



Best in Show: The Films of Christopher Guest and Company

John Kenneth Muir

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(Applause Books). Best in Show is the first in-depth look at the method behind film director and actor Christopher Guest's madness and genius. John Kenneth Muir focuses his attention on the acclaimed Guest-directed trilogy of what some call "mockumentaries": *Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show* and *A Mighty Wind*. In these films Guest has escorted rapt audiences into the purportedly real worlds of a small-town theatrical company, dog show competition, and folk music festival. Muir also details the events that lead to Rob Reiner's influential and legendary *This Is Spinal Tap*, which *Rolling Stone* called the best rock and roll movie of all time, and in which Guest played the part of guitarist Nigel Tufnel. Much of *Best in Show* exemplifies the unique process by which Guest directs films. He employs a common repertory company, improvises scenes often without any rehearsal, and does not use any screenplay with dialogue, instead following a detailed outline often co-authored with his ace actor/writer Eugene Levy. Company members that have been interviewed for this book include Fred Willard, Harry Shearer, Bob Balaban and Michael Hitchcock. Guest's influences *Saturday Night Live*, *National Lampoon* as well as his more conventional comedies, such as *The Big Picture* and *Almost Heroes*, are studied. *Best in Show* is general enough to bring new fans to the table, yet detailed enough to satisfy the most in-the-know Guest fan and film student. A complete filmography with Guest's directing, acting and writing credits is included, as is the appendix, "You Know You're in a Christopher Guest Film When ..." Guest once commented, "I am drawn to people who have dreams that are slightly out of reach." Now, thanks to John Kenneth Muir, the fascinating world of Christopher Guest and company is substantially more within reach.

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