



Best Western Rewards Earn 20,000 **BONUS** Points†— that's a **FREE** night! PLUS you can qualify for an Elite status upgrade.**

Terms & Conditions Apply [Learn More >](#)



movie reviews

[Reviews](#) [Great Movies](#) [Answer Man](#) [People](#) [Commentary](#) [Festivals](#) [Oscars](#) [Glossary](#) [One-Minute Reviews](#) [Letters](#) [Roger Ebert's Journal](#) [Scanners](#) [Store](#)

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES News Sports Business Entertainment Classifieds Columnists

search

[GO](#) Search powered by **YAHOO!**

register

You are not logged in.

[Log in >](#)

[Subscribe to weekly newsletter >](#)

times & tickets

[Fandango](#)
[Search movie showtimes and buy tickets.](#)

about us

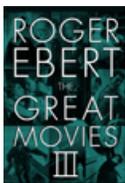
[About the site >](#)

[Site FAQs >](#)

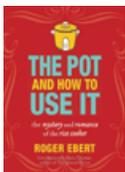
[Contact us >](#)

[Email the Movie Answer Man >](#)

on sale now



[Buy now >](#)



[Buy now >](#)



DINNER FOR SCHMUCKS (PG-13)

Ebert: ★★★ Users: ★★★ You: [Rate this movie right now](#)



Paul Rudd and Steve Carell in "Dinner for Schmucks."

Dinner for Schmucks

BY ROGER EBERT / July 28, 2010

The truly goofy comes shrouded in innocence. If a man is trying to be goofy, it's just an act that quickly grows old. But if he lacks the slightest notion of his peculiarity, there's the secret. The blissful ignorance of Barry Speck is beyond pitiful and ascends to a kind of nobility. He's one of those who truly doesn't have a clue.

In "Dinner for Schmucks," a group of arrogant rich men use him as part of an elaborate joke, but the joke is on them. You can't insult a man who is always happy to be just exactly who he is. In the film, the millionaires have a dinner party every year that is a secret joke: Each guest invites another guest who is, whether he realizes it or not, in a contest to determine which guest is the biggest idiot. This is plain cruel.

"Dinner for Schmucks" was inspired by [Francis Veber's](#) French film "The Dinner Game," which was an enormous hit in France but seemed a shade on the mean side. The genius of this version depends on the performance by [Steve Carell](#), who plays Barry Speck as a man impervious to insult

cast & credits

Barry Speck [Steve Carell](#)
Tim Conrad [Paul Rudd](#)
Therman [Zach Galifianakis](#)
Kieran Jemaine Clement
Julie Stephanie Szostak
Darla Lucy Punch
Lance [Bruce Greenwood](#)
Caldwell Ron Livingston

Paramount/DreamWorks present a film directed by [Jay Roach](#). Written by David Guion and Michael Handelman, inspired by the French film "Le Diner de Cons," directed and written by [Francis Veber](#). Running time: 114 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for sequences of crude and sexual content, some partial nudity and language).

[Printer-friendly >](#)
[E-mail this to a friend >](#)



Best Western Rewards Earn 20,000 **BONUS** Points†— that's a **FREE** night! PLUS you can qualify for an Elite status upgrade.**

Terms & Conditions Apply [Learn More >](#)



in theaters

latest reviews

- [Get Low](#)
- [Life During Wartime](#)
- [Spoken Word](#)
- [Vengeance](#)
- [Eat Pray Love](#)
- [The Extra Man](#)

[more current releases >](#)

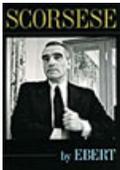
one-minute movie reviews

still playing

- [The A-Team](#)
- [Accomplices](#)
- [Agora](#)
- [Best Worst Movie](#)
- [Cell 211](#)
- [Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky](#)
- [Cropsey](#)
- [Cyrus](#)
- [Daddy Longlegs](#)
- [Despicable Me](#)
- [Dinner for Schmucks](#)
- [Dogtooth](#)
- [Farewell](#)
- [The Father of My Children](#)
- [Get Him to the Greek](#)
- [Get Low](#)
- [The Girl Who Played with Fire](#)
- [Grown Ups](#)
- [Holy Rollers](#)
- [I am Love](#)
- [Inception](#)
- [Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work](#)
- [Jonah Hex](#)
- [The Karate Kid](#)
- [The Kids are All Right](#)
- [The Killers](#)



Buy now >



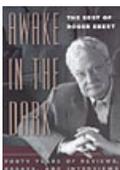
Buy now >



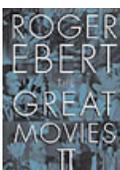
Buy now >



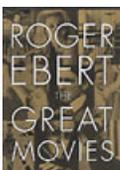
Buy now >



Buy now >



Buy now >



Buy now >

iPads for only \$13.58?

