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Review: Michael Schmidt: Organic Hero or Bioterrorist

Posted by **Sarah Gopaul** at 02:48 PM ET

[Editor's Note: Sarah Gopaul will be reviewing a selection of films from the [Planet in Focus film festival](#) over the next few days. She is a regular contributor to [popjournalism.ca](#)]

This documentary addresses a very sensitive subject in Canada — should unpasteurized raw milk be regulated and made available to consumers?

Both arguments are very strong. Those in favor of raw milk claim the government is making a personal choice for them by making it illegal to obtain. They also insist it has health benefits. Those against maintain the health risks, especially to children and the elderly, are too great to allow people to be given the choice at all. However, Canada is the only G8 country that enforces an overall ban on the product. Most countries have a doctrine of random inspection and testing. In California, it is even available on supermarket shelves.



Although the focus of the film is Schmidt, documenter [Norman Lofts](#) makes some attempt to ensure balance through several opposition interviews with politicians, scientists and victims of illness. On the other side of the fence, Loft interviewed Schmidt's cow share members who claim improvements to their health and farmers in the United States and England who are permitted to legally provide raw milk. He also makes the argument that it may be a matter of "small business versus big business." But in the end, a key segment missing is someone from the scientific or medical community supporting their cause.

In documenting Schmidt's fight for his livelihood, filmmakers capture the many facets of his personality as well. He is not only a farmer but also a leader, a politician and, surprisingly, a conductor for an orchestra.

It is difficult to disagree with either argument but the recent Maple Leaf Foods recall is proof listeria is a risk even with regulation but no one is about to ban lunchmeat.

The Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival runs October 22 through October 26 in Toronto. Over 100 outstanding and compelling films and videos -

documentaries and dramatic, animated, and experimental works of all lengths - created by Canadian and international filmmakers on key environmental themes will be screened at the Royal Cinema, Gardiner Museum, The Bata Shoe Museum, Innis College and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). Panels, workshops, youth, student and children's programs are also offered. Visit www.planetinfoocus.org for full details.