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The Southland Times

# Unwind

**FOUR HOLIDAYS ...**  
 the irony  
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Mad Gloria

# Animals with issues

**A** GIRAFFE in love with a hippo, a zebra with an identity crisis, a lion desperate to win his newfound daddy's respect – the makers of *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa* could have plunked their heroes down in a therapist's office for an "animals with issues" session. Instead, they maroon them on the African mainland for what amounts to more of the same: a shrill retread of the 2005 animated hit *Madagascar*. Voice stars Ben Stiller, Chris Rock, David Schwimmer and Jada Pinkett Smith return,

along with Sacha Baron Cohen and Cedric the Entertainer. Operating on the principle that the bigger the menagerie, the merrier the movie, the film-makers tack on fresh characters to the point of distraction, with the late Bernie Mac among the newcomers as dad to Stiller's Alex the lion. Whether or not they've seen or remember the original flick, young kids will eat up this manic mess, a nonstop rush of slapstick and jabbering dialogue. The noise and mayhem will annoy, or at least bore,

most parents, who can take some solace in the movie's brisk running time. Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath, who made the first movie, return to direct and co-write *Escape 2 Africa*, with Etan Cohen sharing screenplay credit. They keep the story simple, picking up where *Madagascar* left Alex and his fellow pampered zoo animals, Marty the zebra (Rock), Melman the giraffe (Schwimmer) and Gloria the hippo (Pinkett Smith). Still stranded in Madagascar, off the mainland coast, the foursome strap in to a derelict plane rebuilt

by their pesky penguin comrades for the return to New York. The rickety contraption crashes on the plains of Africa, where Alex is reunited with his parents (Mac and Sherri Shepherd) from whom he was separated as a toddler after poachers captured him.

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## Battling the elements

**CHEERS**  
 MARK WILSON



**A**FTER managing to snare two direct hits to the retina in the space of a block, my mind was made up for this week's column. Umbrellas are a hazard, an unnecessary fashion accessory and a bane of my existence for many a year. You have seen it all before – the odd spit of precipitation falls from the sky and the black and tan army of eye gougers is called to action to shield our preciousness from the elements. Short people, tall people and middle-sized people form a seemingly impassable, virtual forest strata formation complete with canopy, sub-canopy and undergrowth. This mobile forest swarms erratically around blind corners, trunks bowed in a futile attempt to achieve some form of aerodynamic state, the world around blotted out by Marry Poppins-like brims all the while blind to the plight of those souls who choose to brave the perils of rain unprotected. I sometimes wonder if the umbrella was in fact derived from an ancient Chinese weapon used to pluck the eyes from unsuspecting moguls who strayed across the Great Wall. The modern version has the ends blunted so as not to raise the ire of the PC movement and is camouflaged conveniently with an often-branded canvas to conceal the attacker from view. Someone forgot to tell the designer that rain in New Zealand is often accompanied by wind, which renders the weapon useless and often results in impending peril as it is thrown back upon the umbrella-wielder. In the confusion it also seemed someone forgot to mention that our skin is in fact waterproof and provides great protection from the elements on most occasions. Can you imagine how much more interesting our days would be if, instead of dressing up for the rain, we dressed down? One memorable example of this impeccable logic was displayed at the great house of learning Otago University in the year 2000 by a young geology student who we shall, for the purpose of the article, call Ralph. His sense of logic seemed honed well beyond his years. Ralph could be seen streaking at great pace through the hazy Dunedin drizzle towards the lecture theatre clad in his best green underwear. Moments later he would emerge into the class bone dry and adorned in full new body attire. This bemused the other wet, bedraggled students who were struggling to tuck away umbrellas and shed sodden jackets without soaking their neighbour's notes in the tight confines of the lecture hall. He had simply tucked his dry clothes in his pack (not a man satchel like many students seem to use now), utilised his waterproof skin to take the brunt of the elements and dropped by the toilets to change on arrival. Common sense to the extreme – no wet clothes, no one lost an eye and damn good entertainment.

*Hope, Love, Joy & Peace*

Our wishes for everyone,  
 over Christmas and for 2009

From the team at

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