

[movies]

## STEALING AMERICA: VOTE BY VOTE

Another uplifting tale on the death of democracy

By David Day



Another week, another movie about the collapse of America.

*Stealing America* documents what many people think happened the last few electoral contests. Namely, that the bedrock of American democracy (indeed, the bedrock of the country itself) was undermined by voting machines that have no system of checks and balances, no audit trail and no accountability whatsoever. It's a thesis that can't be touched. Of course this is a

problem, of course, a lack of paper trail is a problem. It's like a joke from *Futurama*.

Except this is real.

Coolly narrated by actor Peter Coyote, *Stealing* outlines the recent disparities between exit polls—polls that are anonymous and historically very accurate—and the actual polls. There's also "vote-flipping," where machines pick the opposite of what the voter picks, right in front of you (Ohio state Rep. Bob Hagan witnessed it). Even more, there's an unexplained void of these machines in underprivileged neighborhoods, which forces residents to wait in huge lines for hours, just to vote.

What award-winning director Dorothy Fadiman lacks, and what any attempt to truly reveal this crisis lacks, is what naysayers refer to as "a smoking gun." The problem is, of course, that machines don't smoke. *Stealing America* also neglects a few key whistleblowers like Bev Harris of Black Box Voting (an elections watchdog group). They do well, though, in showing the only people who confront the subject on television: the *Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Might as well be Philip J. Fry.

It only takes a few quotes from the willing press to make the viewer quite angry. "We want to find out what happened," says CNN's Judy Woodruff the moment the 2004 vote flipped to George W. Bush without explanation. And then, almost as if on cue: "What I'm telling you is the numbers changed," she says with a shrug, "and sometimes these things happen."

Illuminating.