Breaking News: iPads are being auctioned at 95% off retail....

SwipeBids.com

Got a Computer? Make \$67/Hr From Home!

A Local Mom Shows Us Her Simple Secret To Making \$5,687 a Month

and utterly at peace with himself. He's truly a transcendent idiot.

The film's hero is Tim Conrad (Paul Rudd), an ambitious young man dreaming of promotion to the corner office. His boss is Lance Fender (Bruce Greenwood), who invites him to bring a guest to the dinner. This chance to hobnob with his boss' powerful friends is attractive, but at first Tim says no; he has an important date scheduled with his fiancée Julie (Stephanie Szostak). Then he meets Barry, a man whose hobby is populating enormous dollhouses and model landscapes with elaborately costumed dead mice. Barry is too good to pass up. He looks like a sure winner.

The subplot between Julie and Tim is essentially the MacGuffin; there needs to be something important to Tim that comes into conflict with the dinner. The film itself settles down, or stirs itself up, at the long dinner scene, at which we meet several other perfect idiots, but none in the running with Barry.

Barry is such a specimen it's hard to describe him. Yes, he wears a toupee. Yes, he seems to have mice secreted about his person. But it's more that he's the only happy man in the room. One of the reasons we love the great eccentrics in Dickens, I believe, is that they're so pleased with themselves. You cannot be a great eccentric if you're not a happy one; otherwise there's no fun in it.

The dinner turns into farce and finally descends into slapstick, but Carell sails through these choppy seas with a steadfast belief in human nature. He doesn't perceive insult to himself perhaps because he can't imagine anyone acting that way. Jay Roach, who is no stranger to raunchy comedy ("Austin Powers," "Meet the Fockers"), makes a good strategic decision on how he handles this: Not only is Barry an innocent, but so is Tim, who invited him to the party for reasons of ambition but not cruelty. So the villain is at three removes: That would be Bruce Greenwood as the sadistic boss.

The guests at the dinner are a strange lot. To describe them would be to give away their jokes, and one of the pleasures of the movie is having each one appear. I wonder if it occurs to anyone to reflect that the hosts of this dinner are the biggest idiots in attendance. Oh, and those elegant little mice remind me of the white mice in Charlie Kaufman's "Human Nature," being taught their table manners by scientists.



Steve Carell and mice.

(Enlarge Image)

View Today's CD Rates
Find High CD Rates in Your Area.
CDRates.Interest.com

Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance
If you owe less than \$729k you probably
www.SeeRefinanceRates.com

Drivers With No DUI Are Paying Too Much
If you haven't had a DUI you are paying
Auto-Insurance-Experts.com

Make Less Than \$45,000/Year?
You May Qualify for a Grant to Go Back to
www.SeeCollegeDegrees.com/Grants

Ads by Yahoo!

- The Killer Inside Me
Knight and Day
The Last Airbender
Life During Wartime
Love Ranch
Marmaduke
Mercy
Micmacs
La Mission
Mother and Child
9500 Liberty
October Country
OSS 117: Lost in Rio
Predators
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time
Princess Kaiulani
Putty Hill
Ramona and Beezus
Restrepo
Salt
Sex and the City 2
A Small Act
A Small Act
Solitary Man
Something Better Somewhere Else
The Sorcerer's Apprentice
Splice
Spoken Word
Survival of the Dead
Toy Story 3
The Twilight Saga: Eclipse
The Twilight Saga: Eclipse
Vengeance
Wild Grass
The Wild Hunt
Winter's Bone

more current releases >

on dvd

new on dvd

- Louie Bluie (8/10)
The Joneses (8/10)
The Good Heart (8/10)
Crumb (8/10)
Woodstock (8/3)
Spaceballs (8/3)
The Princess Bride (8/3)
Kick-Ass (8/3)
The Ghost Writer (8/3)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid (8/3)

more new on dvd >

coming on dvd

- The Conversation (8/17)
City Island (8/24)
Survival of the Dead (8/24)
Red Riding Trilogy (8/31)

more coming on dvd >

great movies on dvd

- Gone With the Wind (4/13)
Vivre sa Vie / My Life to Live (4/20)
Viridiana (4/29)
Walkabout (5/18)
Come and See (6/16)
The Red Shoes (7/20)
Mystery Train (7/21)
Farqo (8/3)
Woodstock (8/3)
Crumb (8/10)

more great movies on dvd >

Online
NYGazetteJour...

**Make \$6795
Per Month In
your city**

Shocking Money-
Making Secret Is
Exposed By Local
Mom. Read Her
Story!

news13jobsrep...



© copyright 2010, rogerebert.com

[Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Submission Guidelines](#)

