



# The People's Machine: Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Rise of Blockbuster Democracy

*Joe Mathews*

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California voters passed Proposition 13 in 1978. At the same time, a champion bodybuilder named Arnold Schwarzenegger was becoming a movie star. Over the past quarter century, the twin arts of direct democracy (through ballot initiatives designed to push the public to the polls on election day) and blockbuster moviemaking (through movies designed to push the public to the theaters on opening weekend) grew up together, at home in California. With the state's recall election in 2003, direct democracy and blockbuster movies officially merged. The result: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. In *The People's Machine*, political reporter Joe Mathews, who covered Schwarzenegger's gubernatorial campaign for the *Los Angeles Times* and who has subsequently broken many front page stories about him, traces the roots of both movie and political populism, how Schwarzenegger used these twin forces to win election and, especially, how he has used them to govern. "Let the people decide," said Governor Schwarzenegger after his inauguration. The People's Machine, through remarkable access and whip-smart analysis—there is news in this book—reports on whether this system of governing proves blessing, curse, or mess, and on the remarkable Austrian bodybuilder, movie star, and political man with the nerve to carry it out.



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