

## MOVIE | REVIEW

# Ice, ice, Baby

‘Arctic Tale’ uses polar bear, walrus to school kids about global warming

BY MICHAEL SMITH

World Scene Writer

Essentially a global warming film aimed at children, “Arctic Tale” is a cute, cuddly tale of fuzzy animals dressed in a political statement pelt.

The story focuses on the cycle of life for two polar residents — a walrus named Seela and a polar bear named Nanu — from birth to becoming parents themselves.

It’s an aww-inducing adventure from the start, seeing little Nanu play and fight with her twin bear cub brother and watching over tiny Seela with her protective mother and “auntie” walrus, as described in playful narration by Queen Latifah.

A walrus collective bunched together on an ice floe is “a really close family, (lying) all over each other, and all up in each other’s business,” Latifah muses to the soundtrack strains of Sister Sledge’s “We Are Family.”

But the thrust of the storytelling eventually turns to one dominant subject: survival in an ice kingdom that has long provided these animals food, shelter and other natural protections, but which now is melting underneath their paws and flippers.

There is much to be enjoyed in the interpersonal nature story, the capturing of a harsh existence and the exciting underwater filming.

## ARCTIC TALE

**Stars:** narration by Queen Latifah

**Theaters:** Circle Cinema, 12 S.

Lewis Ave. (call 592-3456 for show times)

**Running Time:** 1 hour, 36 minutes

**Rated:** G

**Quality:** ★★½



Paramount Classics

“Arctic Tale” is the story of Nanu, a young polar bear learning to survive while her habitat changes around her.

Polar bears make yummy dinners out of ring seals, but they have to find them first, sniffing through several inches of ice to locate a seal hiding in a tiny underwater ice cave, then pounding with front paws to crush downward to their entree.

These are thrilling scenes that are skillfully displayed.

The film has an Oscar-winning pedigree, coming from National Geographic Films, the outfit that brought the French-born project “March of the Penguins” to the United States, and Paramount Classics, the studio behind “An Inconvenient Truth” last year.

In the interest of an “Inconvenient” disclosure, a writing credit

on the “Arctic Tale” narration goes to Kristin Gore, daughter of Al and Tipper.

Children are likely to enjoy this tale more than the “Penguin” march, with even the slug-like walruses possessing more kid-obvious personality than the tuxedo-clad cuties in everything from honing the newborns’ survival instincts to comedy options.

It turns out those moustache whiskers are used by mommy walrus to memorize her children’s faces. It’s an amusing who-knew.

But this heartwarming tale also has a nagging quality to its presentation, and I say that as someone who takes no issue with

its statement of a climate in crisis.

But it seemed odd that not only were the words “global warming” never uttered, neither was an explanation of why the ice was melting from underneath these animals’ homes.

It left more than one child at the screening I attended asking mom and dad what was happening. It’s as though the filmmakers decided that if they don’t spell out the cause, the little ones will go educate themselves as to the why.

That the documentary doesn’t address this issue better is a flaw in a film aimed at children, who can rarely be provided too much information on subjects of such import.