film's Mayflower Dog Show. Subsequently, he and Levy attended a number of regional dog shows. The dog show milieu, according to Levy, provides ample opportunity for the creation of interesting characters. 'It's a very unusual world,' says Levy. 'I had never been to a dog show before we started doing the research and was surprised at the intensity involved. This is a full-time thing for these people; they live and breathe dog shows and every weekend they're out there travelling. They've got their dogs in cages and crates, or packed in the van, and they drive hundreds of miles, spend several hours sitting with the dog before it goes on for its 60 seconds of fame. What is it that drives people to do this?'

As the writing process continued, Guest canvassed the alumni cast of *Waiting for Guffman* to find out their interest. The response was predictably enthusiastic and is probably best summed up by Bob Balaban. 'Chris called me about being in the movie,' he recalls, 'and I said I'd be happy to be a dog – I would do anything.' Michael McKean, who co-wrote with Christopher Guest several of the musical numbers from *Waiting for Guffman*, has a long association with him that goes back to their acclaimed collaboration, *This Is Spinal Tap*, and even earlier, when the two were roommates in the '60s. 'Chris told me what he and Eugene were cooking up,' McKean recalls. 'They wanted to do a film about the world of serious competitive dog showing. And if you have a chance to come in and work for Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, John Michael Higgins and this boatload of incredibly funny people – it's one of those things you've got to clear time for. Whenever Christopher Guest calls, you have to answer. And it's not just because he's my friend and I like hanging out with him; it really is a call to battle, if I can be real pretentious. You know that you're going to be in there and you're going to be pretty much naked, because there's no script. But it's okay as long as everybody else is naked too.' Another *Guffman* alumnus, Fred Willard, recalls his experience on that film and his excitement when offered the opportunity to be in another Christopher Guest production. 'That was a great role,' says Willard of his role as Catherine

Jane Lynch (*Christy Cummings*)  
Fred Willard (*Buck Laughlin*)  
Jim Paddock (*Trevor Beckwith*)  
Jay Brazeau (*Dr Chuck Nelken*)  
Carrie Aizley, Lewis Arquette  
(*Fern City show spectators*)  
Dany Canino (*Fern City show judge*)  
Will Sasso, Stephen E. Miller (*fishin' hole guys*)  
Colin Cunningham (*New York butcher*)  
Jehshua Barnes (*Scott's wild date*)  
Scott Williamson, Deborah Theaker, Rachael Harris  
(*Winky's party guests*)  
Fulvio Cecere (*airport passerby*)  
Linda Kash (*Fay Berman*)  
Larry Miller (*Max Berman*)  
Ed Begley Jr (*Mark Shaffer, hotel manager*)  
Cody Gregg (*Zach Berman*)  
Teryl Rothery, Dave Cameron (*Philly AM hosts*)  
Tony Alcantar (*Philly AM chef*)  
Camille Sullivan (*Philly AM assistant*)  
Lynda Boyd, Madeleine Kipling, Merrilyn Gann,  
Andrew Johnston (*Cabot party guests*)  
Malcolm Stewart (*Malcolm*)  
Jay-Lyn Green (*Leslie's nurse*)  
Earlene Luke (*Mayflower hound judge*)  
Carmen Aguirre (*Taft Hotel maid*)  
Harold Pybus (*Mayflower toy judge*)  
Hiro Kanagawa (*pet shop owner*)  
Cleo A. Laxton (*Mayflower terrier judge*)  
Corrine Koslo (*Mayflower sporting judge*)  
Andrew Wheeler (*Mayflower ring steward*)  
Don Emslie (*Mayflower non-sporting judge*)  
Don S. Davis  
(*Everett Bainbridge, Mayflower best in show*)  
Steven Porter (*Bulge*)  
Melanie Angel (*American Bitch photo editor*)  
Doane Gregory (*Terry the photographer*)  
USA 2000©  
90 mins  
Digital

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O'Hara's travel agent husband in *Guffman*. 'It was the most fun I've ever had working in a film. When Chris described my character in the new film as a commentator who talks and talks and talks about something he knows very little about, I said, now why would he think of me? But you know it somehow turned out well. I could go on and on about it, but I understand we don't have much space.'

Executives at Castle Rock Entertainment were equally encouraging, as Producer Karen Murphy recalls. 'We love working with this group of actors,' she says. 'Castle Rock trusts us with this improvisational style of film. After *Waiting for Guffman* was released everyone asked, "When is the next one?" Of course, we also had to discover more actors who do improvisation since we have a bigger cast on this film.' Jane Lynch had worked with Chris on a commercial, while Jennifer Coolidge and Eugene Levy had worked together on *American Pie*. Patrick Cranshaw had worked with Chris on *Almost Heroes*.

Guest is thrilled to be reunited with this talented ensemble group. 'I like to work with people that I know I can trust,' he says. 'Then, it becomes simply a matter of letting them do what they are good at and then I fit in there somewhere. That's the great part of this for me, to be able to work with actors that I like and that I think are funny.' Jane Lynch had not previously been part of Guest's troupe. 'When I saw *Waiting for Guffman*, like every other actor in Hollywood I said, "Oh my God this is what I want to do,"' she recalls. 'I just want to get inside this world and inside these people. So when I was offered the opportunity to do this, it was really a dream come true.' The most formidable task for the production was in creating the canine competition. 'Originally, we thought it would be easier to go to an actual dog show and film there, but nobody would let us do that,' Guest muses. The event would have to be created from start to finish for the production. 'We actually had to stage our own dog show,' says Levy, 'and that's where the nightmare started. We literally had to put everything together from scratch, get somebody to organise the whole show, get the dogs in, find trainers and so forth.'

Producer Murphy spent three months researching dog shows, learning about the many breeds, making contacts, lining up consultants and trainers and finding the hundreds of dogs that would be 'auditioned' for the film. During the process, Murphy gained appreciation for what she terms as 'a rich, unique, sometimes eccentric and complex world. I was impressed by the variety of people, from young junior handlers, who are very serious and professional, to flamboyant middle-aged showmen with flashy rings and incredible outfits who have obviously made a career of this. It's great to give this background to an actor.' Guest was likewise impressed. 'You would have to work years to get to the point where you would actually be able to show dogs professionally,' he says. 'But surprises do happen. During the research for this, John Michael Higgins was asked to handle a dog for an owner and he actually won a blue ribbon!'

Production notes