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The Southland Times

# Unwind



**WOMAD**  
 ... set to rock D2



# Western thinking



Lawmen and outlaws alike have a history of violence in *Appaloosa*, Ed Harris' adaptation of the Robert B Parker novel. **Barbara Vancheri** reports.

It was the history of friendship that convinced Viggo Mortensen to star alongside Ed Harris in the movie set in the Old West territory of New Mexico in 1882. "There's been a lot of them made, so the percentage of good to bad is pretty low, but I think most westerns are pretty terrible . . .," Mortensen told a news conference during the Toronto International Film Festival where it debuted last year.

When they're good, he said, they're very good, as with *High Noon*, *Man of the West*, *The Missouri Breaks* and *Open Range*. "Like this one, at the heart of it, there's a relationship between two men, and other characters enter into the relationship, and that's what Kevin Costner and Robert Duvall played in *Open Range*."

Mortensen liked the sparseness of the *Appaloosa* script, the polite sensibility of the language, the mannerly way in which people addressed each other and the relationship between the itinerant lawmen.

Harris is a marshal named Virgil Cole and Mortensen is his deputy and partner, Everett Hitch, and their motto could be: Have guns and badges, will travel and tame the Wild West. "I liked the fact and I understood that they had

been friends so long and had worked so well together, that there was so much trust," Mortensen said.

"I felt that the reason . . . they had been friends so long and had such a successful law-enforcement business was 'cause I mind my business and he minds his business, and we allow each other to do that." But in *Appaloosa*, Cole falls for a fetching newcomer and both men contend with a murderous rancher. Zellweger plays the woman, Allie French, and Jeremy Irons is the dapper, black-hatted villain.

Although known for playing fellow Brits, Irons said, "I was, like many kids, brought up watching westerns - spaghetti westerns, John Ford westerns, John Wayne westerns. I never thought that I'd be in one, but I never thought I'd be in a movie.

"Life for me has been a constant surprise, day by day. One of the joys of this business is one gets surprised by requests, and when Ed asked me to do this, it was a pleasurable surprise."

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Ed Harris

## It's not my fault

**MATE**  
 MARK WILSON



NOw no-one likes to take the rap for things - it's never fun and definitely not glorious but sometimes the blame is very much deserved.

However, it seems these days that everything is everyone else's fault. "I'm fat, McDonald's did it! Evil takeaway genies came round with crowbars and broke in via the pantry and crammed Big Macs down my gullet. I tried to fight them off but they upsized me for 50 cents against my will and I was powerless to resist due to an abundance of television advertising."

The hand-holding social engineering brigade think the government should ban fast-food adverts and tax healthy people who want to occasionally indulge so that we can all be saved from these evil sadists profiteering through the gullets of the over-nourished. Poor health because of lack of exercise and an unhealthy diet is no-one else's fault and the sooner we realise this and take responsibility for ourselves, the sooner we will be healthy.

"How can I possibly take responsibility for myself? Smoking is addictive and the tobacco giants didn't inform me of the dangers anywhere and made me think it was cool! I know what should happen; the taxpayers should fund an array of procedures to correct my misfortune because I was in no way to blame for it." Madness!

Recently the hot topic has been host responsibility in regard to alcohol consumption. What happened to self-responsibility? Apparently, if you go to a function, chug a dozen complimentary beers, nail five money shots and a few whisky chasers, head home and throw TVs around the place, it's the host's fault. Oh, I forgot the owners of the bar who are tucked up at home and the manager of the alcohol company who is 1600km away teleported to the event and poured this alcohol down the guests' throats and unplugged the cord so the TV was easier to throw. It's almost worthy of a comedy show to attempt to blame everyone but the person holding the glass.

Drinking, smoking and drugs have one thing in common - we have to choose to pick up the glass, grab the smoke or pop the pills. No-one makes this choice for us; they can influence us but we have to choose to do it. It's about time that we stopped blaming everyone else.

Our problems are our own fault. Passing the blame only results in endless law changes, social engineering policies, reviews, money wasted by bureaucrats, and a whole lot of whingeing with very little change.

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