

Filmmaker Set to Release: *A Chemical Reaction*

Working toward the culmination of a four-year project, Maine filmmaker Brett Plymale plans to release a ground-breaking documentary this fall about the anti-pesticide movement that has swept across Canada and into the United States.

Featuring SafeLawns.org founder Paul Tukey as narrator, the film, *A Chemical Reaction*, has been entered into the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival in September. A United States premiere is currently being scheduled.

Centered on the small town of Hudson, Quebec, that was the first in North America to ban common lawn and garden pesticides nearly two decades ago, the movie features numerous scientists, doctors and lawn care professionals who debate the risks associated with these weed and insect killers.

“The movie represents the culmination and fulfillment of more than a decade of dreams and aspirations,” said Plymale, an Emmy nominated videographer and editor. “I feel fortunate to be involved in the telling of such an important world-changing story, one that has not been explored previously in a movie format. If we did our job well, we have the opportunity to effect change — which is probably every documentarian’s goal.”

A Chemical Reaction tells the story of nationally known author and activist Tukey, a Maine native whose national Campaign for Safe Lawns culminated with a trip to Hudson, Quebec, in 2008. In 1991, Hudson had become the first town in North America to ban lawn chemicals used to kill weeds and insects and the town was subsequently sued by the world’s largest lawn care company then known as ChemLawn. To many people’s surprise, the little town of 5,088 won all court challenges all the way to the Canadian Supreme Court in 2001. As a result of the case, lawn chemicals are now banned in more than half of Canada and not sold in Home Depot and other major retail chains in that country. The lawn chemicals are still sold in the U.S., however.

“Initially I wanted to make this film simply because it’s a great story of a modern-day David vs. Goliath,” said Plymale. “But as I delved deeper into the intricacies of how the movement gained momentum and the impact that it had on the entire continent of North America, my motivation has become more driven to find out what forces are at work to shape public opinion, and why we collectively, willingly do things that are potentially harmful to ourselves.”

The film has already earned solid reviews from initial press screenings.

“It’s one of the most eye-opening environmental documentaries I’ve ever seen,” said Tim Rhys, founder of MovieMaker magazine. “Like Michael Moore and Morgan Spurlock before them, Tukey and Plymale do an outstanding job of bringing an insidious health issue to light in a way that’s both entertaining and engaging. If you have children and care about the world they’re growing up in, then despite the fact that it may leave you shaken, if not enraged, *A Chemical Reaction* is a film you need to see.”

The activist at the core of the film said he eschews the comparisons to Moore, the in-your-face filmmaker. The best comparison, said Paul Tukey, is probably to Al Gore, whose film *Inconvenient Truth* widened the dialogue about global warming.

“When I go town by town by town to spread my warnings about pesticides and fertilizers, I’m just one voice speaking to a few dozen or a few hundred people,” said Tukey, whose appearances on stage around North America serve as the narration of *A Chemical Reaction*. “My hope is that the film gains a wider audience than I could obtain on my own. People need to ask: ‘If they banned these chemicals in Canada, why aren’t we banning them here in the U.S.’”

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