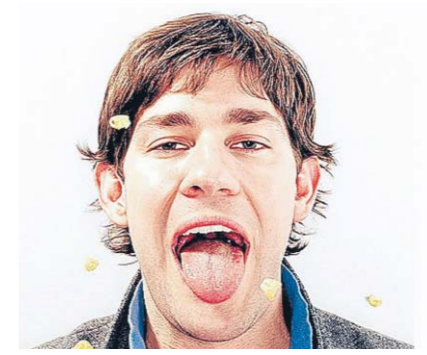


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# Life as a sloth

It takes a while for John Leguizamo to get into sloth.

"I've got to walk around the house a lot the day before, working on the lisp so that it's not too much, that it's just right," he says, demonstrating.

Sloths have lisps, or didn't you know? The ancient ground sloths did, as Leguizamo interprets Sid the Sloth in the *Ice Age* animated films.

"Sid's a vulnerable character, with a higher-pitched voice than you'd think.

"So I have to tighten up, get the voice up there so that he doesn't sound like a sloth who's been out partying all night.

"I don't get to work with Ray (Romano) or Denis (Leary, his vocal co-stars in the films).

"It's just me and a script, not even a picture of what the scene will look like. You create the whole emotion of the character and what he has to do in this scene with your imagination."

Leguizamo, star of one-man stage shows, movies (*Moulin Rouge*) and television, plays one of the most popular characters in the *Ice Age* films, the third of which is *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs*, now showing in Invercargill, Gore, Arrowtown and Queenstown.

The secret to the success of "the rambunctiously goofy" (Variety) Sid may not be his open-hearted childishness and clumsiness. Leguizamo thinks demographics play a part.

"Tom Rothman (chief executive of Fox Filmed Entertainment) told me that we're the largest portion of the audience for these films - Latinos," Leguizamo says, laughing.

"My people!"

Continued, Page D3

## Embracing the spirit of the festival

**MATE**  
 Mark Wilson



LOVE winter - cold crisp days, skiing and, of course, Stags rugby looming large on the horizon.

There is one other small detail that makes winter in the south that little bit more entertaining, exciting and hard on the liver and that, of course, is a 35-year-old festival, started by some mad Queenstown locals back in 1976.

I've been part of the chaos for several years. I've competed in, attended or taken a peek at everything the Winter Festival has to offer - dog derbies, dog barking, splash and dash, dash for cash, bird man, semi-naked girls plunging head-first into icy water, buskers of all descriptions, men dressed as women racing round obstacle courses and Mayor Tim leaving the crowds at the comedy debate with abdominal cramps from excessive laughter.

However, the nature of the beast is that there is always a new experience on the horizon and, as you line up a few soldiers to dip in your egg cup, I am preparing myself to suffer the chilling consequences of a lost bet last year.

Being an ex-pupil of Southland Boys' High School, I was in fits of laughter at the suggestion that St Bede's would have any chance beating the mighty Royal Blue at rugby.

However, like telling Ali Shanks to take a job over cycling back in 2005, taking this bet was a bad call and now I'm putting my dignity and future reproductive ability at risk careering down the slopes of Coronet Peak in the suitcase race starters. I think, sometimes, how do I get into these situations?

It's looking like being about minus 6 degrees Celsius, with snow forecast!

I thought wearing only Speight's Speedos last year was bad; this year is going to be a career ender!

It's just a crazy time of year and I think why not embrace the spirit of the festival and just get among it. If nothing else it makes for some good stories for the resthome in a few years.

On Wednesday I shared this philosophy with a startled looking English lass who had just arrived in Queenstown and barely had time to catch her breath before I walked into Joes Garage where she worked and somehow convinced her to join me in the Undy 500 race the following day.

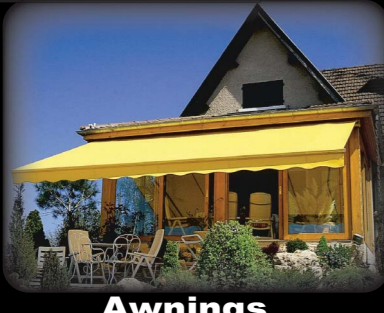
The poor cold lass was plastered all over websites and on the nightly news in all her semi-clad glory and then like any good bloke I shared my second place prize voucher with her and she got to enjoy/suffer an afternoon underwear shopping with me at H & J Smith's.

While standing in the cubicle together playing dressups in all shapes and kinds of underwear, she said: "How does this happen - one minute I'm working and have never met you, 12 hours later I've made a knob of myself in front of everyone and am sharing a changing room with you trying on underwear?"

All I could reply was ... It's Winter Festival!



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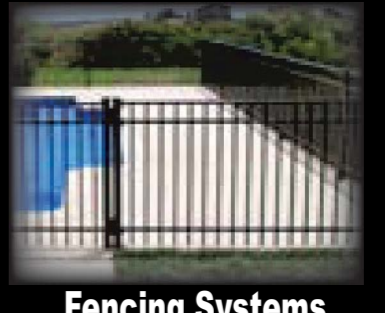
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