

Defcon Solar – TMFF Review

French philosopher René Descartes once said, "to determine whether we can know anything with certainty, we first have to doubt everything we know". That seems like a good motto to live by nowadays. We are currently living in a time of a lot of disinformation. If it was difficult for people to trust their politicians and leaders because of personal scandals and conspiracies, it has become even harder in recent years, thanks to all the information we are constantly exposed to through the news, the Internet, and social media. It'd seem that, in the modern day, everything and nothing is plausible... and in a time of so much confusion, how can we be sure of anything? How can we trust our leaders?

Such is the kind of question that *Defcon Solar*, an action-adventure comedy about a penguin scientist trying to save the planet from a gigantic ozone hole, opens as it tackles a serious subject – global warming... or, well, how it is being handled by our governments. The script doesn't question global warming but rather the actions our global leaders say to be taken on the subject, exposing how many of them are on the game just for their own benefit. The same old story of greed is here again, but being a story as old as humankind itself, it never fails to be relevant.

With a sharp humor that greatly improves this new version of the script and a skilled hand for action sequences, romance, volcanos saving the day, and penguins being awesome, the writer has created an exciting story that goes beyond the limits of the action/adventure or disaster genres, and that makes its audience wonder how much of the so-called measures the governments are providing to fight global warming are effective, and how many of them are purely for their own benefit or because of some agenda. It is a thought-provoking script! And, to a certain degree, a discreetly anarchic one as it invites its audience to rebel against the system and to go beyond their own little bubbles to truly analyze what is happening to the world and what can be done by ourselves to fight it.

That's not to say it is a radical movie. This is no *Batman Returns*, and there are no penguins shooting rockets against a city. It's a family-friendly movie that smartly combines action and humor to get us to engage with its characters, but that makes us think about a lot of things – even the Russia/Ukraine situation. As risky as exploring that subject feels by making one of its heroes a Russian scientist (and by having our protagonist, Waco, happy for going to Russia), the writer offers a strong comment on why is the US government so involved in such a conflict, and while it can be said that it won't be well-accepted by everybody, it will open a dialogue, and that is what the writer seems to be aiming at.

But beyond the human drama, one of the most appealing aspects of the script is its exploration of how our conflicts and our general doing is affecting other species around the globe... which is something we often seem to forget. Whenever a discussion about

global warming comes, there is always a group of individuals saying that it's a lie and that they don't feel the difference, and the writer does a terrific job exploring these closed minds, but this situation isn't about just us, the humankind, but countless other species that live in this planet! And even though a lot of people claim to love animals (such as the generals that say how cute the penguins are), they don't really care about them, and that is heartbreaking. Why should innocent animals suffer for our doing?

Such a question and such a representation of living beings with no voices is the most amazing aspect of the script. After all, as fun and enjoyable as all those Roland Emmerich movies might be, how often do we see the dangers that wild animals are facing in this catastrophe? And so, any person with a piece of heart will find *Defcon Solar* an adventure that goes beyond the limits and that will make us understand that global warming isn't only about the changes we see in our gardens or the increasing heat we suffer every day, but instead, an apocalypse for thousands of creatures that had zero responsibility in it... and that we must save.

On a final note... the script has been greatly improved. The tone is more consistent, and the setting is clearer. The Waco-Inez dynamic was already good in the previous version, but I think that the changes done in this new one are terrific. It was very enjoyable to read their conversations after Waco's presentation (which is also easier to follow this time). There are more fun moments – I want to highlight the line, "Any friend of the penguins is a friend of mine. End of discussion." That encapsulates the heart of the script.

There is something that isn't entirely clear on page 20, though, when it says, "Inez starts to get offended". Is she nearby Waco and Zeppo during this scene? Also, Inez says "pronto" at some point, but wouldn't it be better if she used a Russian word? I quite love the way she talks; it feels very authentic, except for that little detail.

Other than that, it's a great story. Thanks for giving me the chance to read it again!

Note from our reader: *Dear writer, thank you very much for sharing your story. I thoroughly enjoyed DEFCON SOLAR for its originality and the strong sense of empathy created around Waco and Inez. I'd love to help you elevate the story. My mind is racing, and I have a few other ideas about how the structure can be amended. We offer a one-hour one-to-one online consultation service where we can discuss character arcs and sub-plot developments, and I can answer any specific questions you may have. This can be done via Skype or Zoom at your earliest convenience (go here: <https://tmff.net/consultation>).*